

# **ENCOUNTERING THE BOLOGNA MODEL IN AUSTRALIAN MUSIC UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION: AN EXPECTATION PERCEPTION PERSPECTIVE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Since 2008, Australian university music schools have faced significant pressures to rationalize their traditional conservatorium styled operations. In 2012, an Australian university introduced new course structures that generalized undergraduate education overall, adopting the European Bologna Process model. First intake music undergraduates were surveyed within this university to investigate their expectations perceptions of impending study. The survey focused specifically on music units provided under the new academic model. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected. First intake music undergraduates of this Australian 'Bologna Model' report positive 'usefulness' and 'importance' expectations of yet unknown undergraduate music units. Revealed also are insights into the way music undergraduate students commit or not to work during their tertiary study and how this choice may affect their perceptions. Within this paper are presented perspectives of an initial investigation informing this small portion of a larger longitudinal study.

## **KEYWORDS**

Music, undergraduate, expectations, Bologna Model, student perceptions

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Observing how music undergraduate education is developing in Australia in this early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century constitutes the overarching investigation of which this paper forms a small proportion. The investigation is stimulated by global machinations that have seen higher education institutions around the world changing significantly their models and structures, along with the higher education 'products' and 'services' they export. These developments have occurred within a trend of global education commoditization. This paper examines firstly, student expectations perceptions within these developments and how these relate to

their impending music undergraduate education. Specifically, the ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ new undergraduate students expect music units offered at university will be to them, and how these perceptions are informed by what they have received prior to university. Secondly, how these expectation perceptions influence their decision to pursue paid work whilst studying at university. The music course components were devised under the so-called Bologna Model (BM) and were introduced to the University of Western Australia (UWA) School of Music (SoM) in 2012.

The first ever cohort of undergraduate students entering the UWA SoM (2012) under the new model were asked to gauge their perceptions of how useful and important the music units they were about to study would be to them. Of critical interest is the notion that these perceptions would not be influenced by knowledge of the new model, the way the undergraduate degree had been devised, or by how individual music units were structured, presented or delivered within the new degree framework. Consequently, it is assumed in this study that new undergraduate student beliefs and values expectations of ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ in music at university were informed entirely by experiences in music instruction and performance they would have received before university. It is envisaged that this snapshot of music undergraduate education in Australia would be of interest to music and other academics observing comparable adoption of the model not only from within the European Higher Education Area, but also from other parts of the world.

The critical contextual concept underpinning the research is of a higher education model that broadens undergraduate education experience. This is a fundamental philosophical principle behind the Bologna approach. Nonetheless therein lays tension between historical practices of music undergraduate education in Australia usually associated with a narrowing of skill development. This narrowing is considered essential to achieving expertise in mastering a musical instrument, composing music, teaching music and so forth. Through the UWA implementation of the BM with its broadening principle, the interest for this investigation lies in whether music undergraduates’ expectations are affected by the knowledge, if any, they have of degree units they are about to study. It is envisaged that both demonstrated (historical) and unforeseen (generative) experiential dimensions of music undergraduate education will be uncovered. That is, the results of such investigations will offer important evidence for the ongoing music higher education debate. Studying incoming music undergraduate expectations of music units may reveal indicative underlying intentions of a new university experience that inform these perceptions. This would include: the decision to work to sustain music study through these early university years and; the weekly commitment this would involve for those that choose to supplement study through paid work. The approach would enable these emerging experiences to be tracked throughout the three-year period of their study.

## **1.1 Europe and the Bologna Model**

In Europe, the Bologna Process (referred to in this paper as the Bologna Model) revolutionized the tertiary sector, creating what became known in 2010 as the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (Reinalda & Kulesza, 2006). The process was an ambitious attempt to overhaul and standardize higher education institutions in Europe, in particular to establish “*a system of easily readable and comparable degrees*” (p. 9). Over time, European universities had become a collection of disparate structures and models that could not easily accommodate educational intra-transferability, cultural exchange through higher education,

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mobility (of researchers, academics and students) and interchangeability (of programs, degrees, courses), and so forth (Reinalda & Kulesza, 2006). The process, as initiated in 1988 gained its full momentum by the so-called Second Declaration of 1999.

The educational rationale of the Bologna Process is probably best described in the first two points of the World Bank report 2002, despite its direct association with education in developing countries. That is;

1. *“Social and economic progress is achieved principally through the advancement and application of knowledge*
2. *Tertiary education is necessary for the effective creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge and for building technical and professional capacity”* (Reinalda & Kulesza, 2006, p. 78)

The economic rationale behind the process appears inspired by a perception to create a ‘union’ of European universities. Europe needed a strategy capable of competing with the dominance of American institutions attracting the larger student market share of the Asian nations emerging at the time. Best depicted within the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) Council for Trade in Services report, 1998, Reinalda’s and Kulesza’s (2006) interpretations define these as being principally that:

1. *“There are more and more new international activities to support higher national educational services”*

and...

4. *“Increasing international competition takes place at world level, where the US is the market leader of higher education services and other countries are trying to get a larger market share”* (p. 15)

In 2013, participating nations of the Bologna Model within Europe number 45. Since the European implementation it has further embedded educational massification and student-staff mobility on a global scale as a contemporary reality.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### 2.1 The New Undergraduate Education Model and Australia

Declared by the WTO in 1998, higher education as a service export in global trade became a significant focus of interest for national administrations of the time. *“Governments are engaged by investing in higher education, in particular because of a link between education, and economic growth and employment”* (Reinalda & Kulesza, 2006, p. 15). The new look higher education model became a two-cycle structure, the first being undergraduate, the second being graduate. Its purpose is mainly to facilitate expeditious progress towards professionalization of a labour force that should, ideally, continue to subscribe to a prospect of life-long self-directed education (OECD, 2007). In theory, the dissolution of ‘long degree’ specializations (wherein Australia music undergraduate education previously had its higher educational ‘fit’) was one outcome of the process at the undergraduate level. Then, the *“international recognition of the first cycle; a graduate cycle with a shorter master’s degree and longer doctoral degree; and staff and student mobility”* (Reinalda & Kulesza, 2006, p. 19) became the new foci to achieving a harmonized architecture across European higher education institutions.

