

Kodály Australia Written Submission 2021 Australian Curriculum Consultation



Contact information

Dr Jason Goopy

President

president@kodaly.org.au

About Kodály Australia

The Kodály Music Education Institute of Australia Incorporated (also known as Kodály Australia) is an organisation of people committed to music for everyone. We are united in the philosophy developed by Hungarian composer, Zoltán Kodály. We are one of Australia's largest and most active professional music teacher associations with approximately 1000 active members. The association consists of State branches in the ACT, NSW, QLD, SA, VIC, and WA, with chapters in Mackay and Townsville. Our members work predominately as primary and secondary school music teachers, and also music educators in early childhood, teacher education, and community settings.

Structure of this response

This document provides open-ended responses to the consultation survey questions. Each heading contains the survey question, our survey response (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree), proposes a recommendation and provides some explanation. Our response principally draws upon the Music curriculum and the across The Arts learning area. We recognise that different states and sectors implement the curriculum to different extents, and this response has been written in mind with the context of implementing the curriculum as written.

Noted improvements

Kodály Australia thanks and commends The Arts team at ACARA for genuinely aspiring to improve curriculum outcomes for Australian music and arts education. We fully support the aim of the review to refine, realign and declutter the curriculum, particularly in the primary years. In The Arts learning area, we welcome **the intention to clarify meaningful and authentic music learning across the curriculum, particularly regarding the explicit development of music skills and practices**. Kodály Australia believes in the importance of early childhood music education and applauds **Foundation** having its own band, achievement standard and content. We also celebrate the deeper inclusion of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives** throughout the content of the curriculum.

Improvements needed

Kodály Australia advocates that the proposed curriculum for The Arts is **not refined, realigned, or decluttered**, and **significant aspects of the curriculum require improvement**. Seven key aspects that need improvement are summarised below.

1. The **most significant issue is the organising strands** (i.e., Exploring and connecting; Developing skills, practice and ideas; Creating; and, Sharing and communicating). While we acknowledge the interaction of making and responding in The Arts, a clear delineation of these processes is required for the purposes of assessment. Kodály Australia recommends that a research-informed organising structure is adopted (e.g., Abbs, 1987), and for performing arts subjects, we suggest using **Performing, Creating, and Responding**.
2. Many states already have music specialists teaching Foundation, and the proposed Arts Achievement Standard does not align with existing practice. Kodály Australia suggests **subject-specific Achievement Standards should be developed for Foundation** to align with the other primary years.
3. There is a misalignment between music Achievement Standards, Content, and Knowledge and Skills across all bands of the proposed curriculum. There has been some attempt to integrate skills into Content Elaborations, and Kodály Australia advocates that **all Example Knowledge and Skills should be included and referenced in the curriculum**. This will provide greater support for teachers implementing the curriculum and eliminate the need for a separate support document.
4. There is an inconsistent description of music learning and use of music terminology within and across the bands. Kodály Australia suggests that **learning in music needs to be more clearly described in the Key Considerations and consistently applied within and across bands**. The Glossary also needs to provide more support in **understanding music terminology**.
5. The music curriculum does not prioritise the music of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Instead, other issues such as intellectual property and copyright law overshadow music. Kodály Australia advocates that **the music curriculum should prioritise responding to how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples communicate meaning and their perspectives in and through music**.
6. The proposed Achievement Standards include learning experiences, and Kodály Australia suggests **Achievement Standards are reworked to describe assessable outcomes**.
7. Kodály Australia advocates for the **adoption of a recognised cognitive taxonomy** (e.g., Marzano & Kendall, 2007) which would allow for a clear and consistent progression of cognitive development across the curriculum.

Rationale

The rationale is clear about the importance of the learning area/subject

Disagree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia recommends that the rationale is revised to include:

1. **Music as a social activity** and essential to the **human experience**
2. The multiple purposes and functions of **music in our everyday lives**
3. **Every person is innately musical**
4. The music curriculum in the primary years (including Foundation) is based on **teaching music for 30 minutes every week**

Explanation

The first paragraph of the rationale focuses on music as an aesthetic product, whereas Kodály Australia advocates that music is primarily a human and social activity, something that people do (Clayton, 2016; Cross, 2016; Elliott & Silverman, 2015; Small, 1998). It should be noted in the rationale that every person is innately musical (to be human is to be musical) and music's importance in the human experience.

