Reforming a Bachelor of Music Program: a case study

Gemma Carey, Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University, Australia

Don Lebler, Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University, Australia

Abstract

In 2010 the authors conducted a formal review of the Queensland Conservatorium's Bachelor of Music program to determine to what extent the program prepared graduates for professional life in the 21st century. The process was informed by comprehensive performance indicator data and substantial feedback from staff, students and other stakeholders. Information was collected through meetings with staff and students, student evaluations, graduate surveys and feedback from the music industry, along with benchmarking with other Australian and International tertiary music institutions. The review found that teachers at the Conservatorium were committed to striving for excellence yet strong criticism was made of the existing program's perceived limitations in preparing students for their likely futures. Following extensive consultation, consensus reflecting the review recommendations was reached, resulting in a new Bachelor of Music program design. This paper reports on the process undertaken and the major changes that are now being implemented.

Keywords: curriculum review, bachelor of music, higher education, music education, portfolio careers, protean careers.

Introduction

In current times, issues of curriculum relevance are driving a raft of reforms and reviews in higher education both in Australia and internationally. The combination of the effects of greatly reduced funding for tertiary institutions, the rapidly changing cultural landscape and underemployment in many sectors of the music industry has been a powerful rationale for quality and relevance in current programs (Carey, 2008). It is clear from the literature that the needs of students in terms of employment outcomes are increasingly a matter of concern as conservatoires struggle to deliver curriculum

offerings that balance the imperative to produce skilled performers with that of better equipping graduates for the workforce (Carey, 2008; Renshaw, 2002a). For tertiary music training institutions, the need to respond to this context has forced a critical reappraisal of curriculum priorities.

New ways of working

Given the profound shifts that have been occurring in the global knowledge economy and the careers of those who seek to work within it, music institutions are no different from many of their counterparts in other disciplines in needing to re-assess their quality in terms of student needs. University departments are under increasing pressure to prepare graduates for the work environment, to include activities that are vocationally oriented in order to achieve the expectations of society (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996; Poster, 1995; Reddan & Harrison, 2010). Moreover, today's challenging economic situation means it is no longer sufficient for a new graduate to have knowledge of an academic field; increasingly it is necessary for students to gain skills which will enhance their prospects of employment (Fallows & Steven, 2000). For music institutions, this includes the need to acknowledge that "whilst in many professions the model of a regular, salaried, permanent role that one can develop as a career over many years holds true, this is far from the case for musicians" (Burt-Perkins, 2010, p. 277). Unlike students pursuing careers in the professions of engineering, finance, law, or medicine, graduates in liberal arts fields (such as philosophy, music, history) rarely have a clear-cut, predetermined path into professional life (Weller, 2010).

At a recent conference in Beijing (International Society for Music Education, 2010), music scholars from around the world painted a realistic picture of the skills required for employment opportunities for musicians in the real world of music. They unanimously agreed that most professional musicians will expect to undertake a broad range of activities and will need to be able to adapt to changing circumstances. They will

commonly engage in portfolio or protean¹ careers that are “varied and diverse and which lack formal structures for progression and promotion” (Burt-Perkins, 2010, p. 277). As Michael Hannon (2010) argues, it is a suitable descriptor for the musician who is versatile, flexible and adaptable in music making through a wide variety of activities including “performing, composing, arranging, producing, organizing, directing, teaching, researching, critiquing, philosophizing, promoting, advocating and facilitating” (p. 278). In other words, the protean musician will need to assemble a portfolio of income-generating activities to ensure the sustainability of a career.

The emergence of the portfolio career “raise[s] many challenges, changes and opportunities for musicians” and those who teach them (Smilde, 2010, p. 277). However, while most universities have recognized the need both to adapt to change and to ensure that graduates have generic skills required for future employment, such as communication, teamwork and leadership skills (Nelson, 2002), conservatoires have been slow to respond to the increasingly diverse needs of the music industry and the community it serves (Carey, 2008). Angela Beeching (2010, p. 276) argues that “students (and often faculty and staff) in academia can be oblivious to the difficult realities of, and changes in, the real world career paths” and, as a result, students are uninformed about many non-traditional and entrepreneurial possibilities. This is despite the fact that employment opportunities that once existed in the visual and performing arts have diminished. In fact some commentators warned nearly a decade ago that unless conservatoria started responding to the “real world in which their students will be working”, they would rapidly become an anachronism (Renshaw, 2002b, p. 16).