In the late 1980s the Australian government similarly identified the productive benefits that a majority-educated population would provide the national economy. The so-called Dawkin's Report (1988) presented government, private and higher education institutions with the challenge of investing in the growth that the global knowledge economy promised. One significant outcome of this review was the introduction of higher education fees for both domestic and international students; previously higher education had been entirely state funded. The unique Australian government initiative of this fee implementation was to allow income-contingent student loans to accommodate those that could not afford to pay for their education up front (Go8, 2011). In principle this strategy would allow for the larger proportion of young Australians to pursue a higher education pathway, able to repay the debt once employed. In 2013, the charge for domestic students constitutes 40% of the total cost in the sector, the 'gap' of 60% being supported by the federal government (Australian Government, 2013). Since the late 1980s, the user-pay system has seen a number of full time university students (around an average of 20%) undertake concurrent part time employment whilst studying (e.g. ABS, 2010). There could be several reasons for this, including enhancing a university 'lifestyle' whilst still living at home to supporting study if living independently of family and parents etc. It may be possible that music undergraduates undertaking part time employment are doing so through paid music-related work (to improve performance skills for example). This approach therefore may influence their perceptions of university music units and their 'usefulness' and 'importance'.

With a comparatively small population (circa 22 million) that is spread across a vast continent, Australian universities looked immediately to Asia to capture a large and emergent student resource and to attract full fee-paying students. Overseas recruits were seen as the answer to assisting universities 'fund' the difference between the costs of educating its own domestic market and sustaining its educational infrastructure (Go8, 2012). It was also considered a crucial next step to internationalize Australian university 'brands', making Australian education internationally appealing and competitive (Universities Australia, 2012a, 2012b). Yet the Dawkin's review also started a process in Australia that saw music conservatoria becoming rapidly absorbed into research universities, but mainly for economic reasons (GAP Task Force, 2011; Hoegh-Guldberg & Letts, 2005). Consequently over time, for small but very costly tertiary music schools (based traditionally on staff to student ratios), the music conservatoria in Australia could not justify their operations that were principally reliant upon a very small pool of domestic students.

From the early 1990s into the late-2000s, Australia was punching above its weight internationally for market share of higher education students from its closest Asian nation neighbours (e.g. Clark & Sedgwick, 2005). For example, according to the WTO (in Reinalda & Kulesza, 2006, p. 14), Australia ranked 7<sup>th</sup> out of the top 10 countries in the world exporting higher education services in 1993. By 2000, it was positioned 3<sup>rd</sup> behind the US and the UK respectively (pp. 65-66). Certainly, the strategic move made by the Australian Group of Eight (Go8) universities (the eight most research-intensive universities) to begin introduction of the undergraduate-graduate model from around 2005 proved fruitful. Towards the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, such research universities continued to capitalize on the overseas student market, showing at times considerable growth rates for the sector (Clark & Sedgwick, 2005; Go8, 2011). In fact, over these decades, the export of Australian higher education services has continued to grow at around a yearly average of 14 percent (Olsen, 2012, p. 2). However;

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*“In the recent past...a combination of short-term factors (exchange rates, changes to migration policy and perceptions of negative attitudes to foreigners) and longer term developments (market maturity and growth in international competition) suggests that Australia can no longer rely on continued exponential growth in international enrolments. Revenue from this source will not be able to fund future growth in domestic participation”* (Go8, 2011, p. 5).

As Simons (2010) and Marginson (in Ross, 2012) also suggest, this global market is now in the process of contracting significantly, which is reinforced further by a report from the John Curtin Institute of Public Policy (Phillimore & Koshy, 2010). Olsen (2012) in modeling for the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) estimates that a contraction of the total value of all Australian education exports will have occurred from 2012 and hit a low of around AUD\$14 billion. Further estimates from the IEAA show that this will improve, but slowly. In the meantime, the Go8 further state on behalf of higher education (which accounts for 60% of all Australian education exports combined (Olsen, 2012)):

*“Universities’ deferral of key investment in staff and facilities, and over-reliance on international fees, show that public funding is not sufficient. There is a strong case for more public investment in Australia’s universities in view of the significant public benefits of higher education (labour force participation, skills, knowledge and innovation). In a global knowledge economy, higher education funding is a key investment in the nation”* (Go8, 2011, p. 5).

The spike in higher education as an internationalized and interchangeable commodity has implications for a country such as Australia, which for music undergraduate study becomes a major concern for this current researcher. Consequently, one major shift in the operational mindset of the 21st century Australian university and one that critically concerns music undergraduate education has been the move away from an intensively individualized approach (Cohen, 2007). Australia has largely embraced global higher education trends and moved towards this model that extols broadening the undergraduate experience, its educational application, structural interchangeability, and globalized accessibility (Amirault & Branson, 2006; Woessmann, 2011). Furthermore, in its constructivist paradigm, higher education no longer promotes a teacher-led environment, but one of student motivated and self-directed critical enquiry (e.g. Melbourne, 2013; UWA New Courses, 2013).

For Australian music conservatoria—founded on the very different model of the skill-master/novice-apprentice approach in an intensive teacher-led model—the student-motivated approach has been stridently challenged (e.g. GAP Task Force, 2011). Yet, the specialist music ‘master’ as the critical conduit for expert individualized music instruction still may persist as the primary expectation for music instruction in the minds of new students about to enter the music undergraduate cycle within the new model. This expectation may be inherited from music instruction and performance sources accessed by students of music first beginning music in junior years and then developing, their music skill sets well before reaching university. Thus, the contemporary situation appears to exacerbate an argument of opposing educational purposes at the undergraduate cycle—generalized music versus specialized music (GAP Task Force, 2011).

