

VET in Schools good practice models

John Curtin College of the Arts

John Curtin College of the Arts is a co-educational independent public school located in Fremantle. It is one of only two selective public schools in Western Australia, specialising in the arts.

John Curtin College of the Arts has a long and successful history of delivering quality arts programs. It has a national and international reputation for achievement in arts education, and many of its graduates are prominent and successful artists on stage and screen around the world.

The college has been delivering Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools programs since it became a registered training organisation (RTO) in 2000.



School profile

- Approximately 1100 students
- Years 8–12
- Year 8 students enrolled in VET in Schools programs approximately 10%
- Year 9 students enrolled in VET in Schools programs approximately 34%
- Year 10 students enrolled in VET in Schools programs approximately 40%
- Year 11 students enrolled in VET in Schools programs approximately 83%
- Year 12 students enrolled in VET in Schools programs approximately 63%

John Curtin College of the Arts provides an holistic education for all students, with a focus on students pursuing personal excellence. The college is committed to developing creativity, innovation and imagination in every student through the pursuit of excellence in all areas of the curriculum, with a special emphasis on the arts. VET in Schools programs are an integral part of how the college enriches its students' educational experience.

As a specialist school, approximately 80–90% of students are enrolled under the Gifted and Talented (GAT) Arts program.

Program background

John Curtin College of the Arts is a model for how arts can be integrated into student learning. The college delivers a differentiated curriculum for Arts GAT students and those identified as academically talented.

VET qualifications are an important feature of the college's 'enrichment' strategy within the Arts GAT program. These are delivered concurrently alongside mainstream courses. Non-GAT students are also offered the opportunity to undertake other arts related VET qualifications as standalone programs.

As an RTO school, John Curtin College of the Arts has a number of arts related VET qualifications on scope which complement its specialist programs, offering students greater choices.

It is scoped to deliver:

- Certificate I in Creative Industries;
- Certificate II in Creative Industries (Media);
- Certificate II in Live Production, Theatre and Events (electives for Front of House, Costume and Production); and
- Certificate II in Music.

The college also has its own state-of-the-art performing arts facility with a full time theatre manager and two technicians. Additional theatre staff including stage managers, front of house managers, designers and backstage crew are engaged to run the facility. This enables the college to put on performances in drama, contemporary dance, ballet, music and music theatre.

College performances are held throughout the year, providing students with access to industry standard facilities and the opportunity to undertake workplace learning at the college. The college invites external arts professionals to direct/choreograph productions and to run workshops. These professionals not only provide students with opportunities to learn industry standard skills, they also up skill college staff who work alongside them.

The theatre and its equipment are also available for external hire.



Program partners

John Curtin College of the Arts acknowledges the benefits of partnerships with industry and tertiary institutions, to enable its students to gain first hand experience and knowledge of the arts industry and for the college to stay abreast of current issues and changes.

Arts industry partners

All college arts staff have essential links to the industry and work closely with industry personnel. The college has established and maintains national and international links with arts organisations through a range of activities, including:

- the occasional artist-in-residence. This has included I Made Sidia, a well-known and respected Balinese artist from the Institut Seni Indonesia (ISI) Denpasar in 2013, and Australian playwright, Angela Betzien, multi award winning writer in 2014;
- student performances in national arts group events, government conferences and promotional performances for the Department of Education;
- a strong partnership with the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA), including inviting WAAPA personnel to attend college performances, accessing WAAPA lecturers as casual lecturers and maintaining connections with college graduates who work at WAAPA;
- inviting incoming theatre groups to the college;
- arranging meetings with the WA Ballet Company to identify opportunities for the college and WA Ballet to work together; and
- using the graduate alumni as a mechanism to establish national and international links.

Arts students have the opportunity to work alongside all the industry artists engaged by the college.

As an RTO school, John Curtin College of the Arts:

- is an active member of FutureNow: Creative and Leisure Industries Training Council, attending and voting at the annual general meetings; and
- maintains strong links with the Innovation Business Skills Australia Industry Skills Council.

Local artistic community partners

The college places a high priority on supporting the local artistic community and theatres by inviting arts industry professionals to run workshops with their students. These workshops support the community and expose students to a range of artistic genres and mediums to enable them to develop an awareness and appreciation for the arts and arts industry professionals.

