

SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC

REPORT ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PHASE TWO: Progress Report 2

Recommendation 1	Efforts should be made to make performance assessment criteria more transparent to students and to give them more feedback on how they have performed in relation to the criteria. (Section 4.3)
Action taken by the Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generic Performance Grade Descriptors developed by Conservatorium Learning and Teaching Committee in 2005 to complement Academic Grade Descriptors. • New, more extensive Performance Assessment policy adopted in semester 2, 2005. This policy document contains detailed information on assessment criteria and processes in the performance assessment area. • Both the above documents made available to students on-line through the Conservatorium web site. • Information on performance assessment circulated to students and staff through the Conservatorium Learning and Teaching Newsletter, <i>Common Concerns</i>, which commenced in 2004. • Performance Assessment policy supplemented at the unit level by specific assessment guidelines, circulated to students and instrumental teachers regarding the criteria for teacher assessment marks. • To facilitate open and inclusive feedback, the 2006 Conservatorium Teaching Day (Feb. 22) included a forum on the operation of the new assessment policy. A representative of the Conservatorium Student Association (CSA) was on the discussion panel. • As noted in Progress Report 1, Minor Concert Practice (Performance Workshop) was revised in 2004 with greater transparency and improved student feedback key goals. A minor Performance Workshop website was created in 2005 to facilitate communication with students • Because the new Performance Workshop model is more unit-based, a clearer understanding of assessment criteria is facilitated within individual instrumental areas.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The revised Performance Assessment policy will be reviewed by the Learning and Teaching Committee with submissions invited from the CSA. • Improved feedback from Performance Workshop is an ongoing concern and will be reviewed by the Learning and Teaching Committee. • Further development of Conservatorium Learning and Teaching website to enhance communication of assessment criteria across units. • Development of Unit-based email lists and web pages. These were discussed at 2006 Teaching Day with a view to improving staff/student dialogue in relation to assessment and other learning issues
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The faculty has made considerable progress in this area. Students now have access to clear, specific and detailed information regarding performance assessment and teacher responsibilities re feedback and assessment. Course outline templates include provision for student feedback. Events such as the assessment session at the 2006 Teaching Day and the Conservatorium learning and teaching newsletter have also assisted in promoting ongoing collective discussion of issues surrounding assessment and feedback.

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<p>Recommendation 2</p>	<p>The Conservatorium should explore ways to respond to views expressed by students that there is a need for more live performance opportunities (both formal and informal) and for a more vibrant performance culture generally. It is suggested that discussions should be held with students on this issue, for example in staff:student consultative committees, with a view to exploring ways to achieve a higher level of student satisfaction on this matter. Benchmarking and sharing best practice with national and international institutions on this issue is recommended. (Section 4.4)</p>
<p>Action taken by the Faculty</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The Dean, Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) and other staff consulted in 2004 and 2005 with students and staff with the aim of improving student access to performance opportunities. •As a result, formal and informal performance opportunities for all students and staff have continued to increase through 2005 both at Conservatorium and University venues and in the community. •Since 2005 all undergraduate students and postgraduate performance students have been required to participate in the Conservatorium’s large ensembles. •Timetabling of academic units was significantly revised in 2005 to ensure that all students are able to participate in ensemble rehearsals on two afternoons each week. •Students of all performance levels have the opportunity to participate in concert series dedicated to the Conservatorium’s classical orchestras, wind and jazz bands, choirs, chamber groups and new Early Music ensemble. Since the merger with the former music department in January 2005, students have also been able enrol for credit in choral and instrumental ensembles that are based on the main University campus. •Much of the comment re live performance opportunities relates to students with a minor rather than major performance enrolment. A Forum for undergraduate students on the Minor Experience at the Conservatorium organised by the Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) in 2004. Discussion of performance opportunities was a central part of this forum. •Building on such staff/student discussions, the Conservatorium successfully applied for a TIF grant in 2005. The grant is to develop programs that enhance live performance opportunities in the minor stream, especially in relation to community music programs. •Learning and Teaching Committee surveyed first year students in 2005 concerning student concert culture at Conservatorium. Results presented at 2006 Teaching Day. • The Conservatorium international benchmarking project is currently examining performance opportunities at the Royal Northern College of Music.
<p>Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Due to the merger with the former music department and access to main campus ensembles, the proposed lab orchestra for minors would appear to duplicate existing ensembles and thus has not been implemented. •Across 2006, research and development of new minor performance model will take place using TIF monies. •A large equipment grant secured by Dr Peter Dunbar-Hall enabled the Conservatorium to purchase a gamelan in 2005. This will be made available to students and staff in 2006 for teaching and performance purposes. •Benchmarking and sharing of best practice with peer institutions is to occur as part of major curriculum review in 2006. •Continuing appointment of conductor to oversee orchestral program. •Assessment in Orchestral Studies to be adjusted in 2006 to put more emphasis on the quality of student participation in performance activities. •2006 Special Projects Week will focus on enhancing chamber music activities and student performance opportunities in this area.