Based upon the current music undergraduate education situation, it is reasonable to assume that new music undergraduate students will rely in considerable degree upon the beliefs and values they have developed in their pre-university music instruction and performance disciplines to inform their speculative opinions. Subsequently, the ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ they ascribe to music units would be expected to reflect a dichotomous representation of educational expectation. As a result, an assumption is that these expectations would influence the work choices they make whilst pursuing their undergraduate commitments.

## **2.2 The New Model at the University of Western Australia School of Music**

The first Australian university to adopt the two-cycle academic structure was the University of Melbourne (Melbourne). At the time, Melbourne’s new educational model took the form from the American undergraduate–graduate system, which for the most part is similar to the European concept (Assefa & Sedgwick, 2004). The change process commenced at Melbourne in late 2005 (Cohen, 2007; Hoare, 2005). The impact of its radical academic restructure for undergraduate music immediately drew apprehension through expressions of concern and hostility from students and academics alike (e.g. Stokes, 2008). Vocational degrees were not available for specialized undergraduate study at university (Whitzman, 2009; Zou, O'Brien, & Hauenstein, 2007).

The two-cycle structure has been instituted at the UWA in 2012 which adopted and subsequently adapted the Bologna Model (see Reinalda & Kulesza, 2006; UWA New Courses, 2012).

*“The University of Western Australia has recently finished a course review, which proposes cutting 70 specific undergraduate courses to 6 general courses, and offering ‘professional’ degrees such as law and engineering at a graduate level”* (Riley, 2008, p. 6).

Any student considering university entrance at the undergraduate level will choose from one of five generic degrees (Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Design, Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Philosophy [Honours]) (UWA New Courses, 2012). Within these generic degrees a degree-specific major will be taken (e.g. Bachelor of Arts [Music Studies]). In all cases, a student must access units outside of the degree-specific major. As the UWA SoM guidelines for future students states:

*“From 2012, all students will study broadening units as part of their course. This will enable students to perform in a wide range of musical ensembles and/or choirs, regardless of their chosen field of study”* (School of Music UWA, 2012).

For first year study the student can choose either to complement the degree-specific major with other units that broaden the educational experience (such as through Broadening Units as in Table 1), or undertake a Second Major (depicted in Table 2).

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Table 1. Sample Bachelor of Arts music degree-specific major with Broadening Unit

Year 1	Semester 1	MUSC1310 Communication Skills in Music	MUSC1321 Music Language 1	MUSC1341 Practical Music 1	Broadening Unit
	Semester 2	MUSC1350 Popular Music in Global Perspective	MUSC1322 Music Language 2	MUSC1342 Practical Music 2	Broadening Unit

(source: UWA Handbook, 2012)

Table 2. Sample Bachelor of Arts music degree-specific major with Second Major

Year 1	Semester 1	MUSC1310 Communication Skills in Music	MUSC1321 Music Language 1	MUSC1341 Practical Music 1	Second Major
	Semester 2	MUSC1350 Popular Music in Global Perspective	MUSC1322 Music Language 2	MUSC1342 Practical Music 2	Second Major

(source: UWA Handbook, 2012)

According to these tables, the degree units for first year students Bachelor of Arts (Music Studies) 2012 comprise: Semester 1 units, Communication Skills in Music (MUSC1310), Music Language 1 (MUSC1321) and Practical Music 1 (MUSC1341) (Table 1). Semester 2 units: Popular Music in Global Perspective (MUSC1350), Music Language 2 (MUSC1322) and Practical Music 2 (MUSC1342) (Table 2). In the first year the fourth semester-length unit is either the Broadening Unit or the Second Major.

Communication Skills in Music (MUSC1310 Semester 1) and Popular Music in Global Perspective (MUSC1350 Semester 2) are theoretical music units, involving musical analysis and written work. Music Language 1 (MUSC1321 Semester 1) and Music Language 2 (MUSC1322 Semester 2) involve the practical study of aural (musical pitch perception) and harmony (investigation of musical form and structure). Practical Music 1 (MUSC1341 Semester 1) and Practical Music 2 (MUSC1342 Semester 2) both focus upon the physical practicum of music (e.g. playing an instrument, practicing it, performing with it, receiving individual instruction on it). For the Bachelor of Arts (Music Studies), the Second Major is music-related study. For those students not pursuing the Second Major option, the Broadening Unit is a unit of study unrelated to music. In the questionnaire, participants are invited to report concerning their perceptions of both the Second Major and the Broadening Unit even though they may not be immediately encountered in their studies. Electives constitute opportunities for developing further individual preference but these are not available for students in the first year of study. It is also not possible within the scope of this paper to represent every individual option that allows for many discreet permutations, a philosophical premise of the model. Tables 1 and 2 provide an indicative base model representation for the first year only.

### 2.3 Beliefs and Values: ‘Usefulness’ and ‘Importance’ of Music Degree Units

The focus of the current study is how the Australian adoption of the two-cycle European model impacts upon the skill development of music undergraduate students about to embark upon a career of study. For example, grounded theoretical research supports that in order for a young adult to achieve a high degree of musical proficiency (skill), her and his development through long-term participation and engagement in music (e.g. Howe, Davidson, & Sloboda, 1998; Hunt, 2006; McPherson, 2006), hours of sustained and systematic practice (e.g. Amirault & Branson, 2006; Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Romer, 1993; Lehmann & Gruber, 2006), and prolonged periods of specialized music instruction (e.g. Amirault & Branson, 2006; Lehmann & Gruber, 2006) from as early an age as possible is desirable, perhaps necessary. Through this long-term developmental process, a musically competent student aiming to study music at the tertiary level concurrently will have developed: the resolve to do so anyway, and clearly internalized expectations expressed through beliefs and values (attitudes) towards such tertiary study (Ajzen, 1991; Bandura, 1997). Surely such attitudes will derive from musical experiences encountered prior to university (at school, through teachers, in concert performances etc) (Amirault & Branson, 2006; Dweck, 2006; Ericsson, et al., 1993; Feltoovich, Prietula, & Ericsson, 2006). Consequentially, these pre-university music experiences may affect how new students will associate perceptions of ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ of university-level music undergraduate instruction even before having tested them (e.g. Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

### 2.4 The General Undergraduate Degree and Quality Assurance

*“There have also been accusations, especially from the Australian media in recent months, that universities have been trading academic integrity for foreign exchange. As evidence, media reports have pointed out that classes are often oversubscribed and that domestic students are being crowded out”.*

(Clark & Sedgwick, 2005, pp. 5-6.)

