

Evaluation of Years 1 to 10 The Arts Curriculum Development Project

Report 1

Prepared for the Queensland School Curriculum Council by



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Executive summary

This report is concerned with the trial version of the draft Years 1 to 10 syllabus in The Arts for Queensland Schools. It forms part of the external evaluation of the Years 1 to 10 The Arts Curriculum Development Project. The purpose of the curriculum development project is to design, develop and disseminate a Years 1 to 10 syllabus, sourcebooks and initial in-service materials in The Arts for use in Queensland schools. The Arts comprise Dance, Drama, Media, Music and Visual Arts.

The evaluation reported on in this document occurred during the trial phase of the curriculum development process, and was focused on the following questions:

- To what extent does the trial version of the draft syllabus reflect current and emerging views of education in The Arts?
- To what extent does the trial version of the draft syllabus match the needs of all students, teachers and school administrators as expressed in the range of classroom and school contexts in the trial schools?
- What improvements can be made to the intent and content of the trial version of the draft syllabus?

Two approaches were used: an external review and a set of interviews with personnel in the trial schools. The external review drew upon the opinions of five reviewers with particular expertise in the five art forms. The interviews drew upon the experiences of teachers and administrators in the 12 trial schools.

Our conclusions are that:

1. The project design brief, which provides the basis for the syllabus, is thorough, comprehensive and well grounded in current literature and practice.
2. The trial version of the draft syllabus is consistent to a high level with the design features presented in the project design brief and translates the key ideas and aims of the design brief very well.
3. The organisation of the syllabus into the five strands has maintained authenticity in the five art forms but may lead to compartmentalisation in the curriculum.
4. The trial version of the syllabus appears to provide a workable compromise in the Music strand between conflicting views of the nature of music and music education.
5. The trial version of the draft syllabus is highly rated by the trial teachers as a basis for a curriculum in The Arts.
6. The trial version of the draft syllabus is a teacher-friendly document reflecting current thinking in arts education.
7. The trial version of the draft syllabus provides a good basis for future development as a document that teachers will be able to use and work with.
8. A consistent terminology for The Arts needs to be defined and explained.
9. The Rationale of the trial syllabus needs to be as concise as possible without compromising its comprehensiveness and integrity.
10. Teachers want the Assessment section of the syllabus to provide clear practical guidance.
11. The core learning outcomes in their current form have the potential to be practicable for teachers and suitable for a wide range of students.
12. Unless the wording of the core learning outcomes is considerably simplified, many teachers will need guidance and support in order to interpret them accurately and use them effectively.

The following list of directions for improvement are submitted for consideration by the project team:

1. Stronger connections between the art forms without compromising the development of basic skills in music.
2. Links between core learning outcomes in The Arts and those in other key learning areas.
3. Consistent definition and use of terms across the five art forms.
4. Evident continuity across the levels in the core learning outcomes.
5. Level statements and core learning outcomes framed in terms that are readily understood by teachers of students at those levels. Ideally, students should be able to understand the level statements and core learning outcomes at the level they are working towards.
6. A Rationale that is as concise as possible without compromising the basic message.
7. Ready accessibility of all sections of the Years 1 to 10 syllabus to non-specialist teachers at the appropriate levels.
8. Specific guidance of a practical nature associated with the Assessment section.

In evaluating the trial version of the syllabus, two important factors were considered:

- It is a document that is expected to undergo continuous modification as the development process continues through the pilot phase.
- It is not expected to stand alone but will be accompanied by the sourcebooks and an in-service package.

The trial version of the syllabus has been judged quite favourably. As expected, there are many ways in which improvements can be made, but the syllabus is soundly based on a thorough project design brief and it promises to develop into the foundation for valuable learning experiences for students in the compulsory years of schooling.

The impact of the syllabus can be expected to accumulate over a period of several years as teachers become increasingly expert in its implementation and students build upon their learning as they progress through the levels.

The curriculum defined by the syllabus has the potential to establish an identity and status for The Arts as a key learning area within the Queensland curriculum for schools.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purposes of the evaluation

The purpose of the external evaluation of the Years 1 to 10 The Arts KLA (Key Learning Area) Curriculum Development Project is to provide advice on:

- The appropriateness of the Years 1 to 10 The Arts KLA syllabus, sourcebook and initial in-service materials in meeting the needs of students, teachers and school administrators
- The effectiveness of the Years 1 to 10 The Arts KLA syllabus, sourcebook and initial in-service materials in schools
- The efficiency of use of the Years 1 to 10 The Arts KLA syllabus, sourcebook and initial in-service materials.

Report One (the present report) is concerned with the draft syllabus as used in the trial phase of the development project.

1.2 The 1 to 10 The Arts Key Learning Area Curriculum Development Project

The purpose of the Years 1 to 10 The Arts Curriculum Development Project is to design, develop and disseminate Years 1 to 10 syllabus, sourcebooks and initial in-service materials in The Arts for use in Queensland schools. The Arts comprise Dance, Drama, Media, Music and Visual Arts.