Learning without borders

In addition to employment considerations, music institutions both nationally and internationally have been forced to address the issue of student mobility between institutions. In the European context, the Bologna Declaration has drawn attention to the

¹ The adjective *protean* has been adopted from the Greek God Proteus who was able to change his appearance at will.

need for equivalence between various national qualifications and courses of study so that the exchange of students between European institutions can be conducted more effectively (The Bologna Declaration and Music, 2005). In the Australian context, the adoption of a student centred funding model for higher education will result in students being able to move between institutions within Australia more easily than has been the case previously (Transforming Australia's Higher Education System, 2011). Furthermore, the importance of international students in the Australian higher education sector has been confirmed in the recent Review of Australian Higher Education report (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008); a degree of alignment between Australian and European music degrees is necessary if Australia is to remain an attractive destination for European students wishing to study outside of the European Union. All of these considerations have prompted widespread reviews of programs of study across the higher music education sector.

In addition to these external considerations, this Conservatorium has seen the need to carefully examine its program offerings to determine to what extent it prepares graduates for professional life in the 21st century. As part of this process, a review of the Bachelor of Music program, its largest program of study, was conducted in 2010. The purpose of the review was to provide a recommendation as to how well the program was achieving its objectives and to determine also whether it be approved for a further five-year period, approved with conditions or withdrawn.

Case study

The review focused on two major topics: the structure of the program and its teaching and learning strategies. This involved a number of tasks and activities:

- clarifying the purpose of the Bachelor of Music program;
- examining the relevance and effectiveness of the program;
- benchmarking with other institutions' program designs nationally and internationally; and

- identifying gaps and overlaps in course and program offerings.

History and purpose of the Bachelor of Music program

In order to appreciate the rationale for the present BMus program and curriculum, it is necessary to look briefly to the history of the Conservatorium and its past influences.

From its inception in 1957 the Conservatorium has regarded itself as “an institution where practical musicians could be trained” (Brier, 1971, p. 311) rather than a place focused on academic studies. The design of the courses in the first two decades reflected this concentration on performance and involved weekly individual contact with performance teachers and regular masterclasses and workshops. The timetable was also structured to allow students to set aside a significant amount of time for daily practice (Queensland Conservatorium of Music handbook 1973–74, 1973).

By the 1970s several three-year full-time diploma courses were offered, the main direction of which was to provide graduates with “professional careers in all branches of music including performing, teaching, composing and school music” (Queensland Conservatorium of Music handbook 1973–74, 1973, p. 7).² Employment opportunities listed in the 1973 handbook reflected these objectives, including performance and music teaching in higher education, private schools, state schools or private teaching studios.

In 1974, the Queensland Conservatorium became the first non-university tertiary institution in Australia to have been granted the right to award a degree in music³ (Queensland Conservatorium of Music report of activities 1975–1976, 1976). Although the introduction of the degree course significantly changed the balance between performance studies and academic subjects, the Conservatorium’s emphasis remained on the pursuit of excellence in performance training. This was reflected in the Director’s Annual Report which stated:

² These diplomas were: Associate Diploma in Music; Fellowship Diploma in Music; Master Diploma in Music; Concert Diploma in Music and Fellowship Diploma in School Music.

³ The initial degree was a Bachelor of Arts in Music, with a Bachelor of Music program becoming available in 1982.

