Designing a tertiary music institution course to create industry-ready graduates

Woodwind specialist Diana Tolmie has performed in a multitude of musical genres instigated by a Churchill Fellowship and a Queen Elizabeth Trust Award. Consistent session work has included the Queensland Symphony, Philharmonic and Pops Orchestras in addition to the Tasmanian Symphony, Malaysian Philharmonic and Orchestra Victoria. Past membership includes the Australian Youth Orchestra, the Queensland Youth Symphony as well as editor of the *Australian Clarinet and Saxophone Magazine*.

As lecturer of the saxophone, clarinet and bass clarinet at the Queensland Conservatorium at Griffith University and at the University of Queensland, she is also QCGU course convenor for the professional industry preparation strand *My Life As A Musician* and is the founder and conductor of the Queensland Conservatorium Saxophone Orchestra. She led the Queensland Conservatorium Saxophone Orchestra on a 20-day European tour in July, 2012 where they performed to great acclaim at the 16th World Saxophone Congress in Scotland and the International Society of Music Education in Greece.

Chamber music skills are further employed as a member of *Collusion* which has recently recorded Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time*, available on iTunes as *Flashpoint: Masterpieces of Messiaen and Hindemith* [2012].

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While full-time performance employment continues to be a highly desirable aspiration for many musicians within western cultures, its lack of practicality and statistical likelihood in current contexts has recently focussed attention on ‘portfolio careers’ as more feasible professional pathways for music students.

Titled My Life as a Musician (MLaaM), this suite of compulsory courses exposes Queensland Conservatorium Bachelor of Music students to the issues of career survival and sustainability in the economical and technological volatile environment. While the main focus of their degree is refining the ‘product’, namely musical expertise, the overriding goal is to encourage the creative spirit in making well-informed decisions enabling educated predictions of career choices and/or viability of projects.

As the first of its kind to be implemented in an Australian conservatoire, courses such as these have the potential to enhance entrepreneurial abilities in graduates and improving employment outcomes.

**Abstract**

While full-time performance employment continues to be a highly desirable aspiration for many musicians within western cultures, its lack of practicality and statistical likelihood in current contexts has recently focussed attention on ‘portfolio careers’ as more feasible professional pathways for music students.

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**Keywords**

Portfolio career, musician, vocational preparation, course design

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Recent data indicates that the national music sector has a value of approximately $7 billion (MCA 2009). However, economic conditions in 2013 now threaten the otherwise reasonably positive outlook of music activity and appreciation for example, in Queensland (AAC 2011). From state arts funding budget cuts, totalling 12.4 million dollars (Sykes 2012), to the commercial industries global financial crisis recovery, the imperative is for Queensland musicians to act in an increasingly independent and entrepreneurial fashion. As with the rest of Australia, western countries such as the UK, Europe, Canada and the USA are all experiencing similar if not more pronounced examples of the effects on arts enterprise (Bennett 2012).

Student enrolment numbers are expanding. According to the Good university guide, in Queensland alone there are 22 competing tertiary institutions delivering qualifications in music, plus 10 Technical and Further Education institutions (TAFE) offering similar preparatory and industry qualifications (Good University Guide, Retrieved 12 September 2012). Considering that nationally there are over 5000 tertiary music students enrolled (Harvey 2008) the responsibility of institutions to ensure employment outcomes, becomes increasingly apparent.

Conservatoires in Australia have changed since the late nineteenth century from state and private-funded independent institutions to their current status as schools amalgamated with universities as part of the Dawkins reforms in the late 1980’s (Dawkins 1988). The focus on educating students for linear careers such as those found in opera companies and orchestras is being rethought by many. Pressure from host
Universities to produce industry-ready graduates invites exploration of elements that can be incorporated into a tertiary music industry preparation strand to better prepare students for a sustainable career, considering twenty-first century realities for music professionals. This employment reality is often referred to as a ‘portfolio music career’.

The concept of the portfolio musician is nothing new. ‘Surviving’ rather than ‘thriving’ has been the mind-set for many participants in the arts industry where increasingly, income sourced from a multitude of skills either learnt within tertiary institutions or through experience is required. Discussing his report to the Australia Arts Council titled Do you really expect to be paid? (2010) ‘[David] Throsby says the term ‘portfolio career’ may falsely glamorise the trend, but for many artists such a working life is now almost inevitable’ (Sorensen, Retrieved 27 October 2012).