The Project commenced in January 1998 and is expected to be completed by December 2000, when a complete set of curriculum materials will be available for implementation in schools.

The evaluation focuses mainly on the trial and pilot of the draft-in-development curriculum materials in schools nominated by Education Queensland, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland Inc.

1.3 Evaluation focus

In fulfilling the purposes of this phase of the evaluation, the following focus questions were considered:

- To what extent does the trial version of the draft syllabus reflect current and emerging views of education in The Arts?
- To what extent does the trial version of the draft syllabus match the needs of all students, teachers and school administrators as expressed in the range of classroom and school contexts in the trial schools?
- What improvements can be made to the intent and content of the trial version of the draft syllabus?

1.4 Evaluation approach

Two approaches were used in this phase of the evaluation: an external review and a set of interviews with personnel in the trial schools.

For the external review, members of the evaluation team prepared critiques of the draft syllabus drawing on their respective areas of expertise, experience and interest. These critiques were synthesised and summarised in later sections of this report.

The interviews were conducted by telephone with personnel in each of the trial schools. The interviews followed a set sequence of questions. Interviewees received the questions in advance of the interview, allowing time for them to discuss the questions with their colleagues in the trial schools. Summaries of all interview responses (without identification of the interviewees) were supplied to the curriculum development project team.

2. The draft syllabus and current views of education in The Arts

To what extent does the trial version of the draft syllabus reflect current and emerging views of education in The Arts?

2.1 External review

The writers of the *Years 1 to 10 The Arts Curriculum Development Project Design Brief* are to be commended on the thoroughness of the environmental scan, which provided the basis for that document. The scan draws successfully on current research in The Arts. The comparative survey of interstate and international curriculum documents focuses on trends, goals and directions rather than the detail of individual structures, providing an up-to-date framework for the design brief. The implications for the curriculum development project are made clear (pp. 32–33, 34 and 37) and justify the choice of the key organisers. The use of consultative groups and fax feedback added to the thoroughness of the scan. Particular points noted in the responses from the discussion groups, fax responses and public submissions were addressed in the design brief and the draft syllabus.

The project design brief articulates, in a very contemporary and clear way, advocacy for The Arts as a key learning area. It covers the role that the arts play in our lives and in society, the purpose of learning in The Arts and what is gained from learning in The Arts. The content of the Background section could easily be used or quoted to parents, students or school administration staff in explaining the role or justifying the inclusion of The Arts in a school's curriculum.

The evaluators generally agree that the trial version of the syllabus embodies all of the components required by the design brief (p. 12) and translates the key ideas and aims of the design brief very well.

The Rationale in the trial syllabus is a clearly written and motivating document on the importance of The Arts in the curriculum. It refers to the economic significance of the arts as well as the preparation of students for the world of work, leisure and everyday life. Many educators welcome the five art forms into the Years 1 to 10 curriculum for Queensland, especially considering the emphasis placed on English and Mathematics in recent years. The Rationale deals comprehensively with the contribution of The Arts to lifelong learning and relates The Arts to both cross-curricular priorities and understandings about learners and learning.

The five art forms provide language-rich opportunities to students for developing a language of their own for making and communicating meaning. Many students become vitally engaged and enthusiastic about their involvement in the arts, so the opportunities for using language are powerful multipliers of language competence.

Nonetheless, learning in The Arts has the purpose of exploring communication and meaning modes, and arts literacy is competence in the arts languages of dance, drama, media, music, visual arts, and multi-arts combinations.

The trial syllabus outlines the knowledge and skills to be developed, as described in the design brief and identified during the environmental scan. Cross-curricular activities clearly describe how study in The Arts contributes to literacy, numeracy, life skills and a futures perspective. Both integration of arts areas and specialisation in an art area are addressed in the syllabus.

The learning outcomes in the trial version of the syllabus are organised in terms of *Engagement* and *Reflection*, as specified in the design brief. While these two processes can be separated on paper, in practice they should both occur within any given learning sequence. We are aware that in the pilot version of the syllabus, a strategy may be adopted for this organisation to become implicit. We believe that this strategy should be successful in retaining the strength of the organisation while simplifying the layout of the document itself.

Drama can be seen to have at least four complementary and overlapping purposes: to entertain, to inform, to express and to change. In the core content for Drama there is no mention of its potential to change. This change can be emotional or physical. Drama is a potent agent for change through the ways it draws forth identification and its capacity to elicit emotional and intellectual responses in audiences (and actors).

The planned Media strand project has the potential to be cutting edge work in its field. Some improvements in detail are needed however. For example, in the design brief, the Media strand is introduced as encompassing 'the construction and deconstruction of real and imagined mediated experiences'. This statement seems overloaded. In particular, the use of the term 'deconstruction' might be confusing – in some media theory and teaching there has been a view that almost everything in the media has to be deconstructed in the sense of showing its unsuspected ideological manipulations and 'inoculating' students against them. This does not sound like the underlying thesis of the design brief, so a term like 'analysis' may be clearer to non-specialist readers.