The primary aim of the Conservatorium is to prepare students for the music profession, and preparation for competition and concert performances is aimed at providing some of the right kind of experience and training which hopefully will enable many of them to be employed in the future as performers or teachers. (Queensland Conservatorium of Music report of activities, 1982, p. 17)

By the early 1980s it was becoming clear that employment prospects in music extended beyond the two careers of teaching and performance. Despite its continued emphasis on performance, documents from that era expressed the necessity for courses “to suit the needs of the intending professional in both the classical and more commercial and technological strands of music” (Queensland Conservatorium of Music report of activities, 1983, p. 5). As a result, the diploma program was expanded in 1983 to include a diploma in Music Technology⁴ and a two-year Associate Diploma in Jazz⁵. This was to be the first step towards the inclusion of music areas beyond the traditional course offerings that had remained in place since the Conservatorium was established in 1957. Elective subjects were introduced to include Accompanying, Chamber Music, Composition, and Music Recording Techniques (Queensland Conservatorium of Music report of activities, 1985).

It took another decade to see any further significant changes in terms of curriculum restructuring. This followed the amalgamation of the Queensland Conservatorium with Griffith University in 1991 as a consequence of a national move to reduce the number of higher education providers. In August 1996, the Federal budget set a new agenda for tertiary education in Australia that was to have significant impacts on funding. In light of such severe economic pressures, special challenges arose for the Conservatorium to “examine itself and to ensure that it [was] delivering marketable, high quality programs

⁴ This developed into the Bachelor of Music Sonology in 1993, renamed Bachelor of Music - Music Technology in 1998, later renamed Bachelor of Music Technology.

⁵ Jazz is now an area of study within the Bachelor of Music program.

efficiently and within the new budgetary constraints” (Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University report of the evaluative self-study of undergraduate courses, 1997, p. 4).

The music industry had been rapidly changing in the previous decade, “requiring musicians to be increasingly flexible, creative, and technologically literate ... with the ability to self-manage and direct their own careers and adapt readily to change” (Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University report of the evaluative self-study of undergraduate courses, 1997, p. 4). A major review was conducted in 1996/97, the main purpose of which was to meet the challenges of a changing musical and educational context⁶. During the course of this review, it was recognized that the Conservatorium was increasingly attracting “a diverse range of students” and that any new structure “needed to address their backgrounds, expectations and needs” (Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University report of the evaluative self-study of undergraduate courses, 1997, p. 13). These included:

elite and non-elite performers and composers in classical and contemporary/jazz fields, students whose careers will be in classroom or studio teaching, students who will work in the broader arts and music industry, students who will proceed onto higher degree studies in performance, composition, research and other fields. (Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University report of the evaluative self-study of undergraduate courses, 1997, pp. 13–14)

During the course of the next review of the Bachelor of Music in 2002/03, it became clear that a more broadly based music degree was required, to provide opportunities for students to develop their musical skills while also developing a broader intellectual and practical understanding of contemporary cultural practice and related disciplines. As a

⁶ A noteworthy consequence of this review was the establishment of an innovative Bachelor of Popular Music Program on another Campus of the host University in 1999, described in detail elsewhere (for example, Lebler, 2007, 2008, 2010).

result, a new more comprehensive degree program, the Bachelor of Music Studies, was introduced. It included opportunities for practical and academic study of music in fields such as world music, community music, arts and cultural management, musicology, ethnomusicology, musical journalism, business studies and other academic disciplines. This program, notwithstanding its strong musical orientation, was not as intensively performance-based as the Bachelor of Music.

The Bachelor of Music Studies program was offered as a three-year degree with a fourth year Honours program. Unique aspects of the program included the opportunity for students to study within a less intensive practical program. It made it possible also to discontinue practical study after first year, access a wide range of majors, and engage in a program with a high degree of flexibility with a major in music industries. Given the more broadly based curriculum of the Bachelor of Music Studies program, the commitment and level of performance required of students was not as demanding as that required of students in the Bachelor of Music.

In 2006, three years after the previous review, a Faculty Review was conducted and recommended that the Conservatorium carefully review its curriculum and strategies in relation to contemporary performance practices, teaching and other professional opportunities, by taking into account the broad skill-basis needed to respond to the realities of a portfolio career for musicians working in the first decades of the 21st century. The review identified the urgent need to investigate Majors within other programs and combined degrees.