Perceived competitive threats to professional music activities such as globalisation, technology, increase in graduates and shifts in music consumption leads to the question by portfolio career musicians, ‘Who is going to employ me?’ as well as the increasing need to identify as sole trader businesses. Disturbingly, Throsby’s report exposed the lack of business education amongst artists in Australia whereby ‘more than one-third of artists describe their skills only as adequate, and a further 14 percent regard their business skills as inadequate’ (Throsby and Zednick 2010, 59).

Considering the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development prediction in the 2004 Career Guidance Public Policy ‘[A]s enrolments in courses that are not narrowly linked to specific professional qualifications grow, links between
tertiary education and the labour market become more diffused and complex, increasing the need for more sophisticated ways to link graduates to post-graduation employment’ (OECD 2004, 52), a growing opportunity and responsibility prevails for music institutions, nationally and internationally, to ensure vocational education can foster an independent entrepreneurial spirit, grounded in basic business know-how.

In recognition of its intention to provide more comprehensive vocational education (Arts, Education and Law Faculty Group board meeting agenda, 14 October 2010, 7) the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University initiated My Life as a Musician (MLaaM) courses, of which I have had the privilege to design and implement, the first of its kind in Australia.

My Life as a Musician is an industry preparation strand that is delivered as a core subject for one semester of every year of a student’s Bachelor of Music degree in performance, composition and music technology at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University since 2011. It is so titled to reflect the overall purpose: to allow students to maximise their undergraduate degree while discovering broad skills to understand, prepare for and immediately participate in the music industry. Initially influenced by my 26-year experience with the music industry, my Master of Business Administration (MBA) (majoring in Arts Administration) education as well as the consensus of music industry literature, topics taught include networking, financial management, marketing and promotion, grant writing, copyright and intellectual property, a guide to recording, persuasive writing, organisational psychology, and operational management. It is acknowledged that many aspects may assist a portfolio career aside from the
business and entrepreneurial skills required therefore topics include: knowledge of musicians’ health; career identity; professional conduct; effective time management; current affairs and arts policy; leadership and human resource management involving interpersonal and intrapersonal skills development.

The degree design aims to align with what appears to be the four stages of student development throughout the degree namely 1) Concentrated major study focus and career identity development 2) Throsby’s ‘Beginning/starting out’ career phase (Throsby and Zednick 2010, 30) 3) Career goal re-evaluation/realisation and 4) Preparation for life after graduation.

This and the following observations of student attitudes throughout their degree, such as industry awareness, career ambition and planning, are experiential and based upon: previous student reflective journal assessment; observations as an MLaaM lecturer and one-to-one major study teacher; and are affirmed by the research results published in papers such as Shaping the tertiary music curriculum: What can we learn from different contexts? (Burt et al 2007), Prior learning of conservatoire students: A western classical perspective (Carey and Lebler 2008), Curricula and pedagogy for the 21st century (Carey 2008) and the Learning to Perform Research Project conducted by Janet Mills and Rosie Burt (2004 – 2007, Royal College of Music).

As there has not been a course of this kind or magnitude offered in other conservatoria of the calibre of the Queensland Conservatorium globally, there is no prior specific model on which to base the strand design. Yet entrepreneurial tertiary
arts courses have been gaining some attention. Referring to United States, Gary Beckman from the University of South Carolina, claims that ‘Arts entrepreneurship curricula integrated into degree plans exist, although they are seldom replicated elsewhere’ - without disclosing where (Beckman, 2007, 90). In her paper Towards creative entrepreneurship, Kaija Huhtanen outlines the beginnings of research into a similar course via a 10-day intensive program inviting students of four other European universities (Huhtanen 2010). She describes this course’s main objectives to ‘encourage students to widen their professional identity including entrepreneurial attitude and skills’ (Huhtanen 2010, 67) promote new venture philosophy, achieve a starting point for other universities considering entrepreneurship training, to allow educational prototype testing for an industry course and to introduce students to networking (ibid.). To date, no subsequent paper reporting results has been published.