Music (like other arts) have multiple functions and purposes, and there is little mention of the role of music in our everyday lives. Hallam (2017) reports that music can have a significant role in peoples' lives despite individuals not identifying as a "musician". This view acknowledges that music can be a substantial component of the broader self and is an appropriate aspiration for the Australian Curriculum. Furthermore, the rationale serves as an opportunity to advocate for the non-musical benefits of learning music and transferrable skills (Hallam, 2015).

We appreciate ACARA providing flexibility for the delivery of music and the arts; however, Kodály Australia's position is that music should be implemented as a discipline-specific subject delivered by a teacher with music experiences, knowledge, and skills. We advocate that the curriculum should recommend that at least half an hour is dedicated to music per week in the primary years (including Foundation).

Aims

The aims identify the major learning that students will demonstrate

Disagree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia advocates that the Aims of the music curriculum are revised to:

1. articulate a broader and contemporary view of **learning in music**
2. provide **consistent rigour across the learning area**
3. align with the **organising strands and cognitive framework** of the curriculum.

Explanation

The Aims of the Arts subjects are not comparable and result in inconsistent rigour across the learning area. For example, different subjects have a different number of points, and it is noted that "critical thinking" and "enjoyment" do not appear in the Aims for Music but do for other

artforms. The music curriculum aims do not align with the organising strands of the curriculum and cognitive framework. The following specific suggestions are also made:

- First dot point: Include “reflective.”
- Second dot point: Composing is a contested term. We suggest “Creating” is a more inclusive word of the various ways that music could be created (e.g., composing, improving, songwriting, collaborative performance, arranging, covers, producing). It is noted that Creating is later an organising strand.
- Third dot point: Suggested to have “local, national and global communities.”

Organisational structure

The strands/sub-strands provide a coherent organisational structure

Strongly disagree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia recommends that a research-informed organising structure is adopted (e.g., Abbs, 1987), and for performing arts subjects we suggest using **Performing, Creating, and Responding**.

Explanation

The **most significant issue that needs addressing in the proposed curriculum is the organising strands**. “Exploring and connecting; Developing skills, practice and ideas; Creating; and, Sharing and communicating” present one possible learning process in arts education, and not a content organising structure. The proposed organising strands unnecessarily complicate the Arts curriculum, and we believe that this proposed structure is contrary to the review’s aims of “refine, realign and declutter”. The formalisation of these strands has direct implications for assessment and reporting in schools. The proposed four-strand structure confuses and increases content distribution and will contribute to teacher workload intensification, particularly for generalist/arts primary teachers.

We welcome the positioning of “Developing skills, practices and ideas”; however, learning of this nature occurs across all strands. We are concerned about how teachers would specifically assess the development (i.e., the process) of skills. While we acknowledge the interrelationship of making and responding in The Arts, it is now too blurred in the proposal. This blurring has resulted in the duplication of content across bands and cluttering of the curriculum. A clear delineation of performing, creating, and responding in music is required to assess students on a five-point scale. We propose that “developing skills, practices and ideas” is considered an overarching Core Concept across all strands.

In addition, Kodály Australia argues that overarching strands for the arts learning area diminishes the unique contributions of each artform and does not allow music-specific processes to be clearly understood. This “one size fits all” approach is inappropriate for the world-class music education Australian children and young people need and deserve.

Below is further specific feedback.

- Kodály Australia advocates for the removal of the word “methodologies”, which is outdated. Our members use a range of contemporary and research-informed pedagogies

and best practices considering their specific teaching context, students, and communities.

- We suggest that the strand elaborations use active words (verbs) to draw attention to the process of music learning rather than the product. E.g. Use “performing” in strand four instead of “performance”.
- It is suggested that the descriptions of learning in music and the table of relationships between strand and content is refined and combined to declutter the curriculum.

The strands/sub-strands and core concepts are clear about what is important in the learning area/subject

Strongly disagree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia recommends that a **research-informed arts education framework** that clearly outlines the relationship of learning and all curriculum elements replaces the proposed Core Concepts.