By 2010, the cumulative effect of these periodic review processes was that the Bachelor of Music program was available in three-year and four-year courses of study. It was a highly specified program particularly in first year with all students undertaking the following components in semester 1:

- a 10 credit point (CP) performance or composition major study;
- a 10 CP music literature course: and

- 5 CP courses in music theory, aural studies, improvisation and movement, and an ensemble.

In semester 2, a course specific to the area of study replaced improvisation and movement. This structure was replicated in year two with students able to choose a 5 CP elective course or ensemble each semester.

In each semester of the third year, students were able to choose 15 CPs from listed electives and ensembles and 4th year students had 5 CPs of elective choices in semester 1 and 15 CPs in semester 2, as depicted in Figure 1. There were no free choice electives available at any stage of the program.

Students who had demonstrated exceptional ability were able to apply for admission to an Advanced Performance program plan that increased the duration of performance lessons and associated credit points by 5 CP each semester. There was a corresponding reduction in credit points available for elective courses. Customized program plans were also available for students intending to undertake post-graduate Education programs or specialize in pedagogy. A 4th year honours program plan was available for students interested in research training.

The stated aims of the Bachelor of Music program included:

- producing graduates who were highly skilled, musically adaptable and equipped to enter professional life as creative and flexible 21st century musicians
- providing the highest quality focused training for the classical and contemporary instrumentalist, vocalist or composer, including exposure to diverse musical styles and idioms including classical, contemporary and world music;
- developing pathways of study that help the acquisition of skills including adaptability, self-motivation, technological literacy and breadth of vision necessary to succeed in the contemporary music industry; and,
- developing in students a clear sense of direction and a repertoire of relevant professional skills built up through practical experience and workplace training.

Year 1	Sem 1	Performance or Composition major study	10 CP
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		Music Literature	10 CP
		Music Theory	5 CP
		Aural Studies	5 CP
		Ensemble or area specific course	5 CP
		Improvisation and Movement	5 CP
	Sem 2	Performance or Composition major study	10 CP
		Music Literature	10 CP
		Music Theory	5 CP
		Aural Studies	5 CP
		Ensemble or area specific course	5 CP
		Area specific course	5 CP
Year 2	Sem 1	Performance or Composition major study	10 CP
		Music Literature	10 CP
		Music Theory	5 CP
		Aural Studies	5 CP
		Ensemble or area specific course	5 CP
		Listed elective ensemble or course	5 CP
	Sem 2	Performance or Composition major study	10 CP
		Music Literature	10 CP
		Music Theory	5 CP
		Aural Studies	5 CP
		Ensemble or area specific course	5 CP
		Listed elective ensemble or course	5 CP
Year 3	Sem 1	Performance or Composition major study	10 CP
		Music Literature	10 CP
		Ensemble or area specific course	5 CP
		Listed elective ensembles or courses	15 CP
	Sem 2	Performance or Composition major study	10 CP
		Music Literature	10 CP
		Ensemble or area specific course	5 CP
		Listed elective ensembles or courses	15 CP
Year 4	Sem 1	Performance or Composition major study	15 CP
		Music Literature or Music Theory course	10 CP
		Ensemble	5 CP
		Listed elective ensembles or courses	10 CP
	Sem 2	Performance or Composition major study	15 CP
		Ensemble	5 CP
		Listed elective ensembles or courses	20 CP

Figure 1. Bachelor of Music program structure 2010

In broad terms, the 2010 review was intended to investigate how well these aspirations were being met and to recommend improvements if necessary.

The review examined the findings and recommendations of previous reviews and then examined various aspects of the current offerings including:

- the relationship between our programs and offerings elsewhere;
- the relevance of courses and practices to the current context; and, most importantly,
- the degree to which the programs prepared graduates for their likely futures.

Examining the relevance and effectiveness of the program

The review process was informed by substantial feedback from students, staff and other stakeholders. Outcomes of previous reviews were collated and considered.