Music industry courses presently offered in Bachelor of Music degrees of a select group of Australian tertiary music institutions (refer to Figure 1) are either as an elective for third and fourth year undergraduate students, a core subject for one semester, or not offered at all (online search accessed January 7 to February 7, 2013). All courses are not available in the first year of the degree. Whether this is owing to a bloated first year curriculum or the concern that the first year delivery is considered not appropriate is yet to be determined. Overall course content and assessment indicates that business basics and tools are taught, however career identity and planning is not.
Ruth Bridgstock’s invaluable doctoral research into undergraduate arts students career identity and attributes suggested ‘There is strong evidence that many emerging creatives may need support to develop an adaptive and realistic career identity based on knowledge of themselves and the world of work, before they engage in advanced disciplinary learning’ (Bridgstock 2011a, 12). In her later publications she affirms that the career identity process is preferably begun at the beginning of the degree in order to relate and engage with all curriculum activities whereas the second half of the degree should be dedicated with industry-specific tools of the trade including networking and employment search (Bridgstock 2011b).
The first year delivery of MLaaM (1020QCM) is therefore regarded as the most crucial. One of the major challenges is understanding and engaging with the students’ attitudes and career ambitions within a compulsory-course learning environment. It must also be acknowledged that the student perception of the course, albeit positive or negative, may have the respective future consequence on the acceptance of the following suite of courses. In 2013 the course will be delivered for the third time. Considering this, and the afore mentioned considerations, this paper’s content will concentrate more so on the rationale, design, assessment and delivery of 1020QCM.

Students’ first year concerns their secondary to tertiary transition, orientation of their music degree, career aspirations and identity, as well as current music industry involvement and awareness. It is evident from past student assignment reflections that while many of the students already teach music part-time, and some are attempting music performance employment, most view the degree as their primary and most relevant career goal, reluctant to envisage themselves as part of the music industry until after graduation. The MLaaM course’s objective during this first semester is to highlight the immediacy of their music industry involvement, to foster self-awareness, forward planning, and to impress that employment search/decision-making activities upon graduation are belated. Lectures encourage and promote the research and acquisition of music industry information to assist career guidance, including a large focus and importance placed on networking and musician’s health.
As the music industry is expansive and involves a variety of career opportunities and cross-disciplines, covering all informational aspects is near impossible. The threat remains that the course can possibly be perceived as a watered down experience, particularly when considering the large class (150 students), the variety of disciplines (music technology, composition, jazz and classical) and short lecture time (12 one-hour lectures with no assigned tutorial). Rather a deeper, richer learning is achieved by in-class and peer-reviewed activities, and self-directed reflective tasks.

Brief five to ten-minute videos of Queensland Conservatorium graduates espousing their active portfolio music careers are presented to the class in conjunction with exercises where the student is encouraged to identify positive career and employment traits incorporating peer-group discussion. Those filmed present their views of the music industry, what it takes to ‘make it’ as well as the processes and time it has taken them to remain active in a volatile economic and technological environment. This allows not only a source of inspiration but also an understanding of what constitutes realistic goal setting and career pathways.

Reflective non-graded tasks act as a form of engaging in self-awareness and development contributing to the career identity process. Reflective questions and exercises from Hallam and Gaunt’s Preparing for success: A practical guide for young musicians (2012) and Dawn Bennett’s Life in the real world: how to make music graduates employable (2012) are appropriate in order to evaluate intrinsic motivation and develop strategies to maximise personal strengths and identify weaknesses for self-review. The first assignment (refer to Figure 2) follows on from these activities.
The second assessment item (refer to Figure 3) consists of a 5-year career plan with the key questions that also subliminally relate to marketing philosophies “Where am I now”, “Where do I want to be” and “How will I get there”. While it can be criticised that students are possibly not of the mindset to be thinking in such a long-term manner, the virtues of such an assignment remain. A planning document such as this allows students not only to qualify their career ambitions, but also to investigate realistic strategies to enable their plans and seek out what opportunities are available while considering other aspects of life influences such as work and leisure time, and family commitments. By understanding the
role that short-term goals perform within long-term planning adds to the relevancy of the assignment.

As David Cutler in his publication *The Savvy Musician* states, ‘The music business is first and foremost about people. Not music. Not money. Not talent. People’ (2010, 138). Indeed, in a lecture regarding ‘Networking’, when the class is asked, ‘What do you think the music industry is about?’ it has yet to produce a response such as Cutler’s and judging by the silence of the lecture theatre after his statement, it does present cause for reflection.