Explanation

Kodály Australia welcomes the intention of the Core Concepts; however, the proposed Core Concepts, particularly the visual representation, are more likely to confuse teachers than provide clarity. We support a more robust and research-informed conceptual framework for learning in the arts. Such a framework should clarify the alignment between all curriculum elements and learning, including communicating meaning, strands, music elements and concepts, and content (including knowledge and skills).

“Communicating meaning” inconsistently appears throughout the music curriculum, particularly in the “Exploring and connecting” strand. It is suggested that communicating meaning exists across all strands and needs to be included in the Core Concepts.

The “musical elements and concepts” should provide a framework for structuring music content (knowledge and skills). It is suggested to use a framework of one-word headings.

1. Duration (including rhythm, metre, and sound length)
2. Pitch (including melody, harmony, and tonality)
3. Texture
4. Timbre
5. Structure (including form)
6. Expression (including dynamics and articulation).

There are also musical concepts to consider, such as development, accompaniment, contrast, etc.

Key connections

The key connections section identifies the most relevant general capabilities

Agree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia suggests **the Key Connections could be improved by making the explanations more succinct.**

The key connections section identifies the most relevant cross-curriculum priorities

Agree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia suggests that **the balance of cross-curriculum prioritises needs to be reconsidered.**

Explanation

The emphasis on cross-curriculum priorities is not balanced throughout the curriculum. For example, the place of “Asia and Australia’s Engagement with Asia” and “Sustainability” is not strongly evident in the content (Descriptions or Elaborations), whereas “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures” has a dedicated Content Description across most bands.

The key connections section identifies the key opportunities to connect with other learning areas.

Agree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia advocates that **the key connections could be refined to balance and more clearly articulate the unique ways that specific arts subjects contribute to holistic education.**

Key considerations

The key considerations section provides important information for planning teaching and learning

Strongly disagree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia recommends the **important information in the Key Considerations section is better placed in other elements of the curriculum.**

Explanation

The Key Considerations section provides important information that is better suited to other elements of the curriculum. It is suggested that the Elements of Music should be moved to the Core Concepts section. Terms that require explanation should be moved to the Glossary. It is recommended that better use of the Glossary with hyperlinks embedded throughout the

curriculum would assist in refining and decluttering the curriculum. If this section is to remain, its function and purpose need further consideration.

Year/band level descriptions

The year/band level descriptions provide a clear overview of the learning that students should experience at the year/band level

Disagree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia recommends that the band descriptions are revised to **summarise specific band content (music knowledge and skills)**, allowing for a clearer overview and progression.

Explanation

The band descriptions do not provide a clear overview of learning. We are particularly concerned that early career teachers and non-specialist teachers will not find the bands useful. As most Band Descriptions for music are very similar, they are unhelpful, redundant, and further clutter the curriculum. The band descriptions need to be revised to see a logical and sequential build of content. This would be achieved by explicitly identifying music knowledge and skills to be covered.

Furthermore, descriptions need to be carefully considered for their developmental and age-appropriateness. For example, the word “play” features in multiple bands. There is also an inconsistent use of music terminology, such as “listening”, “aural skills” and “musicianship”, and “creating” and “composing”. We applaud the inclusion of the strands in the band description; however, we disagree with the strands used, as previously noted.

Achievement standards

The achievement standards clearly describe the expected quality of learning students should typically demonstrate by the end of the year/band

Strongly disagree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia advocates that a **Music Achievement Standard needs to be developed for Foundation** to align with the other years of the curriculum.

Explanation

Many states already have music specialists teaching Foundation, and the proposed Arts Achievement Standard does not align with existing practice. It is anticipated that combining arts content for one year level and then having subject-specific content in subsequent years is likely to confuse teachers. Furthermore, the current and proposed Example Knowledge and Skills document outlines subject-specific content for Foundation. Providing subject-specific Achievement Standards and Content Descriptions for each arts subject in Foundation would provide a strong base for arts learning before Year 1 and an opportunity for authentic elaborations on subject content and examples of quality learning experiences.

The achievement standards adequately reflect a clear developmental progression.

Strongly disagree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia advocates for the **adoption of a recognised cognitive taxonomy** (e.g., Marzano and Kendall, 2007), which would allow for a clear and consistent progression of cognitive development across the curriculum.

