

Macquarie University

Marcelle Freiman

Towards defining degree standards: creative writing and the performing arts

Abstract:

In 2010 the Australian Learning and Teaching Council funded the substantial Learning and Teaching Academic Standards Project as a feasibility study to develop and define tertiary level program and course learning outcome standards in a selected group of disciplines, of which the creative and performing arts was one. The Academic Standards Project was designed to work towards agreed discipline and qualification standards in preparation for the Australian Government's higher education quality and regulatory framework, including the establishment of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, which oversees regulation and quality assurance from 2011. The Creative and Performing Arts project's scope included creative writing as a creative arts discipline, and this became an opportunity for tertiary creative writing to contribute to the project via the participation of the Australasian Association of Writing Programs alongside other practice-based creative arts. The processes of this project were framed by international best practice in establishing standards as well as a process of wide consultation, and achieved national discipline endorsement. Participation in the project created a pathway for creative writing to articulate benchmarking standards for bachelor and coursework masters degree levels aligned with both the Australian Qualifications Framework for degree standards and threshold learning outcomes for practice-led learning in tertiary programs. Although creative writing has historically, institutionally and pedagogically resided in close proximity to, or within, other disciplines such as literary studies, and media, communication and cultural studies, the participation and contribution of creative writing to the project positions and confirms the practice-led learning and research at its core and its relationship and commonality of language and process with other practice-led creative arts disciplines.

Biographical note:

Dr Marcelle Freiman is senior lecturer in English and creative writing at Macquarie University and executive member and immediate past chair of the Australasian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP). Her current research includes creative writing as discipline, practice and research; post-colonial and diaspora literatures and theory; post-colonial creativity; and poetry, which is also her area of creative practice. Her research publications on creative writing include those in *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Programs* and *Creative Writing: Theory beyond practice*, Nigel Krauth and Tess Brady (eds). Her poetry publications include her books *Monkey's Wedding* (Island Co-op, Woodford, NSW) and *White Lines (Vertical)* (Hybrid Publishers, Ormond, Vic).

Keywords:

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Introduction

In 2010 the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) funded the Learning and Teaching Academic Standards Project (LTAS) to begin to develop and define tertiary level degree learning outcome standards for a selected group of disciplines, of which Creative and Performing Arts was one. The LTAS project's remit was to begin working towards a set of disciplinary and qualification standards. The context for this project is the Australian Government's Higher Education Quality and Regulatory Framework and the establishment of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), which oversees tertiary regulation and quality assurance from 2011. The Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) project included creative writing as a creative and performing arts discipline.

Discipline frameworks

Creative writing as a tertiary discipline was historically aligned with literary studies when, in American and British universities, writing workshops for students were led by well-known writers employed by English Departments. The subsequent history of university creative writing around questions of its disciplinary affiliations with the humanities (Dawson 2005) and in American universities and disciplines (Myers 1996), well rehearsed questions such as whether 'creative writing can be taught' and the nature of its pedagogy and disciplinary positioning have been debated and written about in Australia and internationally in peer reviewed journals such as the *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Programs* and *New Writing: The International Journal for the Theory and Practice of Creative Writing*. In Australia and New Zealand, the Australasian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP) has been a forum for professional discussion and debate amongst creative writing teachers and researchers since its establishment (as the Australian Association of Writing Programs) in 1996. This activity increased with the growth of creative writing and creative arts programs occurring since the period of development and change in the tertiary sector in Australia following the 1981 Dawkins amalgamations and continues today. Also during this time, writing programs have developed both within creative arts programs and in close proximity to English literary studies. For the most part, assessment standards have been applied at course and subject level, although some institutional benchmarking has been carried out at honours and postgraduate levels. Quality assurance in universities, the professionalism of higher education teaching, and the Carrick Institute and Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) funding of learning and teaching projects have contributed to a culture of best practices in assessment, promoting benchmarking in higher education learning and teaching.

This climate generated the need for clear statements of standards, learning outcomes and grade descriptors by disciplines and universities to align with both Australian Quality Framework (AQF) definitions at degree program level coupled with national and institutional standards at discipline level. As part of the Australian Government's 2009 'Transforming Australia's Higher Education System' the ALTC established the 2010 Learning and Teaching Academic Standards Project (LTAS) as a feasibility

study to define tertiary level standards for a set of broad disciplines including Creative and Performing Arts. The LTAS project's remit was to commence the process of defining discipline standards in the university sector.