Therefore, for assignment 3, (refer to Figure 3), students are encouraged to find three music professionals following the

![Figure 3. In-depth outline of Assignment 2 1020QCM.](image-url)
same/similar career path related to their aspirations. They are given a good excuse or ideal ‘hook’ to begin networking and engaging in what can potentially be lifelong contacts provided the students consider and exercise the networking principles studied in class. The assignment’s intended learning outcomes include reflection on aspects and opportunities such as career path, career realities, career training, financial and artistic satisfaction and most importantly mentor advice. This endorses realistic experiences encouraging reflection thus following Work Integrated Learning (WIL) principles of, and not exclusive to: knowledge, skills, professional dispositions, professional practice, and WIL assessment which is set/defined in a workplace context (Orrell, Bowden and Cooper 2010).

The first year assessment aims to broadly align with the six goal clusters that teachers might address in the university setting, as identified by Thomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross in their 1993 study, which are:

1. Higher order thinking skills
2. Basic academic skills
3. Discipline-specific knowledge and skills
4. Liberal arts and academic values
5. Work and career development
6. Personal development (Biggs and Tang 2011, 10)
Weighted: 50%
Task description:

Part 1: Reflective task 2 = 500 words:
Identify and interview, using these 5 set questions, 3 music professionals representing the same or similar career path you wish to follow. Document their answers and highlight the similarities and differences in their responses and provide a critical appraisal justifying your conclusions and impressions of their answers. This will need to be in report style using an Introduction, Body and Conclusion and following the standard procedures for citation. You are welcome to include the full responses of your interviewees as an appendix. Interviews may be conducted in person or via email/phone.
The 5 Questions are:
1) Describe your music career path to date?
2) What have been the highlights and lowlights of your career?
3) What do you consider the most important aspects of your tertiary study? (If tertiary study was not undergone – then ask, “What do you consider the most important aspects of your training*?”)
* ‘training’ to include – self-taught, peer learned, mentor assessed and work integrated learning.
4) How do you currently financially and artistically sustain your career?
5) What advice can you give an undergraduate musician in the 21st century?

Part 2: Reflective task = 200 words:
Revisit the Reflective Career Questions in week 1 and, upon consideration of the answers given in Part 1 of this assignment, write a 200-word reflection on how/if your career ambitions have changed, and how/if your 5-year plan has adjusted. Justify your comments. This assessment is designed to allow you to consider your semester course content and how it relates to your career aspirations and planning, allowing for an opportunity for reflection and further amendment to current goals.
A Review style is required whereby an introduction (stating what will be included), body, and conclusion (summarizing your point of view/state and further realizations/recommendations) are necessary. Grammar, referencing and language use play an important role in this assignment. An example will be available on the Learning@Griffith website for perusal.

Note: Be sure that part 2 is informed by part 1.

Criteria & Marking will be on how well you can:
1) Demonstrate your ability to communicate according to the normal conventions with respect to language use, grammar and referencing
2) Demonstrate your understanding of course work
3) Critically evaluate and apply interview content to your reflective task
4) Identify key themes in the interviewees’ responses
5) Appraise the music industry as it relates to your specific field of interest
Applicable to 1,2,3,4,5,6, of the teaching and learning goal clusters as outlined in Biggs & Tang, 2011, p.10.
As evident from past student reflections and assignments, students during this year are becoming proactive performance and teaching employees while growing their connections and networks. Certainty of career direction/s is still forming however student career goals tend to be increasingly based on educated industry awareness and experience. A more practical approach in assessment is taken to highlight the development and assimilation of information acquired in first and second year. ‘Re-usable’ assessment, applicable to students’ employment activities in the present and future, include 100 and 400-word biography composition; poster and flyer design; written programme notes; and a marketing and audience development plan. The element of reflection, is more so embedded within the practical tasks set, designed to support current employment, continue self and economical/environmental awareness while allowing for guided direction towards future possibilities as a portfolio career musician. This course is a 10-credit point subject delivered for 2 hours each week in semester 1 (refer to Figure 5).

Figure 5 Year Two MLaaM 2020QCM Assignment tasks (short description)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Item 1:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write a 100 word short biography, a 400 word long biography and a one page CV AND Write a 200 word Expression of Interest Letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due: online, end week 4</td>
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<td>Weighted: 30%</td>
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<tr>
<th>Assessment Item 2:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design a flyer OR poster for your chosen event AND write 800 words of Programme notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due: online, end week 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weighted: 20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Due: end week 6</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Assessment Item 3:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design and implement a marketing and audience development plan for your proposed business structure and its event based on your completed marketing survey. In addition - draw up a budget that relates to your proposal. Word Count: 2000 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due: End week 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weighted: 50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This third year course assumes that adjustment to Conservatorium life has settled and the course continues to assist transition to employment that will be shortly, if not already, a reality. It is acknowledged that career path ambitions may have shifted from the original first-year vision. Thus, an integrated suite of learning support activities complement assignments that combine revising self-awareness of the students’ place in the music industry while undertaking specific practical tasks to ensure that careers are not only on track but also prepared for.