Student evaluations and feedback, graduate outcomes data, feedback from industry and benchmarking with other Australian and International tertiary music programs all informed the review.

Feedback from students

Student feedback was gathered by a variety of means including a range of surveys and focus groups. All graduates from Australian Universities are given an opportunity to provide feedback on their University experiences through the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ). Respondents from this Conservatorium in 2007 and 2008 identified the quality of teaching and the opportunity to interact with other students as the best aspects of their degree experiences. However, CEQ respondents were critical of the complexity and restrictive nature of the program structure, which they felt provided inadequate preparation for professional life and they commented that the program should provide better preparation for the real world.

There was, however, consensus among the respondents to the 2009 Starting at Griffith survey of commencing students⁷ around the quality of teaching being the aspect of their programs they appreciated most. Respondents also expressed a desire for more elective courses and voiced concerns about the complexity of their programs and the resulting difficulties they experienced in selecting courses that addressed their interests within the requirements of the program rules. A continuing study of commencing students also identified these aspects as programmatic features that students most look forward to at the beginning of their conservatorium studies, along with the opportunity to meet like-minded people with whom they can collaborate (Carey & Lebler, 2008; Lebler, Burt-Perkins, & Carey, 2009; Lebler & Carey, 2008).

Student focus groups were also part of the evaluation process because such a process would be more likely to offer a richer source of feedback than that produced by the centralized evaluations system. Focus groups have proven to be helpful in improving both the planning and design of new programs or as a means of evaluating existing programs (Marczak & Sewell, 1999). Program evaluators in particular found focus groups to be useful in understanding how or why students hold certain beliefs about a topic or program. While the information produced by focus groups is necessarily subjective and in narrative form, such groups can, as Marczak and Sewell argue, provide a general sense of whether participants are satisfied with their program and why they think it is or is not helpful. Focus groups were therefore considered to be an important means by which to “give voice to [students’] own interpretations and thoughts rather than rely solely on [staff] ... interpretations” of what they required in the program (Eder & Fingerson, 2002, p. 181).

In 2009, the Conservatorium director held breakfast meetings with groups of 10 students for each of the study areas of the Conservatorium. Positive aspects of student feedback included: the high quality of performance teaching; inspiring lecturers and musical environments; the opportunity to mix with like-minded peers; performance opportunities;

⁷ This survey is conducted by Griffith University in week 6 of the first semester of study for all commencing students and investigates their experiences at the start of their University life.

resources such as practice rooms, library, technology, studios and performance spaces; and, the availability of pedagogy courses relevant to profession.

Suggestions for improvement included offering a larger variety of courses to accommodate the individual needs of students; more focus on music as a business, preparing graduates to survive as musicians; more broadly based mentoring from teachers; and a more flexible program structure including free choice electives. In summary, the dominant view of students appeared to be the desire to have the flexibility of pathways found in the Bachelor of Music Studies program while maintaining the possibility of highly focused performance training.

Feedback from staff

The next step of the process was the gathering of extensive feedback from teaching and administration staff through a variety of means, including a two day staff retreat in February 2010 and the inclusion of the program review as a standing agenda item at all school committee meetings in 2010. Additionally, feedback from staff on an individual basis or through their area heads was encouraged throughout the process.

It was clear that teachers at the Conservatorium were committed to achieving excellence both in their own practice and in the achievements of their students. This was described at the 2010 retreat as the need to foster a profound appreciation of music as an art form. Musical excellence was a central goal and for some, interpreted as highly focused training for performance; for others, excellence was expressed in pedagogy, composition, scholarship, community placements, technological dexterity or a wider range of pursuits. Teachers expressed the view that Conservatorium students need *flexibility of choice* as well as *depth in curriculum*.

Overwhelmingly, the strongest critique of the existing program was its perceived limitations in terms of preparing students for a life in music after graduation. It was argued that a revised program structure must strike the right balance between essential musical knowledge components and appropriate options for students to choose their own

pathway. This included the need to acknowledge that whilst performance is a concentrated pathway that many students wish to pursue, others express a desire to engage in a broader range of studies that might prove useful in their future portfolio careers.