The college has a strong partnership with the Fremantle Arts Centre and uses the Centre to exhibit student work and as a location for filming. Many students also attend workshops organised by the Centre. The college also exhibits selected items from the Fremantle Art Centre collection in its theatre.



Supporting the local artistic community has also enabled the college to establish links with:

- Shakespeare WA giving its arts students the opportunity to perform professionally and assist backstage for Shakespeare in the Park;
- Film and Television Institute (FTI), where the works of Artsmedia students are screened;
- Spare Parts Puppets Theatre and the Nexus Theatre at Murdoch University; and
- STEPS Youth Dance Company and other youth performance groups.

Links with the local artistic community have been beneficial to the partners. Local artists have access to college facilities and students from the college are given the opportunity to work on projects alongside arts industry practitioners.

Program features

Course structure

The following programs are available to GAT students as part of the college's enrichment strategy:

- Artsmedia – Students have the opportunity to complete two units of competency each year towards the Certificate II in Creative Industries (Media) in Years 8–10 and finish the certificate in upper school.
- Dance – The college offers its students two streams in dance – ballet and contemporary dance. Students have the opportunity to undertake a Certificate I in Dance in Years 8 and 9, a Certificate II in Dance in Year 10 and a Certificate III in Dance in Years 11 and 12.
- Visual Art – Students are offered the Certificate II in Visual Arts in Years 9 and 10 and the Certificate III in Visual Arts in Years 11 and 12.
- Music – Students enrolled in Music and Music Theatre have the opportunity to complete the Certificate II in Music during Years 11 and 12.

Programs that are open to all students include:

- Front of House – Students can enrol in the Certificate II in Live Production, Theatre and Events (Front of House) from Year 9 onwards, with the certificate completed by the end of Year 12. This program is run off the grid.
- Costume – Students are offered the Certificate II in Live Production, Theatre and Events (Costume) during Years 11 and 12.
- Production – Students have the opportunity to complete the Certificate I in Creative Industries in Year 10 and the Certificate II in Live Production, Theatre and Events (Production) in Years 11 and 12.

An off the grid timetable allows the students to access double periods, rehearsals for performances and activities to cover the practical components associated with the VET qualifications, as required by industry. A Deputy Principal is scheduled to be on the college site after school hours during this time to ensure duty of care for students.

Student entry requirements

There are no formal entry requirements for arts related VET qualifications offered by the college except those qualifications which are offered as part of an enrichment strategy in the Arts GAT programs. These are only available to GAT students.

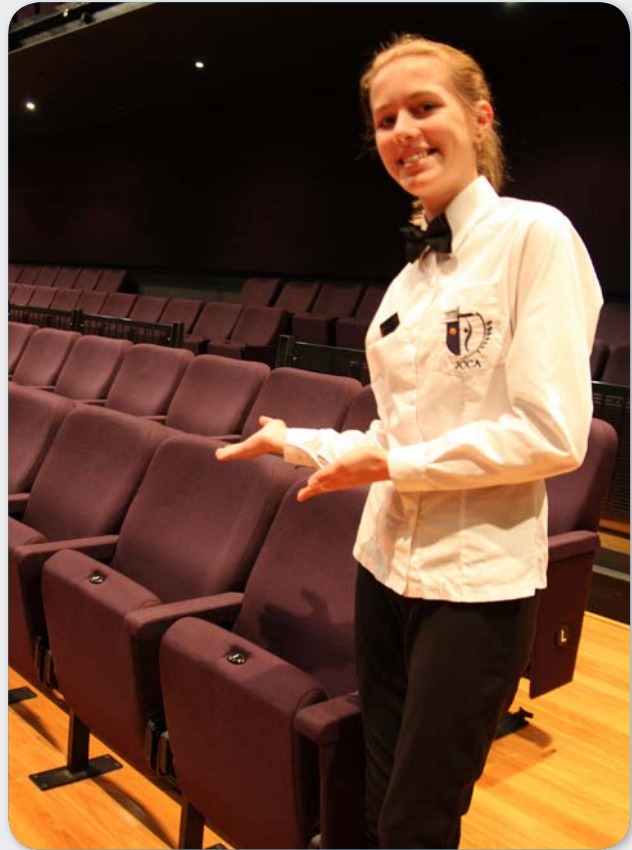
For all other arts related VET qualifications new students can simply apply through the standard college enrolment process or during the subject selection process for existing students.