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Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The substantially increased performance opportunities for students and staff have been very well received by students and successfully implemented. A survey of students in the major ensemble program, for example, revealed great increase in satisfaction, ranking the SCM program as more rewarding than the Sydney Symphony Sinfonia program, SBS or AYO opportunities.•While the faculty has achieved notable success in expanding orchestral and ensemble performance activities for major students, shrinking funding creates gaps between the ideal and the achievable in some teaching areas. This is general problem for music schools. The TIF grant will assist in developing more creative approaches to this issue and the Conservatorium appreciates the University's support in this matter.•Issues of student and staff workloads in relation to the increased demands associated with changes need to be monitored.
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Recommendation 3	The Conservatorium should carry out an investigation into the practice and effects of the casualisation of staff, including comparing the Conservatorium's approach with benchmarking data collected from comparable institutions in Australia. (Section 4.5).
Action taken by the Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The new Dean has worked proactively to reduce casualisation. At the beginning of 2006, for example, fractional and full-time appointments replaced casual positions in music education, musicology and some instrumental teaching areas. • Forum on <i>Casual Teachers and the Conservatorium</i> at the 2006 Teaching Day. A cross-section of casual teachers presented and a rewarding discussion of issues and strategies in relation to causal teachers ensued. •International benchmarking re casualisation commenced. This revealed higher levels of casualisation and poorer staff/student ratios at the Conservatorium compared with peer institutions in North America (Rice, Michigan, Indiana universities)
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Initial national benchmarking agreements formalized between Griffith University and University of Sydney SCM, with a comparison of staff profiles from five of the Go8 programs.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Casualisation is a continuing issue for the Conservatorium. The recent expansion of fractional appointments in some teaching areas is a positive development and the University's support here is welcome. Casual appointment remains, however, the preferred model in some teaching areas (eg. jazz) This is true internationally as evident in peer institutional reviews.

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<p>Recommendation 4</p>	<p>It is recommended that the Conservatorium give high priority to allocating a senior member of staff (e.g. an Associate Dean (Research)) with the role of co-ordinating the Conservatorium's research activities and managing the postgraduate student cohort. It is recommended that this be done soon and that priority be given to ensuring that there is stronger coordination and support of postgraduate research students, including ensuring the quality of the postgraduate research area currently being refurbished. The Conservatorium may find it helpful to develop a Research Plan and is recommended to set itself targets in terms of improved completion rates. More formalised benchmarking of research activities should also be a priority. (Sections 4.11 and 6)</p>
<p>Action taken by the Faculty</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Appointment of both Associate Dean (Research) and Associate Dean (Graduate Studies). The new Associate Dean (Graduate Studies) has taken on the formalisation of many matters associated with graduate study and implemented new procedures for application, interview/audition, reporting, management of examination of graduate theses, communication with students and provision of infrastructure for graduate students. •A task force was assigned to make recommendations to the Dean for a Research Plan. A very constructive report was produced and will serve as the basis for a long-term research plan. A Research Committee is now advising on implementation. •The Postgraduate Research Area has been refurbished and is functioning well. The feedback from students has been extremely positive.
<p>Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Methods of encouraging and rewarding research activities are under review. This includes the creation of information forums to stimulate applied music research. •A new proposal for a research centre has been put forward for review by the Pro-Vice Chancellor. •Many of the recommendations from the Research Task Force will be implemented during 2006.
<p>Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The initiative of the past eighteen months has contributed significantly to an enhanced profile for research within the Conservatorium. The Task Force Report and Report to CHASS on the RQF evidence the considerable effort made by the Conservatorium in the developing strategies and frameworks in the research area. The Conservatorium anticipates positive results will be forthcoming.

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Recommendation 5	Consideration should be given to making student exchange opportunities available to students enrolled in Music Education degree programs. (Section 7.4)
Action taken by the Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Exchange opportunities investigated but have proved very difficult to organise and very expensive to run. Limited opportunities for student practice teaching experience in Taipei and Hong Kong were made available in 2004 with the support of scholarship monies from the Conservatorium Foundation. This initiative lapsed when these monies were no longer available.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Although there is interest from Asia, at this time we do not have funds or staff available to coordinate such activities.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •There appears to be little advantage to the Conservatorium in pursuing such programs in the near future. Without financial support, students are required to self-fund exchanges and connections are required with institutions in which the teaching is in English. Perhaps this explains why there is currently no student demand for this option.

