



Drama Australia Feedback for the Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts

The following is a set of edited responses to the questions posed in the ACARA Online Survey. The response was developed following the Drama Australia National Consultation on the Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts with state and territory drama associations in Sydney 6 November 2010.

Further correspondence about this material can be addressed to:

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*1. Please indicate whether your survey is an individual or organisational submission
Organisation

*2. Please indicate which state or territory you are based in:

NSW, VIC, TAS, SA, WA, QLD, ACT.

*3. Please indicate which category of respondent best describes your perspective.

Primary teacher (generalist)

Primary teacher (Arts specialist)

Secondary teacher (generalist)

Secondary teacher (Arts specialist)

School leader

Academic

Arts industry member

Community member

If other, please specify **Teacher Professional Association**

*4. Please indicate which category of respondent best describes your perspective.

National Teacher Professional Association for Drama (Drama Australia)

*5. Please indicate which art form your responses are based on (tick one or more)

Dance

Drama
Media arts
Music
Visual arts
ALL

Section 2.1 Rationale

*6. The Rationale for the *Australian Curriculum: The Arts* clearly expresses the important contribution of the Arts curriculum to students' education.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments

The statement that the arts are 'special' is an adequate way of describing the learning and engagement for arts disciplines. It would be more appropriate to state how the arts make a unique contribution to learning and the way in which learners learn. There is an urgent need to include ideas of passion, joy and fun and play that come from engaging with arts in the rationale which as it stand is bland in nature. The rationale would also be enhanced with a short sentence about the unique learning frames that art provides to develop emotional engagement and understanding in learning contexts.

Drama Australia recommends that some reference what research tells us about arts and education should be included in the rationale. This may then support a statement about the strands and or key concepts that underpin them.

Drama Australia recommends the deletion of the word 'tool' in the rationale and to replace it with pedagogy and practice. A succinct and clear statement about knowing in, through and about the arts is required. Currently it is not clear enough. Aesthetic knowledge means know, understand, the world, cognitive, the rationale should use the strand terminology upfront, embrace the language early, cultural identity missing, big ideas are missing, the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are positioned (currently in an historical frame) should be better. Indigenous cultural practice should replace the word 'heritage'.

Australia is unique in terms of its cultural policy for children and young people as both Federal and state-based policies position young Australians as art makers. There is an opportunity to stake a claim here in terms of what makes the curriculum uniquely Australian. The inclusion of a statement about the recognition of young Australians as cultural producers in their own right would do this. Such a statement could then be supported with how the arts enable young Australians to articulate their cultural understanding and contribute to the culture of their own. Such a statement would then enable a fuller description about role the arts plays in the development of identity to be illuminated. This idea can be reinforced in the arts and industry section.

Section 2.2 The Art Forms

*7. All students should experience and study each of the five art forms from Kindergarten to Year 8.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments

Drama Australia supports the inclusion of five art forms for experience and study as it embraces and equitable approach to learning and engagement across the art forms. The inclusion of five art forms from Kindergarten to Year 8 emphasises the individual importance art form and maintains the integrity of each art form and recognises the importance of the arts to the future. Drama Australia believes that it is vitally important that every child K-8 have the provision to experience and study five art forms. Research shows that a healthy society is one in which arts and cultural activity is prominent therefore equality of provision for arts learning is important for all young Australians.

Section 2.3 Defining the Arts

***8.** The Arts are appropriately framed by the three realms of experience:
personal experience,
our relation to others and the society we experience,
people, places and objects which lie beyond our direct experience. •

Strongly Agree **Agree** Disagree Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments

The definition of ‘aesthetic knowledge’ in the glossary is a better definition than in the main body of the document. Drama Australia recommends that the definition for ‘aesthetic knowledge’ be moved into the body of the document to replace what is currently under this heading.

The questions listed must be engaged with when generating and realising but not only responding. As it stands it reads as if aesthetic knowledge is only engaged through the responding strand. The use of apprehend and comprehend in preceding paragraph is inconsistent with definitions of the strand. Drama Australia is unsure if the listed questions really elaborate aesthetic knowledge. Glossary has a more useful definition and therefore Drama Australia would recommend that questions be removed and used instead to guide writers. It is important to emphasise in the aesthetic knowledge section that the arts skills and practices and histories of each art form- form, skill, history, context which is vital to developing aesthetic knowledge, as Peter Abbs articulates in his text ‘A is for Aesthetic’.