In Australian music undergraduate education, ‘quality’ is often argued by critics to be one casualty of the two-cycle, mass-subscription model (e.g. Leban, 2009). It is perceived to erode the time needed for the vocational focus of intensively individualized music instruction, demonstrated through research, as necessary to achieving skill expertise (Ericsson, et al., 1993; Lehmann & Gruber, 2006). As the Global Access Partners (GAP) Task Force Report (2011) argues;

*“Though the institutions have cut programs in order to meet financial constraints, in an endeavour to maintain credible, acceptable standards...their standing continues to decline and eventually, for some, it will not be feasible to continue”* (p. 10)

Yet for music education across the entire spectrum of delivery (from schooling, private studio, tertiary education etc.), leading researchers in the field have for a long time indicated that

*“A major challenge for research.... is to find better and more efficient ways for developing the range of skills required to perform (music) proficiently”* (McPherson, 2011, p.2)

Within the current undergraduate structure, proficiency for a professional career needs to be achieved in three years. The elimination of so-called ‘long degree’ specializations that



were a hallmark of the Australian music undergraduate system have placed Australian music schools under greater pressure specifically regarding the one-to-one teaching model (GAP Task Force, 2011). Therefore, the current paper proposed the following assumption based upon this background information: that music undergraduates will respond negatively to the generalized approach of the new model. This will be communicated through perceptions they associate to the ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ of music units about to be experienced at university. Further, their perceptions will be informed by student pre-university music experiences, both in how they have received their music instruction, and how they have participated in the musical performance or otherwise outward expression of their musical interests. These same perceptions will continue to inform and influence other expectation elements such as through how they perceive they will be working for payment (or not) outside of studies whilst they experience their university life.

### 3. METHOD

The methodology employed in this study was implemented in two steps. Step one involved a questionnaire survey. A pen and paper questionnaire was distributed to first year student participants on the first day of their course. Participation was voluntary and all first year new intake music undergraduates were invited to complete it. The questionnaire was extensive and covered several conceptual parameters. It was constructed in three parts.

- Part 1 questioned participants regarding such areas as: their background in music, pre-university music tuition (e.g. where and how it was acquired, its quality and effectiveness etc.), the importance of music in life, commitment to weekly involvement in music (e.g. through practice, performance, writing etc.), and to perceptions of personal motivation, self-efficacy and locus of control in learning;
- Part 2 asked for information about perceptions such as: how they saw themselves performing academically during their study at university, what quality of course, resources and teaching they were expecting to encounter at university, individual competitive spirit, and perceptions of how useful and important they considered the degree units they were about to undertake at university would be to them (the focus of this paper);
- Part 3 gathered demographic information including perceptions of the type of work they would see themselves doing after university study, from where they received their final high school training, age, gender, live music performance attendance, and if they are currently working whilst studying etc.

Step two involved convening a focus group session approximately five weeks into the first semester. Through a semi-structured interview process, first year participants in this session were asked questions that built upon information received through the questionnaire. The questions provided an opportunity for participants to offer a richer interpretation of their university experience several weeks into the first year.

This paper focuses on one key concept area: the expectations of music units to be studied in the first year of university reflected through perspectives of association that new students ascribe to the ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ of first year music units about to be encountered. These expectations perceptions are of interest for three principle reasons. Firstly, the students have no historical familiarity with these undergraduate music units. Secondly, there is no

known study within Australia investigating such critical expectations perceptions of first-time undergraduates taking music units at university and under the newly introduced academic model. Thirdly, the perceptions provide a deeper interest because they are measured on the cusp of commencement of the first academic year. For this third point, music undergraduates were basing their ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ perceptions of the new degree and the music units they were about to encounter on: a) experiences developed outside and prior to the university context and b) possible association to work they might undertake whilst pursuing their university degree.

Responses were made on two 4-point response scales, one each for ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ which were set against the degree units detailed in 2.1 above. For ‘usefulness’, the scale ranges are from Category 1 (not at all useful) to Category 4 (very useful); for ‘importance’, the response scale ranges are from Category 1 (not at all important) to Category 4 (very important).

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analyses reported in this section of the paper include basic demographic data, percentage distributions, descriptive statistical profiles, and focus group information.

Table 3. Frequency (*f*) and percentage (%) for gender and age first year music cohort UWA 2012

Gender	<i>f</i>	%	Age	<i>f</i>	%
Male	19	40	17–19	43	92
Female	28	60	20–24	1	2
			25–27	2	4
			28–40	1	2
			41–49	0	0
			50+	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 lists the demographic breakdown of the responding participants. The total number of new intake students taking music units for the first time through the SoM under the New Courses UWA for 2012 was 50. Of this total, 47 students completed the questionnaire, a 94% participation rate.