One MLaaM goal during this third year is to refine skills previously taught throughout the course and assess processes that assist and sustain music industry employment. This is then combined with a practical component encouraging community engagement. Many students will be able to incorporate either their current working arts life or

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**Figure 6 Year Three MLaaM 3020QCM Assignment tasks (short description)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Item 1:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Task description: Submit a 2000 word 5-year Business and Growth Plan justifying market viability, business sustainability including 5-year predicted financial income and expenditure.</td>
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<td>Weighted: 25%</td>
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<tr>
<th>Assessment Item 2:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task description: This assignment is in 6 parts -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1 - For either yourself OR your business venture - construct elements of an Electronic Press Kit (EPK) - biography, photo, tour/gig dates and recommended website links.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part 2 - Formulate an excel file of network contacts for audience development, in addition to a list of radio, newspaper and television presenters as well as venues and promoters. Minimum 50 contacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 3 - Write a 250-word press release for your own event or your preferred business venture – this will be following the processes learnt in class as well as those outlined by Myles-Beeching’s book <em>Beyond Talent</em> pages 185 – 191.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 4 - Draw up your own pre-interview plan based on the in-class example that relates to one event from your preferred business (outlined in Assignment 1) that you are promoting. Include pre-empted questions and your answers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 5 - Design a website sitemap for yourself or your preferred business venture – see pages 129 – 139 of Myles-Beeching as well as in-class and online information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 6 - Write the web copy for the home page and the About Us section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted: 60%</td>
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</table>
entrepreneurial ambitions into their assessment such as a business and growth plan, Electronic Press Kit (EPK), website copy, and grant applications. This course is a 10-credit point subject delivered for 2 hours each week in semester 1 (refer to Figure 6).

The students enrolled in this course are a high percentage of Bachelor of Music (BMus) strand B (Performance) and C (Advanced) with a smaller number enrolled in the Honours programme (MLaaM is an elective for Honours students). Bachelor of Music Technology (MuTech) is a 3-year course and students have subsequently completed their component of MLaaM. At this time of writing, the fourth-year course is in draft formation. The course content and assessment will not be finalised until research data concerning MLaaM subjects has been collated and analysed. It is proposed that assessment will involve ‘in the field’ entrepreneurial investigation and new venture viability and implementation. The course’s goal during this fourth year is to act as a supervised creative incubator, as a large component of the course is self-directed and designed by the student with activities approved and assessed by the course convenor. In addition, a portfolio of updated tasks is to be submitted by the end of the semester for assessment. Once again, many students will be able to incorporate their working arts life into their assessment. This course is a 10-credit point subject delivered for 2 hours each week in semester 2.

Aside from reputable website links, YouTube media, TED talks, visiting artists and guest lecturers, content is drawn from the consensus of literature of American, Australian, British and Canadian origin such as *Marketing Arts and Culture*, 2nd edition (Colbert et al 2001), *The Australian guide to careers in*
music (Hannan 2003), Music Event & Festival Management (O’Hara & Beard, 2006), Copyright, Royalties and Publishing: A Practical Users Guide to Music Industry Copyright (O’Hara & Beard 2006), Establishing a Small Music, Entertainment or Arts Business (O’Hara & Beard 2009), Budgeting & Bookkeeping for Creative People: A guide to accounting for music, arts and entertainment businesses (Beard & O’Hara 2010), Budgeting & Bookkeeping for Creative People: A guide to accounting for music, arts and entertainment businesses (Beard & O’Hara 2010), Arts marketing insights. The dynamics of building and retaining performing arts audiences (Bernstein 2007), Understanding the classical music profession: The past, the present and strategies for the future (Bennett 2008), Beyond talent. Creating a successful career in music (Myles-Beeching 2010), The Savvy Musician (Cutler 2010), Preparing for success: A practical guide for young musicians (Hallam and Gaunt 2012), Life in the real world: How to make music graduates employable (Bennett 2012), Music business 3rd ed. (Simpson and Munro 2012) to name but a few. As the music industry, and the environment within which it operates, is forever evolving, the challenge remains to use recent and relevant texts and information. There is yet one publication that can be used throughout the entire degree.