***9.** The definitions of the Art forms provide the basis for curriculum development in:

Dance
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Drama
Strongly Agree Agree **Disagree** Strongly Disagree

Media arts
Strongly Agree **Agree** Disagree Strongly Disagree

Music
Strongly Agree **Agree** Disagree Strongly Disagree

Visual arts

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

10. Additional comments:

Definition of drama is not adequate and falls into the realm of an instrumental definition. Drama shouldn't open with the statement that "Drama is a collaborative performing art... ". It needs to be stronger more inspiring and similar in tone to the definition for dance. Notion of change and persuasion, critical thinking should also be included in the definition. There are omissions about the connection to purpose of the art form to society and why the arts are important in the life of the young Australian. The definition for drama is not evocative enough. It reads more like a personal development course. Drama and theatre continuum is false and in this definition forms and artificial and unnecessary binary. Theatre should be there but not positioned as a western only model to performance. Drama is a performing art with a long history and is present in all cultures through storytelling that communicates history, values and hopes. It draws on all the arts to make works, including theatre, but it is primarily about communication through the body and voice. Engaging with narrative is missing perhaps should read - engages through and with narrative to make sense of the world through symbolic and embodied understanding. Role is missing, including an emphasis on embodied and symbolic would remove cultural specificity of the current definition, how does this definition help understand how drama contributes to aesthetic? Drama has a history of written, spoken texts. The literary socio-critical, historical cultural context and perspective is not strong enough. Overall the five art form definitions need to be written with much more consistently. Some definitions are student centred (Dance), industry centred (Media), and some fall in between.

Section 3. Organisation of the Arts Curriculum

***11.** The three organising strands (3.2): **generating, realising, responding**, provide a robust organisational structure for teaching of the art forms K-8.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments

Drama Australia supports the three strands and in principle the three words selected. Drama Australia understands that they are enacted differently in each art form and are generally useful. Common terminology and shared vocabulary is positive in the supporting the future of consistent and quality arts practice. However the recursive, dynamic nature of the three strands (para 22) needs to be reiterated and stronger. (para 22). The conjoined ring diagram is not helpful and should be removed from the document. The wording below the diagram (see para 22) "The three strands may occur simultaneously..." maybe sufficient to convey this. Table in current form is not in great use to educators, what is important is that the writers find common ground and differentiation; nuances should be present in curriculum. Realizing: Z artificial construct semantically it's not possible for this to work, the survey is evidence of this using realising with an S. This distinction is not appropriate or useful. Drama Australia believes that the words generating, realising and responding could be interpreted as product oriented only and so the processes associated with each should be made more clearly evident. Apprehend and comprehend: apprehending/reflecting issue: the definition that is given is larger than the other strands, 'perspective and realms' to important elaborate this more clearly. A contextual, social cultural focus needs to be embedded in the responding strand. There is a chance that this may get lost if it is not named more directly as it is currently overtly embedded in some state-based drama curriculums.

Section 4. The Arts Learning Area

Please select at least one answer option for this question.

***12.** The development of the Arts curriculum from an integrated approach at K-2, to the study of individual art forms in Years 7 and 8, is logical (4.1).

Strongly Agree **Agree** Disagree Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments

Young Australians in Years K-8 should experience and study all art forms in balance across the three strands – generating, realising and responding. Drama Australia would recommend a strengthening of the notion of the entitlement. The time allocation should be expressed as ‘as a minimum’ or ‘at least’. It is important in K-2 that integration between art form is catered for so that it articulates with the principles of learning in the Early Years Learning Framework.

Please select at least one answer option for this question.

***13.** From Year 9 through to Year 12 it is important that students have the opportunity to specialise in one or more art forms (4.1).

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments

This is current practice in drama in all states and territories so therefore it must be maintained. This continuity and opportunity to study one or more art forms in depth allows students to articulate in the further study (TAFE or university) particularly in courses that require a strong level of engagement, understanding and demonstrable level of theory at entry level.

Please select at least one answer option for this question.