Table 4. Frequency (*f*) and percentage (%): where incoming undergraduates completed high school (2011) (*N*=47)

Country	State	<i>f</i>	%	Location	<i>f</i>	%
Australia	WA	47	100	Perth metropolitan	47	100
Overseas	-	0	0	-	0	0
<b>Totals</b>		<b>47</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>47</b>	<b>100</b>

To provide a contextual picture for UWA SoM undergraduate education, Table 4 shows the pool of music students entering its undergraduate program in 2012, revealing that they were 100% domestic. Importantly, rather than hailing from other Australian states, these students completed their high school education in 2011 entirely from the state of Western Australia, and more precisely, from the metropolitan environs of the state’s capital city, Perth.

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A semi-structured interview was conducted with four participants from the total 2102 new intake music undergraduates ( $N=47$ ) about five weeks into the first semester. The group was considered fairly representative of the cohort, comprising three females and one male. By incorporating their qualitative responses, interpretations of the quantitative data were greatly enhanced. At the outset, one participant suggested an interesting avenue for future observation regarding the largely positive result for the new model.

(Researcher) *“How are you feeling about university so far?”*

*“(I) Find it pretty chilled”* (Participant 2)

*“I’m over the whole independent learning thing...”* (Participant 1)

Looking at the results of the questionnaire study obtained in overview, the responses gained were positive. Overall, new UWA music undergraduates report that each of Semester 1 units Communication Skills in Music (MUSC1310), Music Language 1 (MUSC1321) and Practical Music 1 (MUSC1341), and Semester 2 units Popular Music in Global Perspective (MUSC1350), Music Language 2 (MUSC1322) and Practical Music 2 (MUSC1342) will be useful and important to this first year undergraduate group.

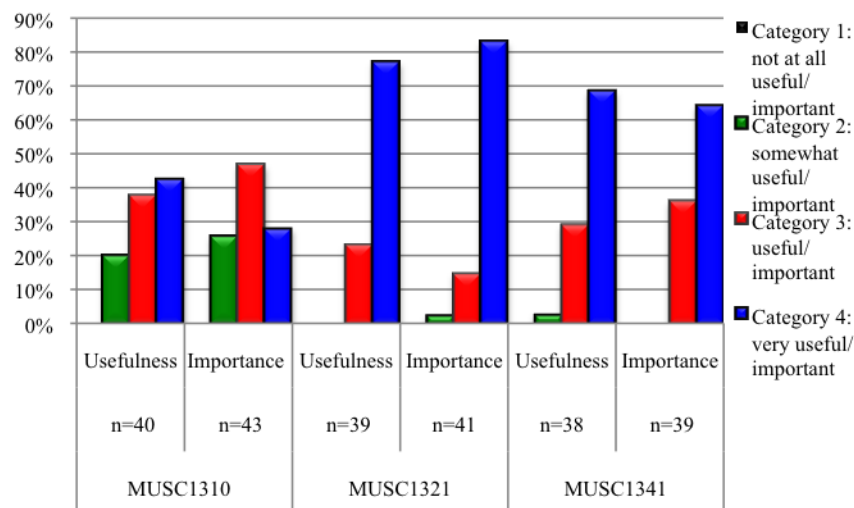


Figure 1. Percentage distributions for Semester 1 units, MUSC1310, MUSC1321, and MUSC1341

Figure 1 shows percentages for ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ distributed across response categories 2 (somewhat useful/important) to 4 (very useful/important) for Communication Skills in Music (MUSC1310) more than for Music Language 1 (MUSC1321) and Practical Music 1 (MUSC1341). The majority of participants perceived that Communication Skills in Music (MUSC1310) would be useful (81%) and important (75%) in their studies. Of these, 43% rated the subject ‘very useful’ and 28% as ‘very important’ (28%) respectively. Music Language 1 (MUSC1321) (practical study of music pitch perception) was more positively rated when compared to the Communication Skills in Music unit. All participants rated this unit would be useful (100%) and 98% as important. More than two thirds of the participants (77%) indicated that this unit would be ‘very useful’, 83% indicating it as ‘very important’. Practical Music 1 (MUSC1341) shows around the same rating as MUSC1321, (overall 97% useful, and 100% important). However, the rating of ‘very useful’ and ‘very important’ was

somewhat lower for this, 68% rated it as ‘very useful’ and 64% as ‘very important’ in their studies. No respondents anticipated that any of the Semester 1 music-specific units would be ‘not at all useful’ or ‘not at all important’ to them.

Table 5. Mean, standard deviation and variance for Semester 1 units, MUSC1310, MUSC1321 and MUSC1341

Degree unit n =	MUSC 1310		MUSC 1321		MUSC 1341	
	Usefulness 40	Importance 43	Usefulness 39	Importance 41	Usefulness 38	Importance 39
mean	3.23	3.02	3.77	3.81	3.66	3.64
standard deviation	0.77	0.74	0.43	0.46	0.53	0.49
variance	0.59	0.55	0.18	0.21	0.29	0.24

The standard deviation and variance scores shown in Table 5 suggest that for the unit Communication Skills in Music (MUSC1310) a greater difference of perception existed from within the group. This result suggests new students’ beliefs and values would appear to associate perceptions of greater ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ for practical-focused music units than for strictly academic ones. From the focus group came an interesting response suggesting some validity in this interpretation of academic as opposed to practical work expectations. For example:

(Researcher) “...even music [performance] can be intensely boring”  
 “yes, it can be” (Participants 1, 2 & 4 together)  
 “But I’m not looking forward to history [MUSC1310]; I’m not very good at writing essays...” (Participant 4)  
 “Really?” (Participants 1, 2 & 3 together)  
 “...I love history” (Participant 1)  
 “...[and] so do I”; (Participant 3)  
 “I find it [music history] interesting, but then you have to do an exam and write lots of essays” (Participant 4)