Feedback from other stakeholders

The 2006 Faculty Review reported that the Conservatorium could legitimately claim to be “Australia’s leading music school in several areas of the curriculum” and “may reasonably aspire to be the pre-eminent music school in Australia”. The review considered the Conservatorium to be “probably better placed than any other Australian music school to enter the first rank of international music schools”. While the Faculty Review did not specifically refer to the BMus or BMus Studies programs in these comments, this general endorsement of the Conservatorium informed the team’s review of these programs.

For some time now, the Conservatorium has been part of an ongoing dialogue with industry through both formal means such as its Industry Advisory Board, and less formal means, including memberships of senior staff on boards and committees ranging from the Australian Youth Orchestra to the Music Council of Australia. Feedback from these organisations is included routinely in strategic and policy discussions of the executive and senior staff. In the months preceding the program review, the Conservatorium Industry Advisory Board expressed their concern about the extent to which graduates are prepared for the music industry.

In addition, a number of senior representatives of the local music industry (including the Director of Dance and Music at a State Government Arts peak body and the CEO of the State’s Performing Arts Centre) were consulted between August 2009 and March 2010. Recurring themes in their feedback indicated a perception of quality in the degree offerings but a lack of visibility in the community and underdeveloped potential for collaborations with the broader arts community.

Benchmarking with other institutions

Bachelor of Music degree programs elsewhere were used to provide a context for this review⁸. Information was sourced from the public web sites of these institutions. Less detailed information about a larger number of programs was derived from Heather Monkhouse's Australian Learning and Teaching Council Fellowship Report (Monkhouse, 2010). Key considerations were the duration of programs, the availability of individual tuition and the availability of elective courses, particularly non-music electives.

In summary, Bachelor of Music programs are typically three to four years in duration with teaching being undertaken 30 to 40 weeks a year. While individual tuition is not always available to all students for the full duration of a program, it is usually available for an average of one hour per teaching week. Non-music elective courses are available in only seven of the nineteen European programs cited by Monkhouse (2010). In the Australian sample cited here, course choice is often restricted and these electives account for less than 10% of the total course load in programs that include such electives. Of the eight Australian programs included in the Monkhouse study, three permitted non-music electives.

Findings of the review process

The review team considered the feedback provided by students, staff and other stakeholders as well as the information provided by benchmarking with other Bachelor of Music programs in Australia and internationally. These considerations resulted in 11 recommendations in total. The most significant of these can be summarized as follows:

- 1. Reduction in the proportion of prescribed courses after first year.*

⁸ Offerings at The University of Queensland, the Queensland University of Technology, the Sydney Conservatorium and the Conservatorium of Music in Hobart provided local context and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (London) and the Royal Northern College of Music (Manchester) were used to provide an international frame of reference.

In particular, there had been general dissatisfaction among staff and students with offerings in music theory, aural and music literature courses and the number of credit points (50 each) required in these areas. This was reflected in student evaluations of these courses. In response, it was generally agreed that acquisition of required levels of music theory and aural proficiency and music literature should be achievable within the context of 40CPs each of core courses in these areas and that more advanced theory and aural courses and music literature courses should be provided as electives.

2. Enhanced availability of Conservatorium listed electives.

The prescriptive model had limited students' potential to prepare for a likely portfolio career. While a prescriptive model was seen as desirable for the foundation year of the program, this model has limited students' ability to tailor their studies in the latter years of the program in preparation for diverse employment opportunities. The range of electives was limited to courses hosted by the Conservatorium. The reduction in the number of music theory and music literature courses prescribed in the program increased the proportion of credit points available for elective courses. It was recommended also that at least some of the currently required ensemble and co-requisite courses become electives.