Student selection process

Students participating in the GAT program are selected through a competitive process managed by the Department of Education. These students nominate the specialist arts program of interest and audition for a place. Students who are successful in their audition are offered a place at the college and this determines which Arts GAT program the student will study.

Students who apply for the Certificate II in Live Production, Theatre and Events – Front of House must be able to meet the following requirements while part of the program:

- arrange their own transport to and from the workplace;
- listen to and follow instructions;
- show a genuine interest in the field;
- attend training classes after school hours;
- be well presented; and
- continue to meet the required competencies in the enrolled year to continue with the program the following year.



Students who fail to meet these requirements are removed from the program.

There are no formal selection processes in place for other VET courses.

Parent liaison

John Curtin College of the Arts recognises that parent engagement and involvement is critical to the success of the VET in Schools programs under the unique art infused curriculum offered at the college.

John Curtin College of the Arts engages with parents through the following activities:

- a parent support group for the arts at the college, which assists with canteen and box office duties;
- formal progress reports to parents each semester;
- extensive regular informal progress reports which can be of a daily frequency;
- an annual Career Expo;
- Year 10 course selection interviews and individual student career counselling sessions;
- invitations to the annual Visual Art exhibition and biannual Artsmedia festivals held at FTI and Curtin Theatre; and
- invitations to performance events held at the Ellen Street Theatre and Curtin Theatre (the college holds approximately 60 performance events a year).

John Curtin College of the Arts also uses an online portal, WIKI, to enhance parental engagement through:

- advertising VET in Schools programs to parents;
- posting short films created in house by the college to enable parents to understand the requirements of certain VET qualifications being offered. This has been done for the Certificate II in Live Production, Theatre and Events – Front of House;

- providing access to units of competency;
- supplying a list of useful web links; and
- providing a blog section where parents and students can post questions.

Program results

In 2013 John Curtin College of the Arts had a certificate II or higher completion rate in Year 12 of 98%.

John Curtin College of the Arts was acknowledged as one of the top performing public schools in WA for 2013. This is the eighth consecutive year the college has been awarded with this acknowledgement.

Lessons learnt

- Accept that you cannot be all things to all people.
- Student success is dependent on committed staff who dedicate their personal time to ensure students can undertake a range of out of school hours activities.
- Professional learning for staff is important.
- A supportive administration team which understands and appreciates the complexities of running VET in Schools is required, especially because VET requirements are constantly evolving.
- Consensus decision making with partners is more effective than decision making based on compromise.
- Use every opportunity available to attend networking meetings and engage with industry groups so that you can stay on top of any changes.
- Training staff effectively in the VET in Schools area should be a process of osmosis (learning over time through observation).



Critical success factors

<p>Leadership, continuity and partnerships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visionary and supportive leadership. • The college has a three year business plan that includes specific outcomes, measures and action items relating to VET in Schools. • The college business plan is communicated at staff, executive and council meetings, so everyone is clear on the college's priorities and strategies. • VET in Schools processes and procedures are well documented. • Succession planning which includes training a replacement VET Coordinator in preparation for the retirement of the current VET Coordinator.
<p>Student cohort and parent liaison</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are provided with a broad choice of arts related VET qualifications in GAT programs to allow them to undertake extracurricular activities. • VET qualifications are an important part of the college's enrichment strategies for GAT students.
<p>Vision, place and configuration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace learning is offered at the college in its theatres and external organisations. • The college has established key pathways to meet the needs of their Arts GAT students, which includes pathways into VET and tertiary Arts programs at WAAPA, other universities and State Training Providers.
<p>Flexibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students, in consultation with their parents, are able to negotiate assessment deadlines if required. • The college runs after school and weekend classes. • The college uses its online portal, WIKI, to enable selected courses to be delivered and assessed online, allowing students to work at their own pace and the option to undertake courses where there are timetable clashes.
<p>Course content, structure and evaluation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible, the college employs art and specialist teachers who have had arts industry experience. • Music teachers are provided through the School of Instrumental Music, where many of the staff are working in the industry and teach part time. • The majority of students at the college are visual spatial learners, so delivery and assessments are adapted where possible. • An online learner survey is undertaken each year and captures student feedback on VET in Schools programs. • A post-graduation evaluation survey is undertaken to identify study and employment outcomes of previous students and capture student feedback on the college's programs, staff and overall schooling experience.

For further information contact:

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