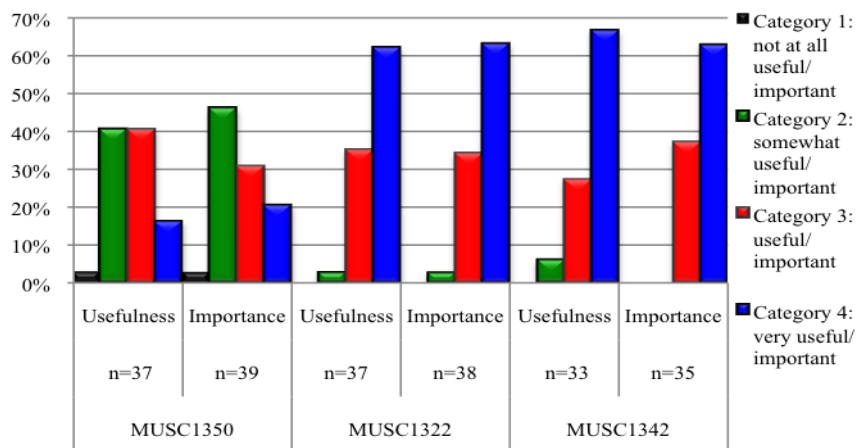


Figure 2. Percentage distributions for Semester 2 units, MUSC1350, MUSC1322, and MUSC1342

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Semester 2 unit results (Figure 2) were similar to Semester 1 unit results (Figure 1). Popular Music in Global Perspective (MUSC1350) showed greater variation of opinion across the categorical measures for the Semester 2 units. Like Semester 1 Communication Skills in Music (MUSC1310), the unit MUSC1350 involves musical analysis and written work only. Of the majority that would find this unit to be useful and important, just 16% rated it ‘very useful’ and 21% ‘very important’. One of the 37 participants rated this unit would be ‘not at all useful’ and ‘not at all important’. Music Language 2 (MUSC1322) follows on in Semester 2 from Music Language 1 (MUSC1321). Respondents considered that Music Language 2 (MUSC1322) would be useful (97%) and important (97%). Of those, 62% consider it would be ‘very useful’ and 63% ‘very important’. Practical Music 2 (MUSC1342) contrasts only slightly to Semester 1, where 94% consider it useful and 100% as important. From this result 67% rated it ‘very useful’ and 63% ‘very important’.

Table 6. Mean, standard deviation and variance for Semester 2 units, MUSC1350, MUSC1322 and MUSC1342

Degree unit	MUSC 1350		MUSC 1322		MUSC 1342	
	Usefulness	Importance	Usefulness	Importance	Usefulness	Importance
n =	37	39	37	38	33	35
mean	2.70	2.69	3.59	3.61	3.61	3.63
standard deviation	0.78	0.83	0.55	0.55	0.61	0.49
variance	0.60	0.69	0.30	0.30	0.37	0.24

There was some increase in the standard deviation and variance scores for all Semester 2 units (Table 6) from their Semester 1 antecedents. When a comparison was made between Communication Skills in Music (MUSC1310) Table 5 and Popular Music in Global Perspective (MUSC1350) Table 6, a common theme appeared. These units involve analytical and written work within their course descriptions and both exhibit greater differences of perceptions than their practical counterparts. Yet for Music Language 2 (MUSC1322) and Practical Music 2 (MUSC1342), there are even slight differences in the degree of ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ the cohort ascribed to these Semester 2 practical units. The focus group revealed a possible reason for the differences of perceptions:

“The units to be studied confused me” (Participant 2)

“Yeah, I didn’t understand where one [music] stopped and the other [music] started” (Participant 3).

This feedback from the focus group suggests two possible interpretations: firstly, that new students lack understanding of the units to create a link from one unit to another; secondly, that the course structure itself does not evoke a sense of interconnectedness.

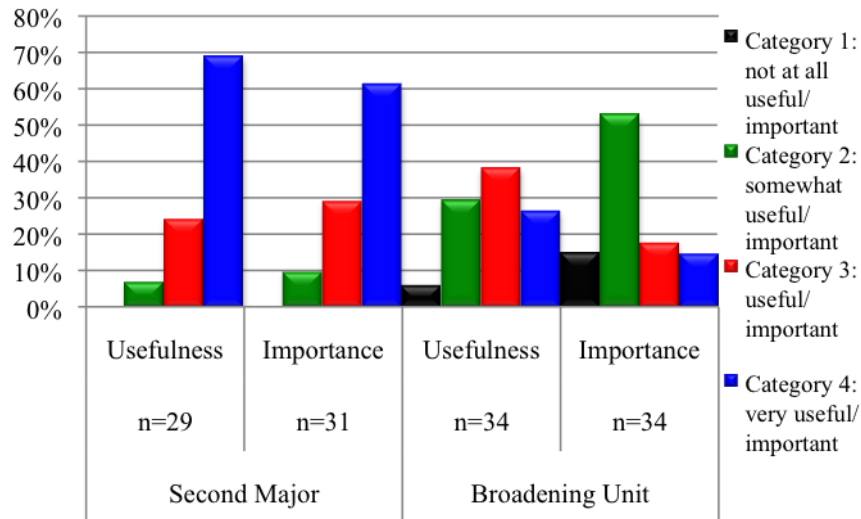


Figure 3. Frequency distributions for Semester 1 and 2 units, Second Major and Broadening Unit

Figure 3 shows participant perceptions of the Second Major and Broadening Unit. Generally participants found the Second Major would be useful (93%) and important (90%). From this overall result, 69% rated it would be ‘very useful’ and 61% as ‘very important’ to their studies. This can be explained by the fact that for the BA (Music Studies), the Second Major is music related. This was reflected by the focus group:

(Researcher) *“The reaction to the Second Major was less mixed than the Broadening Unit—why would this be any different?”*

*“My second major is music”* (Participant 4)

*“Yes, so is mine”* (Participants 1 and 3 together)

*“My second major is Italian...[pointing] you’re doing music/music, you’re doing music/music, you’re doing music/music and I’m doing music/Italian”* (Participant 2)

This information from the focus group suggests that, despite the principle of the BM broadening the undergraduate education experience, music undergraduates at UWA tend not to use the Second Major to broaden skills that are not related to music.