Recommendation 6	The Conservatorium should review its quality assurance processes for offshore activities to ensure appropriate monitoring and assurance of standards and accountability. (Section 7.6)
Action taken by the Faculty	Nil
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	Reviewing eMusic Institute and blended approaches with distance opportunities.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	tbd

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Recommendation 7	<p>While the Team considered many of the Conservatorium's strategies to engage with the music industry to be excellent, it is also noted comments from students that engagement could beneficially be strengthened, particularly in discipline areas such as composition and musicology. Accordingly it recommends that ways be explored to identify and satisfy any unmet demand in the student body in this respect. Focus groups with students and staff might be helpful. (Section 8)</p>
Action taken by the Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Composition consulted closely with music industry in the design of the new postgraduate Creative Sound Production courses. •Creation of a Modern Music Ensemble has brought in conductors and composers to work with the students and link Conservatorium with the Contemporary Music Network in Australia. •In September 2005 the Conservatorium hosted a national musicology conference attended by over 170 delegates from interstate and overseas. Many Conservatorium undergraduate and postgraduate students and staff attended as conference volunteers, presenters and performers. •A new undergraduate unit of study, Writing Skills for Music Professions, was introduced in 2005 and experts in the fields of music criticism, research, ethnomusicology and music publishing were invited to give seminar presentations. •Early Music Ensemble has forged links with leading performers and scholars working with the students pro bono, lending instruments and liaising with Musicology staff.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Exploring proposal for audio recording degree as well as a two year certificate program. •Conservatorium lecture series in musicology, initiated in 2005, is to be continued in 2006 in the form of a series of public debates that, as in 2005, students will be encouraged to attend. •Several high-profile, international scholars will be giving seminars to undergraduate and postgraduate musicology students in 2006. •In March 2006 a new composition award will be announced. The award is for the promotion of new works by students and/or alumni. It is hoped that this will lead to new partnerships in the music industry.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is evidence of a growing relationship with significant community music providers. Conservatorium activities are regularly surveyed in music newsletters. In 2006, the ABC will record five of our Sensational Sunday programs and the lectures for national broadcast. •The September 2005 conference was an outstanding success. In particular, it gave Conservatorium student volunteers training and experience in conference management, venue and technical assistance and abstract book preparation. •Also at the conference, staff and student presenters were given the opportunity to present their work alongside major national and international scholars. •As a direct result of the conference, several Conservatorium postgraduate students are now in contact with Dr Ian Cross from Cambridge University, who attended the conference as a keynote speaker, and other students at Masters and PhD level have applied to enter the Conservatorium degree programs •Positive student evaluations (USE) of the Writing Skills unit indicate that students in composition, performance and musicology found the unit directly relevant to their goals of gaining performance and teaching positions and that they valued the advice of speakers from the music industry who participated in the unit. •Attendance at the 2005 lecture series by Conservatorium students was low, but many of the postgraduate musicology students in particular had work and family commitments and so this may have been due to scheduling clashes rather than lecture content. Student attendance and engagement will continue to be monitored in 2006. •Appropriate relationships with the music industry, in particular for student composers, need to be further investigated and developed.

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Recommendation 8	Efforts should be made to help improve students' socialisation to the new building. For example, greater clarity is needed in conveying how and where to obtain different types of information; the purpose and location of noticeboards should be more clearly conveyed; and efforts should be made to find ways to stimulate a sense of ownership of the building among students. (Section 4.10)
Action taken by the Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Strengthening of communication and access to facilities for graduate students addressed in 2005. This included creation of two post-graduate noticeboards and liaison with facilities management re equipment provision in post-graduate room. •Socialisation to the building made a key part of revised first year Orientation Day including tours of the building. •New first year mentoring program established in 2005 aims to facilitate first year familiarity with and effective use of building. In this regard, familiarising students with different noticeboards etc. made a specific checkpoint for first year mentors to convey to their mentor groups. Also the use of locks, practice rooms etc •Survey conducted in 2005 to investigate student use of the building for concerts and ways in which the building could be made more central in student's educational/musical life. The survey was conducted among first year students since the habits established then are likely to set later patterns of institutional identification and affiliation.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Development of response in relation to the findings of the just completed concert-going survey. •Development of electronic mentor network through a new TIF grant will provide permanent help point for students in relation to building facilities and use.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Marked improvement in socialisation of graduate students measurable through email communication and personal comments at annual post-graduate reviews. •A comparison between 2005 and 2003 SCEQ results shows improved results in Learning Community and Overall Satisfaction scales. It is likely that the above programs put in place to enhance the building's communication and educational functions have contributed to this improvement.