The broad discipline areas of the Academic Standards Project were identified from Australian Field of Education definitions from the Australian Standard Classification of Education, with eight discipline groups and eight discipline scholars selected for participation in the one-year demonstration project¹. The discipline scholar for the Creative and Performing Arts Learning and Teaching Standards project (LTAS CAPA) was Professor Jonathan Holmes of the University of Tasmania. At the initial ALTC forum of the LTAS project, a panel of experts in Creative and Performing arts recommended that the discipline scholar 'explore the possibility of developing a suite of threshold learning outcome statements that can be applied to all bachelors degrees offered in Creative and Performing Arts disciplines rather than attempt to create separate suites of statements' (2010 LTAS CAPA statement: 4) for each of the fields of study. The fields included were creative writing, dance, music and sound, screen and media, drama and performance, and visual arts. The rationale for this grouping were the areas collected under Division 19: Studies in Creative Arts and Writing in the Australian and New Zealand Research Classification (ANZSRC) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008). The decision was made to focus on 'standards as they apply to *practice-led* learning in the Creative and Performing Arts' (2010 LTAS CAPA statement: 4)². The emphasis on practice-led learning would mean that learning in fields of criticism and theory in all creative arts discipline areas would fall beyond the brief of the demonstration project, although the final 2010 LTAS CAPA Statement emphasises that the nexus between theory, research and practice in each area is reflected in the wording and conceptualisation of the practice-led CAPA learning outcome statements (see Figure 1):

It is important to stress here that there is not intention to diminish the importance and, indeed the central role that a theoretical and historical understanding of the various arts plays in underpinning that practice: the ability to demonstrate this at the technical, conceptual, expressive and communications levels lies at the very heart of degree programs in Creative and Performing Arts. The DRG [Discipline Reference Group] paid considerable attention to ensuring that this rigour was captured in the statements both at the bachelor and coursework masters level' (2010 LTAS CAPA statement: 13).

A further reason for the project's focus on practice-led learning is reflected in its grounding in international benchmark and 'tuning' statements, for example the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) benchmark statements for Art and Design make clear separation between practice and theory. In the European Tuning project following the Bologna process a very similar process of collaboration between creative arts disciplines (extending across countries and institutions) had occurred, evidenced by the 'membership of the *Inter}artes Thematic Network* consisting of more than 70 of the leading academic institutions providing bachelor and higher degrees in the creative and performing arts' (2010 LTAS CAPA statement: 5). The tuning documents emerging from this European collaboration played a significant part in the framing of the Australian LTAS CAPA project as benchmarks for its processes and approaches.

Project processes: research, consultation, development

Once the disciplines for the framework of the CAPA LTAS project were selected, a consultation and development process had to be established. Early in 2010 the leaders or chairs of the national peak bodies representing each of the creative arts disciplines, together with deans of two faculties incorporating Creative and Performing Arts and a member representing higher education private providers, were invited to form the project's Discipline Reference Group (DRG) to assist and advise the discipline scholar in developing outcome statements. The comprehensiveness of the DRG provided opportunities for chairs of peak bodies to liaise with their executive boards as well as to provide discipline-specific information and gain feedback from their memberships. In addition, beyond the DRG, numerous academics including course coordinators, heads of schools, deans and program directors were identified. As a result, a substantial network was established consisting of stakeholders at all levels of creative arts sectors in higher education who could be (and were) consulted for feedback and endorsement of the project's outcomes. The Chair of the AAWP, as the head of the recognised national peak organisation for Creative Writing, was invited as a member of the DRG to collaborate on the development of the project's outcomes, and also to contribute in her capacity as representative for the creative writing discipline and as a liaison point with the AAWP Executive Committee of Management (AAWP Executive). Members of the AAWP Executive contributed to further networking reach and provision of resources through its involvement in the creative and performing arts leaders' network *CreateEd*, itself funded by the ALTC in 2009. At a professional level, the creative writing representative to the DRG contributed significant tertiary expertise in assessing undergraduate, Masters and PhD creative writing for over a decade and from her membership of her university's Assessment Working Party which consolidated and formalised the university's policy of standards based assessment³.

