

# Artistic Futures: Demystifying Arts Pathways and Careers

23 July 2021



At least once this year I will have a student say to me, “the arts have no relevance in my future”. I challenge this view and advocate that an arts education can be relevant to all our futures. The study of the arts can lead to a multitude of pathways that offer enjoyment, achievement, and meaningful careers and lives. At ATC, we encourage boys and families to be guided by three questions when considering their subject selections.

- What subjects will I enjoy?
- What subjects will I achieve well in?
- What subjects will meet the prerequisites for my future studies, employment, and adult life?

There is no question that the arts work differently compared to other disciplines and are at times misunderstood. I hope to demystify arts pathways and careers for you and help you answer these questions when considering elective arts subjects.

### What subjects will I enjoy?

Students should primarily choose to study subjects that they enjoy. At ATC, we believe boys should be happy at school and in life. We celebrate the individuality of our students and acknowledge that boys have different interests and passions. Traditional views of education told us that serious learning was unenjoyable, whereas we now know that intrinsic motivation is essential for academic and life success. Rigorous learning looks different in the arts; it is embodied, meaning that students learn to become artists by doing the things that artists do. Arts subjects are also one of the few that allow students to pursue their outside school interests and hobbies in the curriculum. Previous blogs capture boys speaking honestly about the arts and their perspectives on arts learning. The arts can not only make academic study more enjoyable but also life more broadly.



### What subjects will I achieve well in?

Academic excellence takes many forms, and at ATC, we celebrate achievement in the arts. When thinking about their future subjects, boys should reflect on where they have demonstrated prior success. We know that past performance is a strong indicator of future performance. If students are achieving growth and success in the arts, this is likely to continue into their senior year levels. Success in any area leads to increased confidence, happiness, and flourishing. Like learning, assessment in the arts often looks different to other subjects and is highly personalised. Subjective self-expression is privileged through tangible and digital products such as portraits, sculptures, songs, and films, and experiences such as solo and group performances. Studying an arts subject complements STEM subjects which have the added pressure of 50% external exams; after all, the greatest scientists are also artists. All arts subjects in the senior school can contribute towards a tertiary entrance score (ATAR) and contribute to a broad and balanced education.

### What subjects will meet the prerequisites for my future studies, employment, and adult life?

The arts can take on many rewarding roles in adult life. An arts education can benefit a professional creative career, develop knowledge and skills applicable to other occupations, and facilitate personal hobbies and interests.

- Professional artists
- Careers that benefit from the arts
- Life

### Professional artists

Cultural and creative activity contributed \$115.2 billion to the Australian economy in 2017-18 (Bureau of Communications and Arts Research, 2020). Most careers in the arts defy the traditional view of work and are often misunderstood. An artistic career can be highly specialised and diverse. Research documents that most Australian artists have portfolio careers, which consist of multiple simultaneous jobs in the “gig economy” that combine to make full-time work (Bartleet et al., 2020; Throsby & Petetskaya, 2017). For example, a professional musician may perform solo gigs, play in a band, run a teaching studio, run recording sessions, and administer their own business, including billing and marketing on social media. Professional artists are innovators and entrepreneurs, forging their own careers and leaving their mark on the world. Such a career pathway is highly competitive and challenging but can be extremely rewarding.





## Careers that benefit from the arts

No pathway is disadvantaged from having an arts education. Arguably, all careers benefit from the transferrable skills and dispositions that an arts education nurtures. The P21 project (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2019), which includes the 4Cs (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017), is an example of one research-informed framework that advocates the arts as a core subject for students in the 21st century. It is argued that the arts address 21st century themes; learning and innovation (4Cs); information, media and technology skills; and life and career skills (see Figure 1).