This result seems to further explain why perceptions are more mixed for the Broadening Unit (Figure 3), where just 26% reported the unit would be ‘very useful’ and only 15% reported the unit would be ‘very important’. Additionally, some participants perceived that the Broadening Unit would be ‘not at all useful’ (6%) and ‘not at all important’ (15%) in their studies. Overall, the Broadening Unit results report that 64% perceive that it will be useful and 31% important.

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Table 7. Mean, standard deviation and variance for Semester 1 and 2 units, Second Major and Broadening Unit

Degree unit	Second Major		Broadening Unit	
	Usefulness	Importance	Usefulness	Importance
n =	40	43	39	41
mean	3.62	3.52	2.85	2.32
standard deviation	0.62	0.68	0.89	0.91
variance	0.39	0.46	0.79	0.83

The Broadening Unit results (Table 7) show also higher standard deviation and variance in responses from amongst the cohort compared with other units. These results suggest that as music degree units move towards the more practically focused, greater responses for ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ was reported for them (Music Language 1 [MUSC1321], Music Language 2 [MUSC1322], Practical Music 1 [MUSC1341] and Practical Music 2 [MUSC1342]). Implicit in Figure 1 (p.8) was less conviction in responses for the more academic unit (Communication Skills in Music [MUSC1310]). This increased when the undergraduates were asked to prospectively gauge ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ to its Semester 2 successor, Popular Music in Global Perspective [MUSC1350], Figure 2 (p.9). Furthermore, the disparity of results for how useful and important the Second Major and the Broadening Unit would be (Figure 3) might be explained as follows: students deferentially believed that by virtue of it being university-level, the Broadening Unit as a ‘natural consequence’ of tertiary level education, then it would be useful to them (38%). Even when there was noticeable hesitation of outright positive support, the Broadening Unit appeared to be given the benefit of doubt and considered ‘somewhat important’ (53%). The rationale in interpreting this result parallels with previous research (e.g. Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) in that individuals will ascribe a value on a pre-existing belief even if the belief has been acquired non-experientially. The Broadening Unit was a structural change in the UWA undergraduate curriculum reflecting the Bologna Process model implementation directly (UWA New Courses, 2012). The focus group responses provided some further insights:

(Researcher): “The reaction to the Broadening Unit was mixed in terms of how people thought it would be useful and important to them—why would this be the case?”

“The Broadening Unit I don’t put much effort into. I go to it to have a slight break. My Broadening Unit is Japanese, but I really don’t put that much into it. But even when I am in my Broadening Unit, I find myself talking to other students about Japan’s music, music in general. It’s a sort of constant really. For me it’s the most important thing. Even though I think things outside of music are just as important...I’m doing it because I intend to go overseas to Japan. My grandfather is Japanese, and I’m interested in Japan’s culture and music. I’m interested in the entire culture overall” (Participant 1)

“I’m actually doing a Broadening Unit in Italian to help me with my music” (Participants 1, 2 & 3 together), “yes, so am I” (Participant 4)

One universal explanation for these undergraduate perceptions of the music units and the course in general may derive from beliefs and values they have developed prior to university which would align with previous research (e.g. Howe, et al., 1998; McPherson, 2006). This assumption is predicated upon demonstrated evidence regarding the development of expertise and expert performance (Ericsson, et al., 1993). In the first year, the construct of the Bachelor

of Arts (Music Studies) at UWA requires music undergraduates to follow a practical-focused pathway (UWA New Courses, 2012). The assumption against the results also aligns with the literature concerning expectations, ability beliefs and values (e.g. Wigfield & Eccles, 2000; Zimmerman, 2006). The observation should become more interesting as the study tracks the cohort across the next three years. Changes of perceptions through familiarity with the university environment, the degree, and the academic model are anticipated. Currently, perceptions of ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ may be at high expectancy levels. This is because the specialization of their music discipline usually takes a number of years (circa 10) in order to achieve an acceptable proficiency level (Amirault & Branson, 2006; Ericsson, et al., 1993; Lehmann & Gruber, 2006). It may become more apparent that not all students will share this view over time.

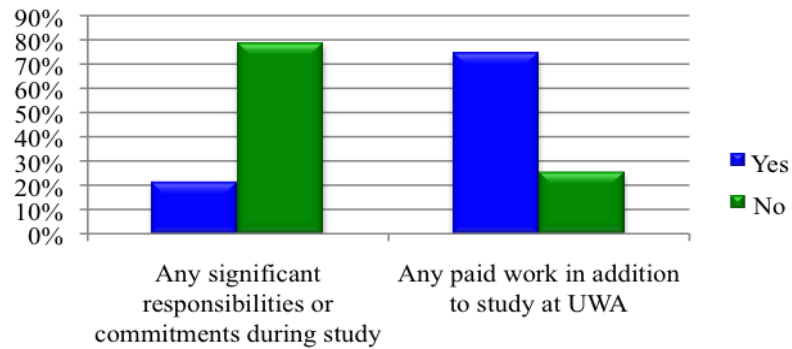


Figure 4. Frequency (%) distributions for Commitments Outside University Study ( $N=47$ )

Figure 4 shows the percentage of this first cohort of students that have a) responsibilities outside of study that might impact their tertiary commitments (such as caring for an elderly grandparent) 21%, and b) paid work outside of university while they pursue their tertiary studies (74%). The latter statistic is worth noting for the national ‘norm’ of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) suggests that around 20% of all full time enrolled tertiary level students in Australia are participating in work outside of their studies to support, enhance or otherwise assist them in this pursuit (ABS, 2010). As can be seen in Figure 4, the statistic for music undergraduates (74%) is substantially higher than the national benchmark. Why this is of interest to this research relates to two possibilities. Firstly, that paid work undertaken has a direct relationship to music (and therefore musical skill development). Secondly, that paid work has no direct relationship to music (and therefore linked to subsistence in the absence of music-related employment). For those undertaking music-related work, this result would then imply a relationship of ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ as students are experiencing undergraduate study, in expectation of ‘picking up’ music-related work.