3. Introduction of free choice electives.

The existing program incorporated the development of many of the skills essential for success as a musician, including performance experience at a very high level. However, there were evident weaknesses in professional/business skills which are essential to a portfolio career. Pedagogy and various other project-based learning courses have assisted students to develop the necessary skills for success in the industry after graduation. It was recognized that employment in the music industry is unlikely to consist of only one source of work; a 21st century career in music is more likely to consist of a combination of part-time or casual positions and projects with irregular employment and periods of varying intensity of activity. It is essential for students to be equipped with a sound knowledge of how the music industry functions and the business skills to identify opportunities and actively create employment. It was generally felt that an opportunity to engage with elective studies, not necessarily restricted to courses within the Conservatorium, would provide students with a better preparation for portfolio careers.

This would also enable the program to conform to Griffith University's policy that programs should offer at least 30CP of free choice electives.

4. Incorporation of a broader range of engagements with performance studies.

The primary intent of this proposal was to enhance the ability of students to move between levels of engagement with practical studies as appropriate to their goals and abilities. Three program plans for the Bachelor of Music were proposed: the standard performance or composition strands, including a provision of individual tuition averaging an hour per teaching week; an advanced performance strand, including additional individual tuition (150% of the standard lesson allocation); and a third strand including a reduced allocation of individual tuition, (50% of the standard lesson allocation), thus enabling an increased engagement with non-performance courses. Such a program structure would strike a balance between essential musical knowledge components and appropriate options for students to choose their own pathway. In doing so, it would acknowledge that whilst performance is a concentrated pathway that many students wish to pursue, others will choose to engage in a broader range of studies that might prove useful in their future portfolio careers.

5. Introduction of a new suite of courses titled "My Life as a Musician" specifically addressing issues around life as a music student and preparation for professional music practice.

This series of courses is designed to respond to one of key challenges in conservatorium training: preparation for life as a musician beyond skills relating directly to technique, repertoire, and interpretation. It pulls together and makes explicit a larger landscape of life as a musician, providing the instruments for a successful career in the myriad professions and portfolio careers that form the contemporary musical domain.

In the first year course, students will be prepared for life at the Conservatorium, focusing on learning music and on wellbeing. Additionally the course will address critical awareness of study routines, appreciation of different approaches to learning, functioning in groups, movement and improvisation, self-assessment, sound health and the avoidance of playing-related injuries. The course will also build students' skills to reflect critically on music in performance and on other aspects of their living, learning and earning.

In the second year course, students will be introduced to an overview of the range of professions that make up musical life in contemporary Australia. This includes an analysis of money streams and funding possibilities, policies and organisations, professions in music, portfolio careers, music and taxes, intellectual property, copyright, performance rights, recording rights, and other legal issues. It will also address choice of profile as a musician (breadth and specialization), public relations and networking (including social networking, the web), presentation (on stage, on camera, in interviews), and analysis of case studies.

The third year course focuses on preparing a performance; project management, artistic choices, collaborations, technical requirements and stage plans, program notes, visual elements, setting the scene for a concert/event. It culminates in a project on sharing art in performance, in broadcasts, through recordings and on the web.

The fourth year course combines the modules developed throughout this series of courses into an online resource: *Surviving music – a musicians' manual*. At the end of the program, these elements come together in a professional portfolio which consists of a professional recording, a bio, a promotional photo, a full proposal for a concert/event to be realized after completing the degree, and a realistic financial plan on activities and income five years after graduation.

6. *Acknowledge and facilitate creative variations of one-to-one practical teaching and facilitate them, including small group activities where appropriate.*

One of the features common to the institutions used as benchmarks in this report is the extensive availability of one-to-one tuition. This is a characteristic of a conservatorium curriculum and it is considered the cornerstone of conservatorium-style training.

However, different perspectives on this model are considered also to be pedagogically desirable. For example, many group-learning activities take place but are relatively unknown outside the departments in which they occur. Opportunities exist for using other models including the open lesson format, where students are encouraged to attend each other's lessons, and communal lessons where larger blocks time are allocated for

predominantly individual lessons but with the flexibility of being able to cover fundamental issues with groups of students, before working with individuals (or pairs) on more specific matters.