Explanation

There is an inconsistent progression of cognitive development in individual subjects and across the learning area Achievement Standards. The same cognitive progression should be used across the learning area to maintain comparability. At times, there is also an inconsistent structure and language used in the achievement standard. It is recommended that an internationally recognised cognitive framework is adopted for the Australian curriculum.

The learning described in the achievement standards aligns with the essential content students should be taught.

Strongly disagree

Recommendation 1

Kodály Australia proposes that the **Achievement Standards are reworked to describe an expected assessable outcome in music.**

Explanation

It is recommended that the Achievement Standards are considered as the assessable outcome upon completing a band. The proposed Achievement Standards, however, include learning experiences that are not assessable on a five-point scale. This issue particularly relates to the strand of “Developing skills, practices and ideas” as previously discussed, which is a learning process rather than an outcome that can be evidenced in a student response. Examples of non-assessable cognitions in the proposed document include “share” (Year 1 and 2, Year 5 and 6), “experiment” (Year 3 and 4), “rehearse” (Year 5 and 6), etc. It is also suggested that students “respond using developing listening skills” rather than “demonstrate developing listening skills” (Year 9 and 10). Furthermore, the inclusion of “and/or” in the primary years’ Achievement Standards allows for inconsistencies in the interpretation of assessable outcomes.

Recommendation 2

Kodály Australia proposes that **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music and perspectives are prioritised as authentic and meaningful learning experiences and not mandated assessment.**

Explanation

Our members commend the deeper inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music and perspectives in the curriculum; however, we believe it is currently inappropriate to assess this content. There are also concerns that such content is not able to be authentically delivered in the typical time allocation in upper primary and lower secondary music classes. Given the complexities relating to the teaching of First Nations music, dance, traditions, and culture, we propose that this content is currently only a learning experience. Including this work as only

content now allows for the possible later inclusion in assessment in subsequent curriculum revisions.

Content descriptions

The content descriptions specify the essential knowledge, understanding and skills that should be learned.

Strongly disagree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia advocates that **essential music knowledge and skills should be integrated into the Content Descriptions.**

Explanation

The content descriptions do not specify the essential knowledge, understanding, and skills learned in Music or The Arts more generally. Many of content descriptions broadly describe music processes and could arguably be applied to any year level. For example, the Year 9 and 10 content description “Practice, develop and refine the use of listening, technical and expressive skills to shape sounds and communicate intended effects” could be applied to early primary years. The current organising structure also blurs and duplicates content in the curriculum, as previously stated. We argue that the content descriptions should be specific enough to reflect the rigour of the curriculum rather than relying on content elaborations.

The content descriptions make it clear to teachers what should be taught.

Strongly disagree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia recommends **that the Content Descriptions clearly identify music knowledge and skills to be taught.**

Explanation

Like the previous response, the Content Descriptions do not clearly identify what music knowledge and skills to be taught. The Content Elaborations provide some useful explanation of skills, but not music knowledge.

The amount of content can be covered in each year/band.

Strongly disagree

Recommendation 1

Kodály Australia advocates for **an acknowledgement in the curriculum that the delivery of primary school music education is vastly different across the country and allow flexibility for developmentally appropriate beginning content and/or revision in lower secondary.**

Explanation

The Arts curriculum design has actively sought to provide flexibility for various arts learning contexts in the primary years, covering a range including integrated arts learning, specialist music, and music in the generalist classroom by class teachers. It is also noted that the latest

data available suggests up to two-thirds of Australian children do not receive a primary school music education (Petrova, 2012). Typically, students in Year 7 receive a specialist music education. Given students' vast prior music experiences entering Year 7, Kodály Australia advocates for flexibility to deliver developmentally appropriate beginning content and/or revision in lower secondary. Many of our secondary teacher members across the country use an “older beginner sequence” in Year 7, which quickly revises concepts that should have been learned in primary school. While being aspirational, the curriculum should also reflect the reality of Australian music education.

Recommendation 2

Kodály Australia advocates that **the music curriculum should prioritise responding to how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples communicate meaning and their perspectives in and through music.**

Explanation

The music curriculum does not prioritise the music of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Instead, other issues such as intellectual property and copyright law overshadow music. The curriculum's focus should be developing cross-curricular priorities through the subject-specific content rather than the reverse.