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Recommendation 9	Formal induction programs should be run for Postgraduate coursework students, especially those commencing their studies in Semester 2. (Sections 4.10 and 9.5)
Action taken by the Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Induction programs under development for implementation in 2006.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Not possible to evaluate at this stage

Recommendation 10	Consideration should be given to finding ways to further extend library opening hours to facilitate students with work commitments. (Section 9)
Action taken by the Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Library hours expanded in Semester 2, 2004, with longer opening hours on four instead of two evenings a week and 9-5 opening on Saturday.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The library is seeking to expand remote access through streaming online catalogue of closed reserved audio resources and eventual delivery of information classes online.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Library users enthusiastically embraced the extension of library hours. For example, Conservatorium library client satisfaction evaluated in December 2004 in the Rodski Report, a bi-annual survey of Australian and New Zealand libraries. The increased hours received a high rating from users. •Comparisons of library use in Semester 2, 2004 and 2005 show a 40% increase across this period. •The improvements in library access may be short-lived. If we are unable to increase funding from University then it is likely we will have to review and perhaps return to older, meaner opening times.

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Recommendation 11	The Conservatorium should continue in its efforts to improve student administration and to ensure a good and responsive client service. Particular areas for attention should be communication and links with University student administration. (Section 9)
Action taken by the Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Administrative staff attended courses through SSDU with a focus on client service. •Administrative and academic staff attended information sessions on main campus on matters relating to Student Administration. •Documentation of systems as part of a business review process to illustrate local and university systems. •Utilising University systems to improve services for staff and students eg. timetable, handbook.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Major database development project underway to improve management of data and have an interface that is more user friendly for Administrative and Academic staff. •Utilising DVC's Guidelines and Procedures for Management of Courses and Fees to implement changes and meet deadlines to ensure relevant approvals are sought in time for course and UOS offerings. •Rationalisation of UOS through curriculum review to simplify course structures and reduce administration involved in maintaining large numbers of UOS. •Further communication and clarification of different functions of administrative areas that deliver 'student administration' to students eg Faculty Administration (Handbook, UOS, Courses), Student Support (Assignments, access to rooms, staff support) and Student Administration (admissions, enrolments, graduation).
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The Faculty continues to work on improving a better service to students within the resource limitations and complex structure of the Conservatorium. •The Faculty continues to work on providing staff with resources required to achieve operational efficiency in managing student administration.

Recommendation 12	Consideration should be given whether improvements can be made that would ensure the smooth transition of staff into management positions. The issue of succession planning and preparation for staff undertaking these positions should be investigated. This might range from basic issues such as the transfer of records to running workshops about roles and expectations and other succession planning issues. (Section 9)
Action taken by the Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification of executive workloads and cessation of practice whereby one person held two administrative roles (eg. Chair and Associate Dean). Recruitment of younger members of staff to some of these roles.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Revision of committee structure to involve a larger pool of colleagues instead of the 16 chairs serving on all committees. This broadening of staff institutional knowledge will enhance the processes of succession planning and better equip staff for the demands of management positions. •Increased encouragement of staff up-skilling through professional development courses. •New faculty members will be expected to undertake some committee work and take on other broader service roles.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The recent appointment of new staff with strengths in a range of areas including administration will allow for the transition of more senior staff into management positions. Some of these transitions have already occurred and more are planned. Much thought has gone into new appointments already made as well as forthcoming ones, and this aspect of staff development has become an important priority for the institution.

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Recommendation 13	The Conservatorium is reminded that Academic Board Resolutions (The Management and Evaluation of Coursework Teaching, Part 4, s. 2 (1)) require faculties to ensure that membership of key faculty committees includes student representatives. (Section 6.7.3)
Action taken by the Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The Conservatorium has ensured that Conservatorium committees make provision for student membership. •Faculty has repeatedly extended requests to the CSA and SUPRA for student representatives on committees.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The Conservatorium is exploring the recruitment of committee members outside of official student organizations such as the CSA and SUPRA.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The faculty can claim only partial success in this area since there is no regularity in graduate or undergraduate student attendance on Conservatorium committees. Discussions are continuing with the CSA. Some of the problem re undergraduate representative may relate to the fourth year status of many recent executive members who were not only completing their final year but also honours programs. Available time was consequently severely limited. This situation seems to have changed in 2006. But, overall, the demands of a music degree and student musical commitments outside of the Conservatorium have long militated against the level of student engagement found in some other areas and faculties in the University. Our efforts are continuing in this area.