Initially, it was planned that learning outcomes for CAPA bachelors' degrees would be articulated and if there was sufficient time within the project's duration, the project would turn to learning outcome statements for masters coursework degrees. The project was guided by the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), with particular reference to the AQF Council's July 2010 publication *Strengthening the AQF: A framework for Australia's qualifications. Consultation Paper*. The paper tabulated ten Australian qualification level types presented as sets of criteria for learning outcomes; qualification type descriptors; the notional duration of student learning for each qualification type; and 'an integrated set of qualification types positioned on the levels structure' (AQF 2010: 3). Particular attention was given by the project to the statements defining degree qualification Level 7: bachelors degree (16) and Level 9: masters coursework (18) and to their further elaborations on each degree's qualification—its expected knowledge and skills, and the capacity to apply these in the document's sections on 'AQF specifications for the bachelor degree' (32-3) and 'AQF specifications for the masters degree' (36-7). The 2010 document was the one used for the LTAS project. After public consultation, a later document was published by the AQF in July 2011. *The Australian Qualifications Framework, First edition 2011* refines and clarifies the language of the descriptors and criteria for the

qualification levels and graduate capabilities and outcomes, for example adding into the qualification type descriptor for bachelors degrees the category 'Purpose' as first statement, then the categories 'Knowledge' and 'Skills', the 'Purpose' being to qualify 'individuals who apply a broad and coherent body of knowledge in a range of contexts to undertake professional work and as a pathway to further learning' (46).

The new framework will be overseen by the Tertiary Education Qualifications and Standards Agency (TEQSA), with the Higher Education Standards Framework based on the AQF Framework being developed to 'underpin the standards approach to quality assurance' (2010 LTAS newsletter). The AQF framework defines graduate outcome levels. That is, what a graduate is expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of their learning at each level. The 2010 publication *Strengthening the AQF*, used for the LTAS CAPA project, states that graduates at the level of a bachelor's degree are expected to have capabilities in the 'Systematic and coherent body of knowledge, principles and concepts and higher order learning skills for further learning and professional employment'. (The wording of this statement conveys a clearer emphasis on knowledge, learning and skills than the AQF 2011 publication, where the ordering of the categories to begin with 'Purpose' orientates more towards applying the degree to professional work and further study than acquiring knowledge.) Using this descriptor, the LTAS project took as its starting point and aims the need to define minimum or threshold learning outcomes that define and describe this 'coherent body of knowledge, principles and higher order learning skills for further learning and professional employment' for each of the discipline areas of the demonstration project. The LTAS project specified that it would define threshold or minimum outcomes as core 'must haves', not the totality of learning outcomes, as a way of safeguarding against standardisation and loss of autonomy: 'The ways in which these outcomes are taught, learned and assessed are not defined. Curriculum is defined by the institution not the national framework' (2010 LTAS newsletter: 3).

The project also turned to the structural division of degree threshold learning outcomes as 'cycles' of competence achievement as they have been defined in Creative Arts disciplines internationally. The European tuning project set up by the European Union in 2001, for example, developed first and second cycle competences, and later, third cycle (doctoral level), as a way of framing the Europe's vastly different institutional and disciplinary degree structures. The work done by the European Tuning project, and the quality assurance frameworks of the 'Dublin descriptors' as they were interpreted and developed by the Tuning project's work in Creative Arts, provided already-established learning outcome descriptors for first, second and third cycle awards in higher music education, visual art and design, theatre and dance (2004 Shared 'Dublin descriptors'). The European project was, similarly, not aimed at standardisation, but rather to aid the development of higher education across Europe by opening up debate on subject-specific and general competences; exchanging information on curriculum, learning outcomes and methods of teaching and assessment; and improving co-operation and collaboration in developing transparency (2001-2002 *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe*). In the context of the European Tuning project subject reports articulate different degree

outcome levels represented as consecutive ‘cycles’ that correspond somewhat to AQF degree threshold capability levels but, more significantly, they provide a foundation for benchmarking degree levels and quality assurance in practice-led creative arts.