Content elaborations

The content elaborations provide useful illustrations and suggestions on how to plan and teach the content.

Disagree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia advocates that **all Example Knowledge and Skills should be integrated into the Content Elaborations.**

Explanation

There is a misalignment between music Achievement Standards, Content, and Knowledge and Skills across all bands of the proposed curriculum. There has been some attempt to integrate skills into Content Elaborations, and Kodály Australia advocates that **all Example Knowledge and Skills should be included in the curriculum.** This will provide greater support for teachers implementing the curriculum and eliminate the need for a separate support document.

The content elaborations provide a range of contexts that support teachers to meaningfully integrate the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities

Disagree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia suggests that the role of the **cross-curriculum priorities is reconsidered in the music and arts curriculum.**

Explanation

There is a clear inclusion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives music in the curriculum, though at times is overshadowed by intellectual property and copyright issues. We suggest the role of the cross-curricular priorities is reconsidered in and through music.

Overall feedback

The introductory sections provide important information.

Disagree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia suggests that **the introduction sections of the curriculum need to be revised** to provide important information that supports teachers based on our previous recommendations in this document.

The quality of content descriptions has been improved.

Strongly disagree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia strongly recommends **revision of the organisational structure of the curriculum** as previously documented in this response.

The quality of achievement standards has been improved.

Strongly disagree

Recommendation 1

Kodály Australia advocates that a **Music Achievement Standard needs to be developed for Foundation** to align with the other years of the curriculum.

Recommendation 2

Kodály Australia advocates for the **adoption of a recognised cognitive taxonomy** (e.g., Marzano and Kendall, 2007), which would allow for a clear and consistent progression of cognitive development across the curriculum.

Recommendation 3

Kodály Australia proposes that the **Achievement Standards are reworked to describe an expected assessable outcome in music.**

The quality of content elaborations has been improved.

Disagree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia advocates that **all Example Knowledge and Skills should be integrated into the Content elaborations** as previously documented in this response.

Curriculum content has been refined, realigned and decluttered.

Strongly disagree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia advocates that **the proposed curriculum content is not refined, realigned, or decluttered**. A substantial amount of work is required to achieve the review aims, and we **welcome the opportunity to contribute to further drafting**.

The revised Australian curriculum in the learning area/subject is an improvement on the current version.

Strongly disagree

Recommendation

Kodály Australia recommends that **significant revisions** be implemented to the proposed curriculum and welcomes **consultation on a second draft**.

Explanation

The proposed revisions of the Australian Curriculum for The Arts learning area are a missed opportunity for genuine refinement and reduction. Our opinion is that the revision has fallen short of its aims to “refine, realign, and declutter” and jeopardises the opportunity for all Australians to access a quality and valued music education. This proposed version is a step backwards from the current published version and is not endorsed for implementation.

References

- Abbs, P. (1987). *Living powers: The arts in education*. Falmer Press.
- Clayton, M. (2016). The social and personal functions of music in cross-cultural perspective. In S. Hallam, I. Cross, & M. Thaut (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 47-59). Oxford University Press.
- Cross, I. (2016). The nature of music and its evolution. In S. Hallam, I. Cross, & M. Thaut (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 3-17). Oxford University Press.
- Elliott, D. J., & Silverman, M. (2015). *Music matters: A philosophy of music education* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Hallam, S. (2015). *The power of music: A research synthesis of the impact of actively making music on the intellectual, social and personal development of children and young people*. Music Education Council.
- Hallam, S. (2017). Music identity, learning, and teaching. In R. A. R. MacDonald, D. J. Hargreaves, & D. Miell (Eds.), *Handbook of musical identities* (pp. 475-492). Oxford University Press.
- Marzano, R. J., & Kendall, J. S. (2007). *The new taxonomy of educational objectives* (2nd ed.). Corwin Press.
- Petrova, I. (2012). *What makes good music programs in schools? A study of school music across Australia and a comparison with England and Russia* [Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of New South Wales]. Sydney, Australia.
- Small, C. (1998). *Musicking: The meanings of performing and listening*. Wesleyan University Press.