The initial description of media in the trial version of the draft syllabus states that the strand focuses on the ways in which 'reality is constructed by media institutions' (p. 14). The claim that the media 'construct reality' has been a problematic way of saying that media practices represent their objects by using material techniques that have effects on what is represented and on people's ways of understanding reality. But it is unclear what it means to say that 'media *institutions* construct reality'. Also, this statement puts institutions first, whereas the trial syllabus focuses first on the media forms and then, progressively, on their contexts, with some reference to institutions. An alternative approach would be to say that:

- The Media strand focuses on the ways in which meaning is communicated in various media forms, through a range of techniques and technologies, for various audiences, and explores the influences affecting media institutions and the ways in which media products and practices help to shape cultural life.
- For the visual arts, the syllabus is up to date with trends in educational thought, especially in terms of its placement in a connected way with the other art forms. The project design brief emphasises inclusivity and diversity in learning styles. The design brief is structured generically rather than by the art forms. This emphasis and structure encourage and allow the learning environment to retain lateral thinking spaces rather than specific or singular thinking spaces. Such a development should enhance the teachers' and students' development of

conceptual and analytic processes. A focus on developing curriculum with a generic, holistic approach will allow and support the learner to make connections among the boxed or artificially divided ways of seeing, acting and thinking in the dominant culture and social system. Nonetheless, the style of the draft syllabus does not display the same emphasis on inclusivity and diversity in learning styles and it is structured around the five art forms. Therefore it risks compartmentalisation in the curriculum.

From another perspective, however, some experts in the field of music dispute whether music should be incorporated into a curriculum with dance, media and drama. In this line of thought, music is another language with its own symbol systems and concepts, and music learning depends on the sequential acquisition of skills specific to performing, composing and listening. We recognise that this argument was considered at the national level in preparation of The National Statement on The Arts, but the controversy will probably continue to surface throughout the curriculum development process. The trial version of the syllabus appears to provide a workable compromise in the Music strand between those who believe in a formal heritage of music and those who have more modern views of what constitutes music.

2.2 Interviews

The interviews indicated that the trial participants supported the trial version of the syllabus. When asked to rate the extent to which the syllabus represented the basis for a good curriculum in The Arts, 11 of the 12 interviewees gave Very High (3) or High (8) ratings. When asked the same question of the Rationale separately, interviewees gave the same results. Ratings are shown in tabular and chart form in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

Comments on the trial syllabus included:

- *We are very happy with the breadth and balance of the entire Arts program.*
- *It gives all kids an opportunity to experience the arts and that is extremely good.*
- *I think it gives the arts legitimacy and makes it equal to the other key learning areas.*
- *I liked the primary to secondary continuity. This will allow for progression in The Arts as students gain skills at an earlier time.*
- *It is expansive and inclusive of all areas...*
- *It is rigorous and explicit.*
- *It does cover the five art forms and it makes sense...*
- *There is nothing drastically wrong in the basic approach and it is satisfactory.*
- *It takes into account the learner.*

One concern expressed in a couple of the schools was that secondary teachers would have difficulty coming to terms with the approach in music, described as developmental and seen as deriving from the methods of Kodaly.

- *Unless you are Kodaly-trained it could be difficult.*
- *... it will require a lot of change in [secondary] music teachers' thinking.*
- Comments on the Rationale included:
- *It sits well with my own practices and beliefs and it reads well. It recognises all components of the arts.*
- *Comprehensive, detailed and a good philosophy for arts education.*
- *It's fine, broad, covers all aspects and is reasonably meaningful.*
- *Quite easy to read. It is clear about the basis for the curriculum.*
- *The rationale is just excellent for someone to pick up and know what underpins the whole document.*
- *It is clear about the basis for the curriculum.*
- *I really like the part about the lifelong learner and the focus on across-the-curriculum is good for teachers.*

- *What I like in the Rationale is where it talks about arts curriculum being for lifelong learning.*
- *... as a rationale that will form the basis of a syllabus we think it is fairly satisfactory.*

Both misgivings and support were voiced about basing the curriculum on outcomes:

- *In visual art it is good how the students work with outcomes not criteria.*
- *I am not convinced that the model of outcomes etc. is a good one for all the arts. In music an outcome approach will work. The outcome approach will not work so well with the other areas.*
- *The principle behind outcome-based learning is unassailable as a way of breaking the lockstep of putting kids into grades.*

In one school, the developmental approach in the media section was criticised as being ‘totally contrived’:

- *It doesn't have a continuous line of development to it.*

Two of the interviewees suggested that music might present difficulty for secondary teachers because of the developmental approach that

- *... may require a lot of change in music teachers' thinking.*

In general terms then, at this stage of its development, the syllabus has been quite well received in the trial schools as the basis for a curriculum in The Arts.

2.3 Summary and conclusions

The external review indicates that overall, the design brief and trial version of the syllabus are curriculum blueprints of a high standard. Their design reflects up-to-date knowledge of approaches to education in The Arts and is important work in establishing the centrality of this area in the broader curriculum.

The Rationale is a clear and motivating document that provides teachers with a student-centred framework for curriculum decisions. The decision to provide core and discretionary outcomes for each art form ensures that the authenticity of each discipline is maintained.