The 2011 program structure

In the revised program structure, the first and second year program structure remains unchanged except for the inclusion of the first My Life as a Musician course in semester 1 of each year. In year 3, My Life as a Musician 3 is included in semester 1 and a 5 CP free choice elective is available in both semesters. Fifteen credit points of free choice electives are available in each semester of year 4, and the final My Life as a Musician course is undertaken in semester 2. This structure is represented below in Figure 2.

Year 1	Sem 1	Performance or Composition major study	10 CP
		Music Literature	10 CP
		Music Theory	5 CP
		Aural Studies	5 CP
		Ensemble or area specific course	5 CP
		My Life as a Musician 1	5 CP
	Sem 2	Performance or Composition major study	10 CP
		Music Literature	10 CP
		Music Theory	5 CP
		Aural Studies	5 CP
		Ensemble or area specific course	5 CP
		Area specific course	5 CP
Year 2	Sem 1	Performance or Composition major study	10 CP
		My Life as a Musician 2	10 CP
		Music Theory	5 CP
		Aural Studies	5 CP
		Ensemble or area specific course	5 CP

		Listed elective ensemble or course	5 CP
	Sem 2	Performance or Composition major study	10 CP
		Music Literature	10 CP
		Music Theory	5 CP
		Aural Studies	5 CP
		Ensemble or area specific course	5 CP
		Listed elective ensemble or course	5 CP
Year 3	Sem 1	Performance or Composition major study	10 CP
		My Life as a Musician 3	10 CP
		Listed elective ensembles or courses	15 CP
		Free choice elective	5 CP
	Sem 2	Performance or Composition major study	10 CP
		Music Literature	10 CP
		Listed elective ensembles or courses	15 CP
		Free choice elective	5 CP
Year 4	Sem 1	Performance or Composition major study	15 CP
		Listed elective ensembles or courses	10 CP
		Free choice electives	15 CP
	Sem 2	Performance or Composition major study	15 CP
		My Life as a Musician 4	10 CP
		Free choice electives	15 CP

Figure 2. Bachelor of Music program structure 2011

Most students will undertake the new program in this form but it is possible for students to apply for a more intensive engagement with performance after first year; the resulting increase in lesson time and credit points is balanced by a corresponding reduction in listed or free choice elective courses. This option is limited to students who have demonstrated excellence in performance and all other areas of their Conservatorium

studies. Students are also able to choose a less intensive engagement with performance, resulting in reduced lesson times and credit points, enabling them to take more elective courses. Students who fail to achieve nominated standards in performance courses will be directed to undertake this option. There are also program plans specifically designed for students preparing for post-graduate training as schoolteachers and for students in the Musical Theatre strand of the program.

These changes have responded to the recommendations of the review process. The resulting program is more flexible and permits a range of levels of engagement with performance courses; it also includes specific preparation for life as a musician and the opportunity to take a significant number of non-music elective courses without reducing students' abilities to engage with intensive music performance training.

Conclusion

There is little doubt that, as Monkhouse (2010) argues, “curriculum review requires time, energy and, above all, acceptance of the need to review”. Importantly, she goes on to say that “inevitably review connotes change; whether change eventuates is dependent upon those who are charged with enacting it” (p. 24). This was certainly borne out in the experience of the authors. The review process described here occupied a substantial part of the authors' professional lives for the best part of a year and also included the active participation of many colleagues. Notwithstanding its labor-intensive demands, such a process provides the opportunity to place one's practice in a broader context and reflect on the probable outcomes for students whose lives in music may well be substantially different from those of their teachers.

The reforms that are being implemented as a consequence of this review process are being progressively introduced between 2011 and 2014. The effectiveness of changes will be rigorously monitored and evaluated to ensure the reforms achieve their intended results; thus the program will continue to be developed in a continuous cycle of planning, implementation, review and improvement. As a more relevant Bachelor of Music program, it is intended to provide a meaningful and useful education for its students, no matter what their futures hold; to achieve this will require a continuing process of

reflection and review, to ensure that we continue to prepare students for an uncertain future rather than a certain past.

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