***14.** The description and sequence of Arts learning (section 4.2-4.6) is clear and appropriate in **Kindergarten to Year 2.**

Strongly Agree **Agree** Disagree Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments

It is important in K-2 that integration between art form is catered for so that it articulates with the principles of learning in the Early Years Learning Framework.

Please select at least one answer option for this question.

***15.** The description and sequence of Arts learning (section 4.2-4.6) is clear and appropriate in **Years 3-8.**

Strongly Agree Agree **Disagree** Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments

Years 3-8 banding is too broad. It needs to cover an enormous range of territory cognitively, socially, psychologically, academically and from skill-based perspectives. Drama Australia would recommend a splitting of the band to Years 3-5 and Years 6-8 to accommodate the needs of learners in these years.

Please select at least one answer option for this question.

***16.** The description and sequence of Arts learning (section 4.2-4.6) is clear and appropriate in **Years 9-10**.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments

Year 9 band description is very thin not specific enough ...expectations might be a little high, developmental ability means a revisit of key content anyway. Recursive skills need to be clearer.

Please select at least one answer option for this question.

***17.** The description and sequence of Arts learning (section 4.2-4.6) is clear and appropriate in **Years 11-12**.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments

Several key aspects related to learning in, through and about Drama in the senior years are missing in this description.

“Students learn in, through and about Australian drama and theatre, including indigenous and non-indigenous forms”.

As an opening statement this seems to lack punch and could be expressed implicitly throughout the text. The opening statement needs to express something about the fact that the years of 11-12 are pre-tertiary and therefore important in creating self sufficient and highly skilled dramatic artists/theatre makers that are a culmination/consolidation of their years of drama.

“They explore and critique a range of other significant world movements of theatre”.

This statement would be better placed further down the text when discussing point 48 as it seems more linked there.

“They participate in student devised drama and applied theatre for a range of contexts, theatrical settings and purposes, in numerous representational modes and styles including contemporary innovative and emerging forms”.

This statement is a bit thin. It is attempting to say too much and yet is not explicit enough. If students are to devise their own work in year 11 and possibly 12 they should do it with a knowledgeable and aesthetic understanding of the elements of drama and can manipulate these in a sophisticated way. The term ‘numerous representational modes’ is too obtuse. Students in years 11 and 12 should be able to analyse text, develop characterisation techniques based on major acting theorists (from both Western and non Western schools of thought) and have an understanding of contemporary theatre practice. They should work as a drama ensemble and as co-artists with their teacher operating as director.

“Students develop the practice of acting, exploring and experiencing both empathic and distanced techniques”.

Again this statement is unclear. Mention needs to be made of the highly developed movement and vocal skills (muscle control, focus and concentration, diaphragmatic breathing, projection, articulation) required for performance, the use of improvisation as a characterisation tool, the emotional and analytical skills that are applied simultaneously when in role.

“They gain experience and understanding of forms and styles of representation and performance drawn from Australian and other significant world drama and theatre”.

This is where the understanding and experience of Indigenous forms could come in. It is common placed to capitalise the word Indigenous – is this not the case in this document?

“Students learn directing and design skills, processes and techniques, including advanced process approaches and rehearsal techniques. Students learn devising, playwriting, scripting and dramaturgy; and a range of technical skills etc”.

Drama Australia agrees in principle with the statement above but would like to see the word performance or production included. The document is specific in saying that in years 11 and 12 there is an understanding that performance is part of the curriculum. Concomitant to this point paragraph 47 reads “students learn devising, playwriting, scripting and dramaturgy; and a range of technical skills (including lighting and sound) and production management skills (including administration and budgeting.)”. Drama Australia would suggest that ‘production management skills (including administration and budgeting)’ not support the stated goal of enhancing the aesthetic knowledge of students. Drama Australia suggests that “production management skills (including administration and budgeting.)” be deleted as it probably falls into VET Drama or business and accounting subjects.

The statement in point 48 about cultural role of theatre needs to include references to text/language/script as cultural artefacts that dramatic artists use/understand/theatricalise as part of dramatic practice.

In summation, in the senior years it seems logical that students will develop a deeper appreciation of and more sophisticated ability to critically analyse and evaluate through the viewing of live theatre performances. This aspect of drama informs students' own making as artists and their understanding of the historical, political and cultural contexts in which theatre is made and viewed. In the senior years students continue to devise work as both solo and collaborative artists, and they interrogate written text or script for the purposes of interpretation, re-interpretation and the application of a range of stagecraft elements. They consider pathways into the theatre industry.