The interviews indicate that the trial version of the draft syllabus was well received in the trial schools. Most aspects of the trial syllabus were highly rated by the trial teachers except for the Assessment section, which was seen as lacking in practical detail or guidance.

Our conclusions are that:

1. The project design brief, which provides the basis for the syllabus, is thorough, comprehensive and well grounded in current literature and practice.
2. The trial version of the draft syllabus is consistent to a high level with the design features presented in the project design brief and translates the key ideas and aims of the design brief very well.
3. The organisation of the syllabus into the five strands has maintained authenticity in the five art forms but may lead to compartmentalisation in the curriculum.
4. The trial version of the syllabus appears to provide a workable compromise in the Music strand between conflicting views of the nature of music and music education.
5. The trial version of the draft syllabus is highly rated by the trial teachers as a basis for a curriculum in The Arts.

3. The draft syllabus and the needs of students and schools

To what extent does the trial version of the draft syllabus match the needs of all students, teachers and school administrators as expressed in the range of classroom and school contexts in the trial schools?

3.1 External review

The reviewers agreed that the trial version of the draft syllabus has been developed with careful consideration of the apparent needs of teachers and students who have a variety of experience and ability in the five art forms. According to the rationale, the syllabus is aimed at the needs of all teachers and students. This aim is reinforced in the sections on inclusive curriculum (p.11) and the 'learner-centred approach' (p.12). This learner-centred approach sees knowledge as ever changing and built on prior knowledge, requiring learning to be based on negotiation and flexibility: a very appropriate approach for The Arts.

Each of the reviewers recognised that the generalist teacher will need explicit supporting documents for the five art forms.

Specific comments by the reviewers in each of the five arts areas are provided below.

3.1.1 Dance

The trial version of the draft syllabus states that learning outcomes inform curriculum planning and act as a framework for assessment. This directly relates to the Senior Dance Syllabus and its direction. Being outcome-based still allows for flexibility within each individual school in planning the curriculum, writing work programs and assessment instruments. This is important particularly in Dance, as it is still quite a young subject area in terms of its inclusion into schools' curriculum programs and the development and availability of print and video resources.

Planning from outcomes also allows flexibility within a school to alter or change content or structure of work programs as a result of changing demands, for example, class size, time allocation, school performance and production opportunities.

The level statements, although written generically to all five arts strands, adequately refer to and cover Dance in a developmental process through the levels.

The learning outcomes develop sequentially. The Dance learning outcomes develop and become more sophisticated and complex in terms of knowledge, skills, processes, understanding and aesthetic awareness.

The focus on Australian artists and Australian dance content in the Reflection organiser of Level 6 in Dance is appropriate and desirable.

Both the level statements and learning outcomes in dance reflect a most desired course of study. Engagement incorporates activities and outcomes in choreography and performing. Reflection mirrors the appreciation component of the Senior Dance Syllabus. Therefore, the two strand organisers parallel the three organisers in Senior Dance and comprise a most suitable Primary and Junior Secondary school course to precede the Senior one.

The provision of discretionary learning outcomes as well as the core learning outcomes address the issue of catering to the learning needs and challenges of students of varied abilities and backgrounds. The discretionary learning outcomes will certainly assist teachers in the stated intention of broadening the understandings of some students and providing opportunities for students with special interests and talents.

3.1.2 Drama

The draft syllabus provides an insight for non-specialist creative arts teachers into why the arts should be implemented as an integral part of a student's development and growth. More friendly explanations of technical terms and arts-specific language will need to be provided in future documents so that all teachers feel confident, empowered and equipped to embark on their journeys into the arts.

There is progress and continuity in the level statements and they indicate that students will work at each level with ever increasing complexity, control, depth and independence within their work. Students at each level need to be given ever-increasing responsibility for their own work. The challenges in terms of both form and content should become increasingly complex. Drama as a subject and students' individual achievements within it, should become increasingly visible as they move through the levels.

In the primary years, the teacher will always be needed to provide a framework, focus and strong direction to the drama. The extent to which older students will be able to meet responsibility and challenge will depend upon contextual factors, including their overall personal and social development, their previous experience in drama and whether they are used to being given such opportunities in other curriculum areas. Students will have increased responsibilities and this changes the nature of the teacher input but does not diminish it. This handing over of the power can be somewhat intimidating or unnerving to those not used to teaching in this way.

The outcomes of the trial syllabus provide an excellent framework for planning work units and programs and assessment tasks. Drama assessment must not become over-complex and methods must, in the end, make the reporting of attainment easier, more specific and more accurate. Drama should not become narrowly assessment driven. Over-assessment spoils the satisfaction children derive from drama, regardless of their individual levels of attainment. If children achieve and make progress in the creative arts and understand how and why they have done so, the motivation this engenders adds to, rather than detracts from, their sense of enjoyment.