The aim of the course has not been to dishearten students by promoting a challenging music industry, but rather instil confidence that with planning, self-awareness and basic business tools their career is, if anything, more secure as a portfolio career musician rather than following a linear career path. A common and unprovoked student opinion, after being informed of the statistics of musician employment and earnings, has been opposite to the presumed response of
discouragement - rather increased determination to work hard and 'make it' (2012 1020QCM assignment journal entries).

Although this course has been evolving and improving design and delivery, past student feedback and opinions of previous courses do hold some relevance. While understanding the credibility limitations of Student Evaluation of Courses (SEC) Semester 1, 2012 1020QCM results, the anonymous nature of the open question answers give a somewhat transparent opinion of MLaaM:

The information given was very informative, relevant and engaging. This course addressed topics which <sic> are vital for musicians yet which are not really addressed in any other area making this subject very important in our degree.

I thoroughly enjoyed the fact that all the information given to us could be linked within each lecture, and also with other courses that we are taking. The information was relevant and related to us as musicians of today, and mostly focused on the present and future. This course also gave us basic business skills to consider in our positions as music students with aspiring careers in the music industry. (Item #32 Griffith SEC 1020QCM 2012)

Negative feedback did not concern the course itself but rather the elements of assessment students felt irrelevant to the course ethos and better placed in other areas of the Bachelor of Music curriculum e.g., concert attendance, and Improvisation & Movement workshops.

Despite the lack of comprehensive feedback of the course, formal research has recently begun seeking, amongst other data, opinions of the MLaaM suite from high profile industry arts leaders and advocates, active portfolio career musicians,
tertiary music institution directors, Bachelor of Music major study lecturers as well as MLaaM and non-MLaaM Bachelor of Music undergraduates nationwide.

A course such as MLaaM within the Bachelor of Music degree is new to Australian conservatoria curricula and may take time to for key tertiary music education stakeholders to adopt in their programmes. Thus it is a good reason to scrutinize the current model thoroughly especially within the context of the complex and rapidly changing environments in which professional musicians operate. Further research aims to support the curriculum design, justify/amend the structure and determine the full potential of the course, while inviting opportunities for advanced and innovative education strategies.

Comprehension of the contemporary music industry environment; the human resource that functions within, including those in training; and individuals guiding the future musicians and/or are in key decision making roles, is desirable in order to ensure credible course delivery and sustainability.

A literature review has produced recurrent themes regarding the introduction of arts industry and entrepreneurship courses. For example, of the universities Beckman canvassed, he encountered obstacles regarding course implementation. These include faculty resistance; the disputed acceptance of ‘entrepreneurship’; and mixed student attitudes (Beckman 2007).

Regardless of the acceptance or rejection of MLaaM within current and prospective institutions, questions remain: Are conservatoria accepting too many students for too little employment opportunities? What proportion of students’
musicanship skills can be considered industry-ready upon graduation? With the increasing enrolment, is there a broad spectrum of student capabilities driving a shift in conservatoria education strategies? Therefore is the perceived competition for music employment real or illusionary? Rather, if the research focus became on quality of student rather than quantity – would the statistics reveal a more positive perspective of the music employment industry? Has the increase of graduates entering the music industry served as the basis of and reason for the portfolio musician’s heightened attention? Is there still a place for the nineteenth century conservatorium model? Will conservatoria need to develop an increased online presence to satisfactorily service music students and compete in the global education market? Are conservatoria capable of catering for the education and vocational needs of this amount of students?

Where previous generations’ career pathways may have encountered skills via a ‘learning through experience’ model, the current economy and competitive music industry within which it exists, allow less students this opportunity for the same ‘trial and error’ approach. This then challenges whether a ‘textbook experience’, ‘mentor learning’, ‘work integrated learning’ method or combination of all during the degree is a viable education model.

To assist solving this design quandary, the students’ assignments may potentially reveal answers to: Who are the students’ mentors? Are there creative opportunities that conservatoria are unaware of and should be preparing students for? How active in the music industry are undergraduates and what ramifications does this have on the best practice of delivering such a course as MLaaM? Future
research will also require a longitudinal study of the impact or effect of MLaaM with consideration of the surrounding economical environment. In addition, this research lends itself to the investigation of the likelihood of MLaaM’s transferability to other conservatoria possessing a variety of organisational cultures, curriculum traditions, enrolment numbers and geographical locations.
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