

Draft HSC syllabus compared to current with comments

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Before outlining the differences between the current syllabus and the proposal, it is important to mention the most significant aspect that is not subject to any proposed change. This is the essential structure of the stage six courses: Music 1 and Music 2 remain separate and Music Extension may be taken by students taking Music 2.

This retention of course structure is extremely welcome.

**Music 1**

	CURRENT	PROPOSED	COMMENTS
Content	<p>Students and teachers choose to study three topics (called contexts) in year 11 and three in year 12.</p> <p>These choices are taken from a list of 22.</p>	<p>Students study 3 topics (called focus areas) in year 11 and 4 in year 12.</p> <p>These are:</p> <p>Year 11                      Music of contemporary popular styles 1                      Music of Western art traditions                      Music of global cultures and traditions</p> <p>Year 12                      Music of contemporary popular styles 2                      Traditions and techniques of improvised music                      Music for entertainment, film and multimedia                      Comparisons and connections</p> <p>No choice in focus areas.</p>	<p>There is value in having students explore focus areas in music other than those with which they are most familiar. However, this strictly prescribed curriculum of focus areas (as proposed) will not best serve the needs of most Music 1 students. The greatest strength of the present syllabus is its flexibility and its capacity to accommodate young musicians with a wide variety of interests, styles and skills. This flexibility has been very successful for 30 years.</p>
Electives	<p>Students in Year 12 choose three electives which may be performance, composition or musicology in any combination.</p>	<p>No electives.                      Students all do a written examination and perform two pieces, one of which must represent "Music of contemporary popular styles"</p>	<p>The proposal to remove electives from Music 1 is highly problematic. There are many students for whom a heavily weighted performance program is not suitable. Not only is it the case that not every musician is a performer (many are composers, musicologists, digital content creators, critics etc.), there is</p>

			<p>also a significant number of students for whom performance is an almost intolerable ordeal because of their health conditions. Currently, all of these students are offered the option to submit compositions or to undertake a musicology viva voce [REDACTED] things (and perform [REDACTED] proportions.</p> <p>The has been a myth prevalent for years that Music 1 is the pop music course. Undoubtedly, it <u>can</u> be a pop music course and is for many students. However, it also accommodates young musicians with a wide variety of other focus areas including Western Art Music and music of global cultures and traditions. Therefore, mandating the performance of a popular contemporary piece in the final examination (and worth 25%) discriminates unfairly against students working in a Western Art Music style. For most of these students Music 2 is not available at their school. The contemporary popular music performance mandate is also entirely discriminatory against young musicians who wish to perform in the style of a global culture and tradition. It is explicit policy to embrace and encourage a multicultural society in our school syllabi; this directly affronts that policy.</p>
External Assessment	(marked out of 110) Listening exam 30 Core performance 20 Three electives 20 each (Performance, composition or musicology in any combination.)	Written exam 50 Two performances 25 each	It is troubling to read the proposal that the written examination is going to double in length and nearly double in value. There are states of Australia where this is currently the case, such as WA, and their experience has been that an unacceptably large proportion of class time in Year 12 becomes dedicated to preparing students for the written examination. Certainly, such

			<p>examinations are important. However, to suggest that they are important enough to count as half of the assessed mark for a high school music course is almost grotesque, and certainly flies in the face of the overwhelming majority of research and classroom practice.</p> <p>This heavily weighted written examination would disadvantage students for whom English is a second language or dialect. Their written English skills are already tested rigorously in other exams; HSC music assessment should be about their music skills. We need to retain the flexibility of Music 1 by having electives and more options for focus areas.</p>
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Music 2

	CURRENT	PROPOSED	COMMENTS
Content	<p>Year 11                      Music 1600-1900 plus ONE additional topic chosen from a list of six.                      Year 12 Music of the Last 25 Years (Australian focus) plus ONE additional topic chosen from a list of eight.</p>	<p>Year 11                      Music of Western art traditions 1                      Music of contemporary styles                      Music for drama, movement and entertainment                      Year 12                      Music of Western art traditions 2                      Music of a time and place                      Australian art music                      Comparisons and connections                      No elective content.</p>	<p>The removal of choice in focus areas is somewhat problematic. There is much to be said for a broad musical education, however by Year 12 many candidates in Music 2 are beginning to specialise in certain musical styles or periods at a very high level and need to be given the opportunity to show their skills and knowledge as fully and fairly as possible.</p>
Electives	<p>Performance (2 additional pieces) or composition or musicology submitted essay.</p>	<p>No electives.                       Students all perform two pieces, one of which must be a solo. Students all submit one composition which must represent the focus area Australian art music (music of the last 25 years).</p>	<p>The proposed removal of electives in Music 2 is not a good idea. Doubling the amount of assessed performance will be to the great disadvantage of the those young musicians who wish to specialise in composition and musicology. It will not be of advantage to performers, because they already have the option to elect more performance assessments. The mandatory topic in Year 12 has been narrowed in its focus from 'Music of the last 25 years (Australian focus)' to 'Australian art music (music of the last 25 years)'. Although an apparently insignificant change, this will greatly disadvantage musicians performing jazz at a very high level, and it explicitly discriminates against musicians wish to perform in the style of a global culture and tradition, directly contravening policies on encouraging multiculturalism.</p>
External Assessment	<p>Listening Exam 35                      Sight singing 5                      Core Performance 15 (mandatory)                      Core composition 15 (mandatory but no restriction on instrumentation)</p>	<p>Listening Exam 40                      Mandatory Performance 40                      Mandatory Composition (must be for 1, 2 or 3 instruments) 20</p>	<p>The main problem here is the proposed removal of electives, currently worth 30%. The proposed weightings of external assessments imply that every musician is 40% musicologist, 40% performer and 20% composer. This is manifestly untrue. It is important to retain an assessment pattern that encourages</p>

	Elective (performance OR composition OR musicology) 30		and rewards the strengths of all of our musicians.
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Music Extension

	CURRENT	PROPOSED	COMMENTS
Content	Guided independent study of Performance OR composition OR musicology	A large component of musicology, including the study of mandated works.	It is easy to infer why the proposal for the extension course includes content that is examinable in a conventional way. However, the idea of mandated works is regressive. These have not existed in NSW for more than 30 years because research and practice indicate that they have a very narrowing effect on students' musical knowledge and understanding.
Electives	Entirely elective	Students may perform two pieces or submit two compositions	Under this proposal, performance students would be examined on two pieces rather than the current three. This could be seen as 'dumbing down' of an extremely rigorous and demanding course. There is no proposed change to the composition elective. It is proposed that compositions still be submitted on staff notation only. When this mandate was introduced in the 1990s, there was a clear equity-based rationale behind it. Now that every student in the state effectively has a recording studio in their pocket, it is archaic to insist that compositions be notated on a staff. Options need to be available for composers whose work is presented by other means.
External Assessment	Either performance of 3 pieces (one ensemble piece) OR submission of two compositions OR one essay.	Mandatory written examination 50 Performance ensemble 30 AND Performance solo 20 Or submit two compositions (one for small ensemble) 25 each	There seems to be no good reason why one of the two compositions in that stream should be for a small ensemble. This is yet another example all of the reduction in choice and opportunity in this proposal; a reduction to be deplored.