In framing level statements, consideration needs to be given to the following four principles of progression in both planning and assessment:

- Complexity (issues dealt with by younger children can be revisited in more complex and sophisticated ways by more mature children)
- Control (students should acquire increasing control of the means of dramatic expression and the forms it can take)
- Depth (students should move progressively as they mature from receiving a broad range of drama experiences to exploring individual projects in more depth)
- Independence (students should become increasingly autonomous; capable of making and articulating their own judgements with regard to their drama work).

The successive level statements appear to develop these four dimensions. Perhaps this development could be made more explicit.

3.1.3 Media

The design brief strongly reflects current and emerging views on media education. Especially promising is the way it sets up the strand organisers, engagement and reflection, in a complementary relation, rather than in opposition as has sometimes occurred in media education. The design brief creates a dialogue between these organisers and hence between the different roles of making art works and analysing them, around which learning experiences can be constructed.

This approach gives a flexible basis for future curriculum development. It should help teachers to ground the study of media in the real-life cultural environment where, as the design brief indicates, people engage in and reflect on the arts in different ways and for varied purposes. The project design brief is forward-looking in the way it encourages attention to new technologies while emphasising the importance of old and new arts 'literacies' and the broader cultural context.

The trial syllabus embodies all the components required by the project design brief. It translates the key ideas and aims of the design brief very well. The elaboration of the core outcomes for the Media strand presents core contents and activities involving multiple aspects of engagement and reflection in a way that should help teachers to plan sequential learning activities appropriate to their circumstances. It develops the design brief's concern for 'a continuum of understanding' into sequential and progressive aims and learning activities across the levels.

If the linking of engagement and reflection is instrumental in setting up the outcomes and in generating core content, it is effectively complemented by the use of subcategories similar to some of the organisers of the national arts curriculum profile — exploring ideas, using techniques, investigating contexts, etc. This should help teachers to integrate objectives and content and make purposeful selections from a wide field of media practices and products.

The trial syllabus should meet the needs of classrooms and schools in different areas. It provides support for generalist teachers. Evidently, some of the activities depend on technological facilities (video cameras, editing equipment, computers, etc.) that may not be equally available in all schools. The trial syllabus takes this into account. It focuses on the aims of using the media forms, the principles of media work that bring cognitive, expressive and other processes into play, such that these can be pursued by alternative means. Of course, at the higher levels, it becomes increasingly difficult to sustain engagement in media production without the appropriate facilities.

The level statements in the trial version of the draft syllabus would assist teachers to integrate aspects of the arts. However, it may be helpful to supplement them with level statements branching into the elaborations of specific outcomes.

The learning outcomes and their elaborations for media are comprehensive and present a model of cumulative learning. They combine engagement and reflection — practice and theory — across a range of media forms (television, video, film, newspapers, magazines, etc), roles and interactive experiences. The design of the media components should assist teachers to manage different learning levels within a class and to help students entering the strand at a later stage make up ground they have missed. It should encourage cross-arts and cross-KLA integration. More generally, if a school offers just one subject in The Arts, the syllabus information about the adjoining strands could help teachers illuminate the single area.

The Assessment section makes clear the principles and techniques of assessment within an outcome framework. Possible strategies for individual and group assessment are indicated in the trial syllabus (p. 44, cf. design brief, p. 14). However, in due course it will be useful to provide guidance on assessing particular kinds of task in the Media strand. Generalist teachers, in particular, may have questions about criteria and mechanisms for distinguishing levels of accomplishment in video productions, what students' and teachers' expectations should be in adapting industry-derived formats such as the documentary treatment for learning in a classroom, etc.

3.1.4 Music

Music seems to be different in nature from the other art forms because students need more regular lessons in skill development to achieve the outcomes. Therefore sufficient time allocation and support from music specialists would seem to be critical to successful outcomes for students.

The trial syllabus is written in such a way that it is generally accessible to both generalist teachers and music specialists in its description of music content and core learning outcomes. It will, however, need specific elaboration in support documents for teachers who are not music specialists if they are to implement the music program in the intended way. The importance of the role of the specialist teacher in assisting the classroom teacher is accentuated for music, where the development of music skills at an early age is fundamental.

The outcome statements are sequential, so students should be able to achieve at a level appropriate to their experience and ability. Discretionary outcomes will cater for those students progressing at a faster rate due to talent or outside tuition.

The core content presents a reasonable compromise between different views in music education. The essential elements of a sound course of study are articulated but in a very general way. It is important that supporting documents are specific about what is to be taught, especially for teachers who are not music specialists. The generalist teacher will need explanations of musical terms and concepts such as 'anacrusis'.

The core content and core learning outcomes describe a course of study that is grounded in the development of basic skills. Therefore the integration of the teaching of music with other arts forms in a unit can achieve only some of the music outcomes. Music will have to be taught as a separate subject on a regular basis to ensure the sequential development of skills.

The level statements and core learning outcomes continue the Kodaly element of the successful Queensland Primary Music Syllabus, which is highly regarded as a successful approach to teaching music nationally. This approach may be less familiar to teachers who are not music specialists, and they will need explicit advice on teaching specific music skills and concepts.

3.1.5 Visual Arts

The trial syllabus seems to counteract a tendency for The Arts to be seen as a subject that provides the learner with an 'arts experience' rather than an 'arts learning'. This is a welcome development.