The LTAS CAPA Statement of December 2010 thus emphasised that the ‘learning outcome framework developed by the discipline communities in Creative and Performing Arts in Europe has been extremely important to this present project’ (6). The established practice-led Creative Arts have played a significant role promoting tertiary arts education in Europe, with the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA, formed in 1990) and the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC, formed in 1953) influential in this promotion and positioning these disciplines in the Bologna process⁴. The LTAS CAPA project also gave careful attention to the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Honours Degree Benchmark Statements in a range of creative arts areas published 2007-08 (art and design/history of art, architecture and design; communication, media, film and cultural studies; dance, drama and performance; English; and music), and to North American quality assurance frameworks for selected creative arts disciplines, as developed by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD). Significantly, there are no European, North American or QAA benchmark statements for creative writing although it is mentioned in the QAA subject statement for English. In response to this, the UK National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE) published *A Subject Benchmark for Creative Writing: Creative Writing Research Benchmark Statement* in 2008 and these statements were accessed and utilised by the Australian LTAS CAPA project. All the UK and European benchmarking documents include both threshold and typical standards and thus contain a large number of learning outcomes expectations (2010 LTAS CAPA statement: 6). They also include those that identify more aspirational learning outcomes that disciplines consider appropriate at equivalent bachelors and masters / honours levels (cycles 1 and 2). The decision for LTAS to consider only threshold outcome levels for the broad CAPA discipline as a way of framing the project was also influenced by this factor.

Practice-led learner-centered activities in the creative and performing arts were the basis on which the discipline scholar and project officer for the CAPA project drafted six threshold learning outcome statements (TLOS). For this work, research was also conducted on the stated graduate capabilities of higher education institutions, where these were available. For the most part, universities have published graduate outcomes for bachelors degrees, and these could be mapped across the broad knowledge and skills for AQF level 7, but there was wide discrepancy and often no information on outcomes for masters coursework graduates. The graduate capability outcomes that were available showed a number of common areas of expected proficiency for graduates and these were incorporated into the six CAPA LOS⁵. These were presented to the Discipline Reference Group and discussed in depth at the first group meeting in Sydney on 15 April 2010. At this meeting

there was broad agreement that the draft learning outcomes represented the expectations of the reference group although, at the time, it was clear that there would be a period of considerable reflection on and refinement of the statements before they

were widely gazetted within the discipline communities' (2010 ALTC CAPA statement: 7).

In May 2010, the AAWP invited Professor Holmes to present the project to the Executive Committee of Management's mid-year retreat meeting held at Macquarie University. At that stage, as discipline scholar, he was seeking feedback on draft learning outcomes for bachelors level, with the masters coursework level TLOS also drafted. The AAWP committee was inspired by the project, in particular the alignment of creative writing as a creative arts discipline, incorporating the creativity, realisation, reflection, collaboration, autonomous learning and other cognitive skills involved in the practice and learning of creative writing. Feedback from the committee and the organisation's chair as DRG member contributed to the final expression and wording of the learning outcome statements.

The CAPA DRG met again at the end of May, when the revised draft learning outcome statements were considered and endorsed for bachelors and also, at this stage, for the coursework masters degrees. These were then circulated to the discipline communities for feedback and comment. The discipline scholar presented the revised final draft TLOS in November to the executive boards of the peak bodies as well as to a group of deans, associate deans, program leaders and directors for endorsement in preparation for the Learning and Teaching Academic Standards recommendations to be presented to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations by the ALTC in December 2010. Most significant for the CAPA project was that

“in principle” endorsement was also granted from the first ever meeting of the Deans and Directors of Faculties, Colleges and Schools of the Creative and Performing Arts held on 15 October 2010 at the University of New South Wales⁶ (2010 LTAS CAPA newsletters June, November).

The process of developing these learning outcome statements to the point of their wide endorsement in late 2010 involved much consultation and comment in addition to, and after, the DRG had worked on them. During the DRG meetings there was debate about the use of terms, the categorisation and ordering of the outcomes list, the desirability (or not) of implying sequential learning, and group work to find the exact language and eliminate ambiguity in meaning so that the TLOS could be applied across the broad CAPA areas. As members were closely involved in their own creative arts practices and pedagogy, it was illuminating to share the different processes and to identify areas of commonality of practice, despite differences in their media. This commonality and sharing of language was also applied to the articulation of the learning outcomes and to a raised climate of discussion and awareness of establishing standards for creative arts disciplines so clearly distinguishable by their products, pedagogies and practices. Nevertheless, the common areas of learning were significant, particularly in terms of learning and practice as *process*. While the learning outcome statements are necessarily generic and provide the threshold expectations of competency for quality assurance and purposes of establishing degree standards, it is also possible to drill down to develop detailed learning outcomes specific to disciplines and to align these in turn with assessment learning outcomes for specific and capstone experience tasks.

