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Subject: Coursework review
From: John Gillies <john.gillies@unsw.edu.au>
To: <g.forsyth@unsw.edu.au>
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Dear Graham,

I wish to register my urgent and strong concern at the new proposal to restructure the undergraduate degrees in the faculty. No issue could be more important to the future of COFA and therefore needs the considered input of staff and schools in the faculty. It is also of importance to industry stakeholders outside the UNSW. To make radical and far-reaching decisions without a consultative process in the week before Christmas could rightly be seen as hasty and ill-considered.

Some points (could raise a lot more):

Re BFA/BFA-BA

Stage 1 of the coursework review proposed cutting the major strand in session 3 -5 from 3 classes per week to 2 classes, (this was bad enough) but the new proposal aims to cut the major from session 2 - 5 to only 1 class per week!

This would immediately mean that students in the Time Based Art major of the BFA/BFA-BA would not be able to do sound, cinematography etc. It would mean they would be presenting silent videos at the end of year 3! Remember that majors such as Time Based Art are already inherently multi-disciplinary.

Similarly Photomedia would be producing graduates with no knowledge of digital processes!

Also the loss of sequential learning would mean that the practices of the old BFA of City Art Institute would be re-introduced - no sequential technical and conceptual learning- always going back to the lowest level - unable to build on knowledge gained in the previous session etc, and then also the student anger and frustration which this engenders. Dangerous OHS and dodgy technical equipment practices were also common before a commitment to a core of sequential learning.

The intensive and collegiate BFA reviews of 1991, 1995, had as very important goal. It was important to have a degree of flexibility (Electives, Introductory Studies, General Studies) plus an ability for a student to have

important degree of specialisation and produce work of a standard sufficient to be awarded a degree (and be considered for entry into a BFA honours programme which would be graded directly against other honours programmes in the region through partial outside assessment) - a degree that would be recognised for its excellence and the quality of the students graduating. Over time this it has achieved - in contrast with the generally poor situation of the BFA in the 1980s, particularly if compared to other institutions. The Honours and Post-Graduate research imperative rightly meant that standards in Fine Art had to be pushed upward - we produce the bulk of our Honours and Post-Graduate research students, we don't get them all from somewhere else - we wanted this faculty to be particularly known for the quality of its Post-Graduate research. We have only just recently got our first student going all the way through the BFA to graduate with a PhD. Please remember that the earlier 1990s BFA reviews had a lot more Electives in the BFA but these have been pruned back to save money (smaller 1998 review) and that BartED students also majored in the BFA streams.

I have also not even begun to address the RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS of the proposed changes in this email!

I have kept this very brief and have not included many important points but I hope that you will consider this email.

John Gillies
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