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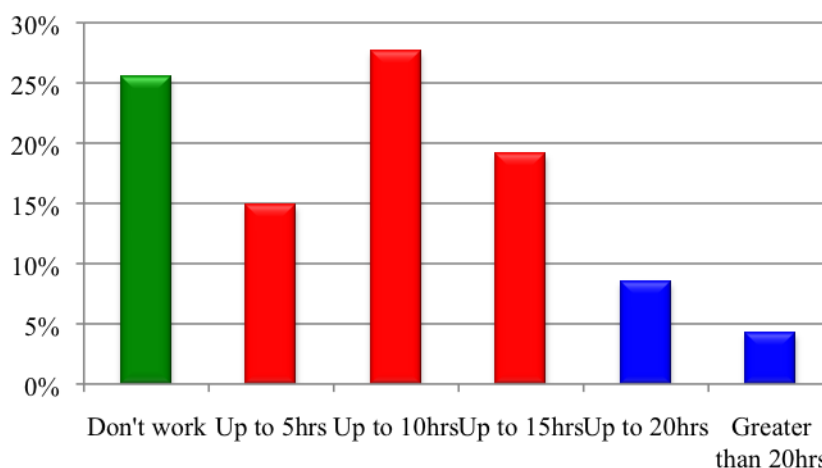


Figure 5. Paid hours worked per week whilst studying (N=47)

How the ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ of music undergraduate study will measure up to expectations may well be linked to the day-to-day lifestyle of the music undergraduate student. This would apply to their management of the anticipated experience, and possibly contingent on living at home or independently. Figure 5 shows that of the 74% that work, 62% (highlighted red) do so from between 5-15 hours per week. The remainder highlighted in blue, work more than 15 hours per week. Why this result is of interest is contextualized through grounded research (e.g. Amirault & Branson, 2006; Ericsson, et al., 1993; Lehmann & Gruber, 2006). That research revealed that around 3 hours per day (21 hours per week) is required in consistent and deliberate application to a musical instrument (or other specifically musical specialization) for achieving mastery of skill expertise (particularly in music performance). Factoring university expectations for effective undergraduate study (nationally averaged males and females [17-24 years] to around 30 hours per week) (ABS, 2010), deliberate music practice (minimum 21 hours per week) (e.g. Amirault & Branson, 2006), and paid work (the national average being 16 hours weekly (ABS, 2010)), accounts for around 40% of total available weekly hours (168). According to the ABS (2008), “*contracted time includes paid work and regular education. Activities within this category have explicit contracts which control the periods of time in which they are performed*” (Explanatory Notes). An initial assumption made in this paper is that the expectation of working during music study will have some necessary connection to working in music-related employment. Thus, the new music undergraduate student will likely be predicting ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ towards units that will enhance their prowess in music [performance] to achieve this end.

This assumption was tested in the focus group session:

(Researcher): “*Are any of you doing work that is exclusively music-related?*”

“*I’m singing at [church], and I get [a stipend] a year*” (Participant 4)

“*I work [mainly] at [supermarket], and also teach really young kids music and aural*” (Participant 1)

*“I’m an usher at a theatre. I love it because I get paid to go see stuff I love to see anyway—no matter what’s on, I learn something from it”* (Participant 3)

*“I answer phones 20 hours a week. The hours are really flexible”* (Participant 2)

The suggested link between current study, preferred employment type and ultimate work choice based directly in music was further tested and appears at this point not to be so clear-cut:

(Researcher): *“Do you think that most music students here are working and studying...and are working in music-specific jobs?”*

*“I think they would like to be doing music-related work but that there isn’t enough. I’ve sung at a few weddings, but you can’t make a living out of it”* (Participant 3)

*“People playing the oboe or the tuba just won’t get any work anywhere, there’s just no demand for that—even [a lecturer], one of the best [instrumentalists] in Australia went and busked outside the station, and only earned \$8 in an hour, and 500 people must have passed him by”* (Participant 4).

## 5. CONCLUSION

Empirical and qualitative evidence from new intake music undergraduates to the UWA in 2012 was gathered concerning: a) expectations perceptions regarding the ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ university music units would provide having not yet experienced them and effects upon their expectations of university level music study and b) any anticipated expectation of work commitments to support or otherwise enhance this tertiary study. The investigation has found firstly, new music undergraduates to university study at the UWA do not express negative preconceived opinions regarding the ‘usefulness’ and ‘importance’ the undergraduate music units they are about to undertake will be to them. On the whole, new undergraduates’ responses are largely positive. It is anticipated that as they become more familiar with the university environment, the degree, and the academic model, this perception will change to reflect a more balanced view of the undergraduate music units. It is also apparent that these perceptions are based upon experiences they have accumulated before university. Secondly, those new student expectations of work prospects during study reveal a preference for music-related employment, but a reality that negates an entirely comprehensive focus in this respect.

The results from this study provide a research pathway for the ongoing observations of this and future student cohorts. Further, the investigation may help to establish if the new university model for music undergraduate education as it stands can provide for the continuing operations of the music school, for the expectations of future students and their expectations of, say, employment. It has some potential value for providing input to undergraduate curricular structures that may operate within music under the new academic model insofar as effectiveness and quality outcomes might be concerned. The study offers an opportunity for further research not only for the continuing investigation of this and subsequent cohorts of new undergraduates in music at UWA. It also enables deeper investigation through empirical observation of curriculum development, application, relevance, quality and effectiveness based upon student expectations and feedback. Over the duration of the study, such results will become a useful resource for other institutions both within Australia and overseas contemplating the implementation of a similar academic model. It would be of particular interest to higher education music schools internationally that may be challenged in their current operations by the global nature of mass education.

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