A holistic approach to the exchange of knowledges will further develop and apply this connectedness through interactive relationships among the art forms, which leads to

cross-arts learning and experience. The syllabus is open enough to allow teachers to make links across the art forms. Every student will be able to have some learning and experience in each of the five art forms. Those students that develop a strong interest in one of the art forms will be able to draw upon the others.

Another important aspect of the trial syllabus is that it will foster the expression of cultural differences without drawing attention to them. For example, indigenous students can express aspects of their culture through the arts without having to define them or differentiate them from a perceived mainstream culture.

The trial syllabus is written to allow for the diversity of teachers' knowledges and experiences. The core content and level statements reflect the necessary outcomes required from an arts course. The core contents provide a strong framework, with the level statements providing a clear articulation of learning from one level to the next. The core learning outcomes with elaborations are clearly articulated with easy-to-follow outcomes that allow a simple approach for the generalist teacher, or can be extended by specialist teachers or those with a strong interest in the visual arts.

The outcomes section in the visual arts is very specific in language and direction. This should allow teachers in primary school — Foundation Level to Level 4 — to achieve the core and discretionary outcomes without specialist knowledge. The learning outcomes in the higher levels may require specialist knowledge or at least a strong interest in the visual arts, but this should be available to secondary teachers.

Some inspiring examples for teachers of where this curriculum could support other key learning areas in cross curriculum approaches would be valuable in fulfilling the holistic approach.

3.2 Interviews

Seven interview questions were used to gauge the extent to which the trial version of the syllabus matched the needs of schools and their students. We consider the responses to each question separately.

3.2.1 To what extent does the draft syllabus make sense to teachers?

Ratings on this item were:

Very High: 0	High: 6	Moderate: 4	Low: 1	Very Low: 0
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One interviewee declined to give a rating.

Many commented on difficulties associated with terminology, or suggested that non-specialist teachers may struggle with the draft syllabus:

- *If we are talking about generalist primary teachers, they may struggle without comprehensive in-service.*
- *Some of the language used is different and needs clarification. A glossary would be helpful.*
- *Once you get down into the fine details it could be misinterpreted if you are not skilled in that area. It needs more explanation of all of the special terms that are involved.*
- *We are lucky to have the support and it may be hard without that.*
- *It makes sense to people who have been trained in the particular arts discipline but it may not make sense to teachers who have no such training, especially primary people.*
- *Needs to be a glossary — one word in dance can mean something different in drama.*

A few of the interviewees spoke of difficulty understanding the core learning outcomes or commented favourably on the 'elaborations' provided by the project team to help explain the outcomes.

- ... it does take a lot of time to understand the outcomes.
- In the elaborations you are given some practical ideas and that clears up what is required a lot.

The comment that accompanied the low rating referred to a low priority for The Arts in primary schools:

- Primary is about literacy and numeracy and teachers are well trained in that. Most teachers and parents are not looking for outcome statements in arts.

One comment related to an issue about where things belong in terms of the different art forms:

- It is hard to put a box around the strands and have something in one strand that may also have a place in other strands.

3.2.2 To what extent is the draft syllabus something that schools will be able to work with?

Ratings on this item were:

Very High: 0	High: 8	Moderate: 2	Low: 2	Very Low: 0
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Some comments were similar to those for the previous question:

- If there is support and in-service, teachers will be able to work with it.
- Will work well with specialist teachers if the timetable allows. Otherwise there may be problems and the syllabus may not be beneficial or achieve its objectives.

A few comments expressed doubts about time availability:

- The demands of all the other areas in primary school make it difficult to do everything.
- I think also that we have probably been asked to do too much in terms of the amount to be covered in the time available. The suggested number of hours will not be available in the secondary school within the individual disciplines.

Two comments related to outcomes:

- It is so far into outcomes based approach, no one is game to nominate specific content to be taught.
- ... we think there is a lot of work in tracking those outcomes ... There is also an issue of how it relates to traditional [secondary] methods of reporting on students under criterion based assessment.

3.2.3 How do you rate the Rationale as a document for teachers?

Ratings on this item were:

Very High: 3	High: 4	Moderate: 3	Low: 1	Very Low: 0
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One interviewee declined to give a rating.

Negative comments usually represented the belief that teachers do not usually use or make reference to a document such as a rationale:

- In general teachers don't have time to read documents such as this.
- It would not be something a teacher would use or refer to — they would go to the outcomes. It is necessary but not directly useful.

Some found it to be wordy.