Section 4.7 Arts and the Cross Curriculum Priorities

***18.** The broad outline of **cross curriculum priorities** in the Arts is appropriate.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments

This section fails to be futures oriented. The section reads as though it is articulating the current position rather than being forward thinking about how the arts may be used as pedagogy, literacies, cultural pluralism and the opportunity for aesthetic knowledge as way of understanding universal about human experience, imagine other ways of thinking. Representation of other culture too narrow at the moment,

notion of culture looked fixed. In terms of the discussion around arts and sustainability there should be a stronger realisation that the arts have the capacity to enhance our understanding of issues of global sustainability and change views to change the way we operate in the world. Art is an enabler and change agent to imagine a solution to the future challenges and this is not being captured in these paragraphs adequately. Given the Gillard's government productivity agenda there needs to be a stronger futures orientation that outlines how the arts provision the workforce flexible creative thinkers responsive to fast changing work environment. Arts learners engage in complex, often team-based decisions and this value of arts learning should be present. The opening statement "Through the Arts we can explore and re-imagine our whole culture: as it was in the past, as it is now and as we would wish it to be" sounds very monolithic and old-fashioned. Drama Australia suggested that it be rephrased to: "Through the arts we explore re-imagine culture" and that the end of the sentence be removed. Drama Australia also recommends a broadening of the cultures overtly represented in the document. Specifically Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Asian cultures are mentioned but they are not woven throughout the document. Other ethnic groups are not represented in the document.

Section 4.8 Arts and General Capabilities

***19.** The broad outline of **general capabilities** in the Arts is appropriate.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments

To make the general capabilities relevant to arts learning and engagement Drama Australia suggest that examples be provided for each art form to inform writers. Creativity throughout the document is inadequately explored as is design.

Section 5. The Arts Industry and Community

***20.** The Arts industry and community can augment the provision of Arts education provided by schools.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments

Para 84 More emphasis on the reciprocal relationship and partnering is needed. Statements included in Careers in the arts section are underdeveloped. The section needs to state what young Australian's leave year 12 with rather than what schools won't get them ready for. Drama Australia suggests the sentence "It is recognised that this curriculum is unable to provide all the specialised training necessary in those art forms for which long and sustained immersion is necessary, such as music and dance performance, and that the Arts industry will continue to be responsible for much of this kind of training and support" be deleted. Para 85 Drama Australia recommends replacing "intervention in the curriculum" with the notion of enriching and complimenting curriculum otherwise it sounds like arts teachers are not capable of achieving high standards of process and production with learners.

Appendix A: Glossary

21. Please make any comments on the Glossary.

It would be preferential that terms defined in the glossary be part of the main document. For example the definition of 'aesthetic knowledge' in the glossary is a better definition than in the main body of the document. Drama Australia recommends that the definition for 'aesthetic knowledge' be moved into the body of the document to replace what is currently under this heading.

*22. I agree with the overall intention of the Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts paper.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments

The document needs more consistent in the use of language, voices of the academics still very present and variances are too obvious. There are semantics faults with arts/Arts, realms, worlds, contexts and perceptions. There is lack of consistency in the terms used in the document to describe learners. They are variously defined as young Australians, students or artists. Some terms are used for a particular art form but not others e.g. performing Indigenous dance, engage with Indigenous arts, drama safe place and trust – interpreted as OC health and safety, working safely defined as an emotional sense and OC-health and safety, both important and both should be explained at the front of the document. Embedded nature of ideas that appear at back of the document (i.e. Section 4.7 Arts and the Cross Curriculum Priorities; Section 4.8 Arts and General Capabilities; Section 5 The Arts Industry and Community) need to be more up front and woven into the rationale so that they do not appear as ‘add-ons’ but rather as integral to the teaching of and experience in the five art forms.

About Drama Australia

Drama Australia is the peak national body that represents and advocates on behalf of all state and territory drama education associations in Australia. Drama Australia represents drama teachers, academics, applied theatre workers and theatre in education practitioners at national arts and curriculum forums.

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