The CAPA LTAS project was framed to create learning outcomes to masters coursework level, a degree qualification in need of benchmarking because so many different requirements, processes and outcomes and differing disciplinary and institutional structures are reflected in these programs throughout Australia. When the project turned to masters learning outcomes, similar strategies were applied as for the bachelor degree in aligning the outcomes with the Australian Qualifications Framework (2010) for level 9: coursework masters degrees. The masters outcomes were mapped against the AQF descriptors and show the expected progression and deepening of skills, knowledge and application of the bachelors TLO categories. For example, in the first two TLOS, masters by coursework graduates will be able to ‘Integrate specialised and advanced skills with a developed knowledge of the Creative and Performing Arts discipline’ and ‘Generate, research and explore ideas, concepts and processes in the field through integrated creative, critical and reflective thinking’ (see Figure 1) (2010 ALTC CAPA: 12). In addition, international benchmarks were referenced in the *European Tuning Educational Structures: Reference Points for the Design and Delivery of Degree Programmes in Music* (2009) document and the *European Inter}artes Thematic Network, Art and Design Document* (2007). The Inter}artes document contains threshold competency level outcomes for bachelors level at cycle 1, masters level at cycle 2 and PhD at cycle 3 (Inter}artes document: 9, 36), with cycles 1 and 2 adaptable to the Australian bachelors and masters levels (2010 LTAS CAPA Statement: 25). The international benchmark standards documents consulted for this project are significant in that they locate the capacity of the CAPA project to be deployed (with further discipline and aspirational learning outcomes) as standards for creative arts degrees in a context of established international benchmark standards. The final report of the project provides the mapping of the CAPA learning outcome statements across comparisons with international, AQF and professional accreditation standards (2010 LTAS CAPA statement: 20-26).

Implications for the creative writing discipline

The division between practice-led learning and theory and criticism applied to this project for pragmatic reasons was somewhat artificial for all creative arts disciplines, as prior work in any field must inform current practice and its teaching. In point of fact, tertiary writing is a broad discipline area: it includes creative writing, professional writing and journalism. This reflects ways in which tertiary creative writing is taught; how it has been positioned in higher education historically and institutionally (as part of English, creative arts, professional writing, communication, journalism and cultural studies); and its areas of classification as research. The ANZRC Division 19 includes writing in several ways: as 1903 Journalism and professional writing; as 1904 Performing arts and creative writing; and as 1999 Other studies in creative arts and writing. These overlapping categories demonstrate the multidisciplinary nature of tertiary writing and creative writing. They also begin to demonstrate the complexity of categorising as a discrete discipline the practice of writing and the written verbal expression that forms part of learning outcomes for many disciplines in humanities, sciences and social sciences.

The historical (and still current) integration (or rather, inclusion) of creative writing with English literary studies has some purchase in that the literary outputs of accomplished creative writing by (mainly) postgraduate students frequently results in publications that make contribution to literary culture (see AAWP Professional Outcomes). It should be noted that the English discipline is, itself, also multidisciplinary with its links to philosophy, journalism, history, aesthetics and visual culture, to name a few. The reading of texts of English literature, criticism and poetics are often prescribed for writing students as examples of good writing or in relation to specific approaches or techniques. Conversely, creative writing is viewed as part of literary studies through a historical alliance with literary criticism, as in T. S. Eliot's statement that 'creative artists make superior critics', where he goes so far as to assert that 'the criticism employed by a trained and skilled writer on his own work is the most vital, the highest kind of criticism' (1932: 23). Since the establishment of creative writing as a tertiary and research discipline, it is unlikely that practice-led learning would justify itself through its relationship with critical thinking such as in Eliot's view (where he is intent on claiming the role for the creative writer as critic) (Freiman 2005). In the current tertiary context, it is creative writing which is being claimed by English: in defining the scope of English the British QAA Benchmark Statement for English (2007) attributes the educational health of English to its inclusiveness of creative writing: 'The marked increase in the number of creative writing courses, strands, and modules since the original subject benchmark statement was published provides an excellent example of the vitality of English and its related disciplines'. The statement affirms

both the fertility of creative writing and its close and productive affinity with the study of English literature and language. Creative writing, in addition to encouraging self-critical practice, allows students to acquire many of the same aptitudes, knowledge and skills, but attain them to some extent through different routes. ... The original work produced by creative writing students is likely to be informed by wide and critical reading of existing literature, and to demonstrate precise attention to genre, form and audience (QAA 2007: 2).