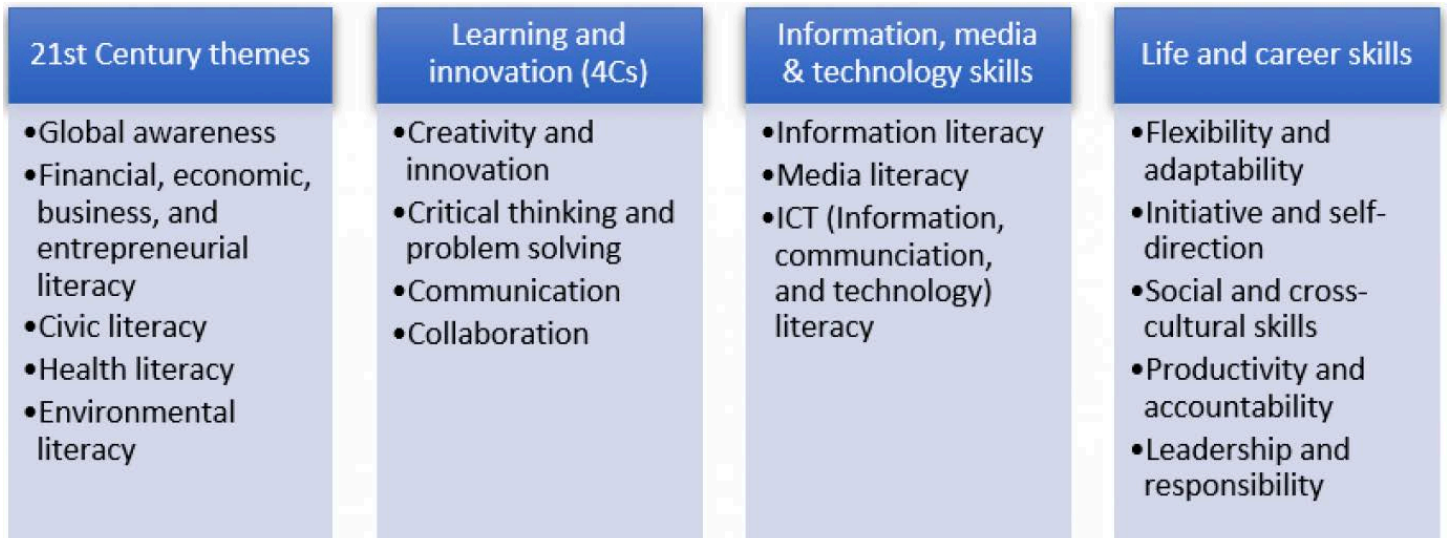


Figure 1. Framework for 21st century learning (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2019).

It is easy to see how all disciplines benefit from the transferrable skills and dispositions that an arts education offers. Example fields include health and medicine (civic and health literacy); science (innovation and problem solving); law (civic literacy and communication); business and financial management (global awareness, financial literacy, leadership, and productivity); project management (communication, collaboration, and accountability); government and politics (civic literacy, information literacy, and social and cross-cultural skills), and trades (business literacy, problem solving, and initiative and self-direction).

## Life

The arts can enrich our daily lives and, for many, give purpose and meaning. I know no one who says that they regret their arts education, but I know plenty who say they wished they had an opportunity to learn the skills of artists such as painting or playing an instrument. Being an artist can be a lifelong rewarding hobby alongside an unrelated professional career. The arts also bring people together, building community and social cohesion (e.g., We need each other: we need music). Some examples of arts hobbies include community music and theatre productions; street theatre performer; garage band musician, singing and playing for personal enjoyment; singer-songwriter; freelance and hobby artist; short filmmaker, vlogger, and social media influencer.



Senior Drama

## Arts subject offerings at ATC

At ATC, we offer the following arts subjects in the elective years.

## Subject Offerings

Year 8	Drama, Music, Visual Art	
Year 9	Drama, Music, Visual Art	
	<b>General</b>	<b>Applied</b>
Year 10	Drama, Music, Visual Art	Media Arts in Practice
Year 11	Drama, Music, Visual Art	Visual Art in Practice, Media Arts in Practice
Year 12	Drama, Music, Music Extension, Visual Art	Visual Art in Practice, Media Arts in Practice

If you would like further information or wish to ask questions relating to arts pathways and careers, please do not hesitate to contact me or your son's arts teacher. We are only too happy to assist.

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### *References*

- Bartleet, B.-L., Bennett, D., Bridgstock, R., Harrison, S., Draper, P., Tomlinson, V., & Ballico, C. (2020). Making music work: Sustainable portfolio careers for Australian musicians. Queensland Conservatorium Research Centre, Griffith University.
- Bureau of Communications and Arts Research. (2020). Cultural and creative activity in Australia: 2008-09 to 2017-18. <https://www.communications.gov.au/publications/cultural-and-creative-activity-australia-2008-09-2017-18-visual-summary>
- Jefferson, M., & Anderson, M. (2017). Transforming schools: Creativity, critical reflection, communication, collaboration. Bloomsbury Publishing.
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