- *It is worthwhile, it is noble, but it requires dedication to read through it.*
- *It is pretty thorough but wordy.*

Some comments were more positive:

- *The average teacher can pick it up and use it.*
- *As a document for teachers, I like the way it points out cross-curriculum priorities and how it links up with other KLAs.*

3.2.4 To what extent do the level statements apply to each of the five art forms?

In the trial version of the syllabus, single statements were provided at each level to cover all of the five art forms. This strategy had mixed success as indicated by the ratings:

Very High: 1	High: 5	Moderate: 4	Low: 1	Very Low: 1
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While most of the ratings were in the moderate to high range, the comments showed wide variability. For example:

- *They apply to all of the art forms.*
- *Very broad but they have to be.*
- *So far we haven't noticed any problems in relating to the art forms.*
- *Generally in art, dance and drama we have no problems with the level statements. In [visual] art there may be some potential concerns for sequential development depending on how the statements are interpreted.*
- *The level statements go right across the five art forms and therefore are very general. This means I would read them but not use them.*
- *There is no such thing as a common art language and there should be ... If we want to have non-specialist teachers implement the syllabus then the language has to be consistent across the art forms.*
- *I feel there has been no serious research into developmental psychology and developmental learning in framing the level statements. When does a child become capable of certain learnings? There is no comparability in how they apply across the five arts forms.*

3.2.5 To what extent will the core learning outcomes accommodate the range of students in your school?

Ratings on this item were:

Very High: 3	High: 5	Moderate: 4	Low: 0	Very Low: 0
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While the ratings here were quite high, few comments specifically referred to accommodating the range of students:

- *They can cater for the range ... There is no gender or cultural bias.*
- *We found it accommodated students in our primary school but I have only done levels one and two.*
- *For a number of years, students will tend toward the lower end because they haven't had a continuum of a program. This needs to be explained.*

3.2.6 To what extent do the core learning outcomes provide a guide for effective planning and teaching?

Ratings on this item were:

Very High: 1	High: 6	Moderate: 5	Low: 0	Very Low: 0
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Ratings were moderate to high, even though the outcomes were in the very early stages of development. Planning and teaching from outcomes was apparently something new to many of the teachers.

Most comments indicted that the core learning outcomes were quite practicable:

- *When combined with elaborations and core content, can base school program on them.*
- *I find them very useful for planning and teaching.*
- *They are general enough to be open to interpretation, which is a good thing. It allows us to work with them quite well and have a range of learning experiences that suit our situation.*
- *Easy to follow and a good guide for a specialist teacher. The detail is good and the development comprehensive. I would not like to see it watered down any more.*
- *Great document for planning and teaching.*

Difficulties and problems were reported by many of the interviewees, highlighting teachers' concerns expressed throughout the interviews about how the outcomes will be understood, especially by primary teachers:

- *The core learning outcomes show a lot of doubling up. I appreciate that they build upon one another ... [but] I feel we seem to be covering a lot of the same stuff in the different levels.*
- *The problem is with the nature of the subject being forced into this format. There is a long way to go yet.*
- *We are finding it is hard to plan some activities but the project team has been wonderful in helping us to plan and teach. If we were just left with the book on our own it would be very difficult.*
- *For planning, the elaborations are needed.*
- *The media ones have been considerably revised but there is a feeling that in the other art forms, especially music and the visual arts, there is inconsistency between levels and the outcomes don't track through the levels well.*
- *In some cases the outcomes are too prescriptive and in other cases too general.*

3.2.7 To what extent will the Assessment section help teachers assess students' achievement in The Arts?

Ratings on this item were:

Very High: 0	High: 1	Moderate: 2	Low: 5	Very Low: 2
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Two interviewees declined to give a rating. Generally the ratings were low.

Many interviewees indicated that insufficient specific guidance was provided in the Assessment section:

- *Most teachers may want more help here.*
- *Very general. Teachers need samples, proformas and checklists.*
- *It is relatively bland and without real guidance particularly for secondary school.*
- *Not nearly good enough. Far more help is needed.*
- *There is a lack of clear philosophy regarding the role of assessment in outcome-based education.*

In secondary schools, some concerns were expressed about the compatibility of outcome-based assessment with current assessment and reporting practices:

- *In high schools we will have two separate ways of assessing students. It is at odds with the senior syllabus assessment.*
- *A lot of the project team were telling us at the last cluster meeting how to assess, but not enough leeway was given to us in terms of having to work within existing practices in schools.*

3.3 Summary and conclusions

In summary, the trial version of the draft syllabus provides a clear pathway for curriculum planning and assessment. Reviewers and trial teachers agreed that

generalist teachers will need explicit supporting documents to interpret the core learning outcomes.

The reviewers indicated that the draft syllabus was developed with careful consideration of the apparent needs of teachers and students with wide variety in their experience and ability in the five art forms. They saw the core learning outcomes as comprehensive and sequential, allowing for variation in students' prior experience and ability in the five arts areas. They believed, however, that teachers would need specific guidance on how to plan units that cater for students at various levels of performance.

In the interviews, the trial teachers gave moderate to high ratings of the syllabus and its components as practical documents for teachers. Only the Assessment section drew mostly low ratings because of a perceived lack of specific direction. Some called for the Rationale to be brief or less wordy. Consistent definition and use of terms across the strands was identified as a problem. Teachers considered the core learning outcomes to be, in general, quite practicable and suitable for the students in their schools, but many were concerned about difficulty in interpreting the outcomes. Like the reviewers, the teachers believed that non-specialist teachers would require a lot of preparation and support in order to interpret the outcomes or use them for planning and teaching.

We conclude that:

1. The trial version of the draft syllabus is a teacher-friendly document reflecting current thinking in Arts education.
2. The trial version of the draft syllabus provides a good basis for future development as a document that teachers will be able to use and work with.
3. A consistent terminology for The Arts needs to be defined and explained.
4. The Rationale of the syllabus needs to be as concise as possible without compromising its comprehensiveness and integrity.
5. Teachers want the Assessment section of the syllabus to provide clear practical guidance.
6. The core learning outcomes in their current form have the potential to be practicable for teachers and suitable for a wide range of students.
7. Unless the wording of the core learning outcomes is considerably simplified, many teachers will need guidance and support in order to interpret them accurately and use them effectively.

4. The draft syllabus — possible improvements

What improvements can be made to the intent and content of the trial version of the draft syllabus?

4.1 External review

Specific suggestions for improvement to the syllabus made by the reviewers have been passed on to the project team. In general terms, the improvements could be made by:

- Demonstrating the dimensions of development of core learning outcomes across levels.
- Framing level statements and core learning outcomes in terms that are readily understood by teachers of students at those levels. Ideally, students should be able to understand the level statements and core learning outcomes at the level they are working towards.
- Strengthening connections between the art forms without compromising the development of basic skills in music.
- Finding ways to emphasise links between core learning outcomes in The Arts and those in other key learning areas.

4.2 Interviews

By inference from the responses to the interviews, improvements to the draft syllabus can be made by:

- Making the Rationale as concise as possible without compromising the basic message.
- Continuing to strive for consistent use of terms across the five art forms.
- Making all sections of the Years 1 to 10 syllabus readily accessible to non-specialist teachers.
- Striving for evident continuity across the levels in the outcomes.
- Clarifying the intention of indicative time allocations.
- Providing specific guidance of a practical nature in the Assessment section, or associated with it.
- Continuing to focus the main effort in the process of developing the syllabus on refining the core learning outcomes.

4.3 Summary and conclusions

There was extensive agreement between the reviewers and the interviewees from the trial schools on the key issues. Both indicated that the draft syllabus represented a good base for further development and refinement. Improvements were suggested by both groups and others were implied from their responses.

The following directions for improvement are submitted for consideration by the project team:

1. Stronger connections between the art forms without compromising the development of basic skills in music.
2. Links between core learning outcomes in The Arts and those in other key learning areas.
3. Consistent definition and use of terms across the five art forms.
4. Evident continuity across the levels in the core learning outcomes.

5. Level statements and core learning outcomes framed in terms that are readily understood by teachers of students at those levels. Ideally, students should be able to understand the level statements and core learning outcomes at the level they are working towards.
6. A Rationale that is as concise as possible without compromising the basic message.
7. Ready accessibility of all sections of the Years 1 to 10 syllabus to non-specialist teachers at the appropriate levels.
8. Specific guidance of a practical nature associated with the Assessment section.

5. Concluding comments

This report is concerned with the trial version of the draft Years 1 to 10 syllabus in The Arts for Queensland schools.

In evaluating the trial version of the syllabus, two important factors must be considered:

- It is a document that is expected to undergo continuous modification as the development process continues through the pilot phase.
- It is not expected to stand alone but will be accompanied by the sourcebooks and an in-service package.

Therefore the document has to be judged on the soundness of its foundation and its potential for future development.

In making judgements on these two criteria, the evaluation has drawn on the opinions of five reviewers with particular expertise in the five art forms as well as the experiences of teachers and administrators in the 12 trial schools.

The trial version of the syllabus has been judged quite favourably. As expected, there are many ways in which improvements can be made, but the syllabus is soundly based on a thorough project design brief and it promises to develop into the foundation for valuable learning experiences for students in the compulsory years of schooling. The syllabus retains the integrity of the five art forms but presents them within a single package. It sets out links between The Arts and other key learning areas. It defines levels of performance and learning outcomes.

The impact of the syllabus can be expected to accumulate over a period of several years as teachers become increasingly expert in its implementation and students build upon their learning as they progress through the levels. It has the potential to establish an identity and status for The Arts as a key learning area within the Queensland curriculum for schools.

Appendixes

Appendix 1: Ratings in interviews

Rating of:	VH	H	M	L	VL
To what extent does the draft syllabus represent the basis for a good curriculum in The Arts?	3	8	1	0	0
To what extent does the draft syllabus make sense to teachers?	0	6	4	1	0
To what extent is the draft syllabus something that schools will be able to work with?	0	8	2	2	0
How do you rate the Rationale as a basis for a curriculum in The Arts?	3	8	1	0	0
How do you rate the Rationale as a document for teachers?	3	4	3	1	0
To what extent do the level statements apply to each of the five art forms?	1	5	4	1	1
To what extent will the core learning outcomes accommodate the range of students in your school?	3	5	4	0	0
To what extent do the core learning outcomes provide a guide for effective planning and teaching?	1	6	5	0	0
To what extent will the Assessment section help teachers assess students' achievement in The Arts?	0	1	2	5	2

Appendix 2: Percent rating high or very high on interview items