English literary studies also clearly includes creative writing, though this is more as critical reading 'in practice' rather than as a creative practice in its own right. These are, in fact, uneasy bedfellows. How *does* creative writing encourage 'self-critical practice'? Can it really do this as part of literary criticism? Tertiary postgraduate creative writers and teachers will assent variously to the difficulty and/or the advantages of applying critical skills to writing projects while immersed in creative practice (Brady 2000; Kroll 2006, 2010). A practice-led approach to creative writing, on the other hand, provides a framework that encompasses the awkwardness of moving between creative and critical processes, or between practice and analysis, for many writers by positing different models such as the 'iterative cyclic web' for creative/critical process—an inclusive model that 'accommodates practice-led research and research-led practice, creative work and basic research' and includes 'many points of entry and transition within the cycle' (Smith & Dean 2009: 19).

This example of the ‘re-framing’ of practice-led disciplines to incorporate and include research and criticism complicates formulating threshold learning outcomes, yet as the CAPA project shows, degree threshold learning outcomes can do this. For example in the first two bands of the threshold learning outcomes, a graduate of a bachelor degree in the creative and performing arts will be able, in addition to demonstrating skills and knowledge of their creative practice, to ‘Develop, research and evaluate ideas, concepts and processes through creative, critical and reflective thinking and practice’; a graduate of a masters by coursework in CAPA will be able, in addition to integrating ‘specialised and advanced skills with a developed knowledge’ of their practice, to ‘Generate, research and explore ideas, concepts and processes in the field through integrated creative, critical and reflective thinking’ (Figure 1) (2010 LTAS CAPA: 12). When adding discipline-based and aspirational learning outcomes, which must be aligned with assessment and assessable tasks, these complications will have to be addressed by the sub-disciplines. For creative writing, this will include the twin processes of reading and reflective thinking.

The *Creative Writing Subject and Research Benchmark Statement* (2008), prepared by UK-based National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE) for undergraduate and honours level study as part of the UK and European Tuning project, effectively redresses the appropriation of creative writing into the QAA benchmark statement for English (2007 QAA). It acknowledges the overlap with other disciplines such as literature and journalism programmes (2008 NAWE: 5) and admits that

Creative Writing can occur in a wide variety of contexts for a wide variety of purposes. Our aim is to celebrate this diversity, which at the same time giving a clear indication of the kinds of activity, creativity, knowledge, understanding, skills and methods of learning appropriate to the field of study (3).

Because its medium is written language (which is ubiquitous across all disciplines) and is so closely connected to reading, creative writing is perhaps more complex, or at least less obvious, in its overlapping with other disciplinary categories—as in the example of philosophical feminist writing (Cixous) which deploys poetic, even stream of consciousness, language for its textual explorations—than some other creative arts disciplines. What is so interesting about the strategy adopted by the CAPA LTAS project is that in addition to articulating the threshold learning outcomes for practice-led learning in creative arts, the forum created by the project generated a very broad network of creative arts organisations that share a common language about threshold standards for practice-led learning of creative arts within the tertiary sector. This collaboration led to the establishment of the Australian National Academy of the Creative Arts in 2010 as organization for the broader creative arts disciplines. Uneasy relationships have the potential to generate creative solutions and those between research, theory and creative practice, as key elements of all the creative arts disciplines, must be incorporated into further standards projects.

Of significance for creative writing's status as a creative art in this project is how it has established a number of connections with other creative arts areas and the creative arts mode of practice-based learning. When creative writing is aligned with English, there is a tendency to read, and even assess, creative writing as literary text and as finished product, without sufficient consideration being given to the process of its making. Creative writing practitioners know that a great deal of messy creative mapping and brainstorming, notetaking and drafting, revising and redrafting occurs as creative writing work develops. This applies to all genres of creative writing, whether narrative, poetry or playwriting. Furthermore, the workshop process which is part of teaching and learning creative writing, involves collaborative group work—at the stage of writing a first finished draft, and before editors and others contribute to the work—where writing creeps out of its personal, individual space and exposes itself to an audience of readers. This workshop process is collaborative and reciprocal and is part of a larger process. Understanding this assists in articulating what defines creative writing as creative art: that is, the creativity at the core of its 'making' as a creative art form with written (and performed) language as its medium. It is this element of writing as creative formation in language that motivates its teachers to explore how creative writing is learned (Freiman 2007). This is why creative writing finds strong connection with other creative arts practitioners and learners. Sharing in the articulation of the CAPA project's learning outcome statements, promoted new and exciting ways of situating the learning of creative writing that incorporate its cognitive, social and creative processes as well as its key graduate knowledge and skills.

Project outcomes and further possibilities

The draft learning outcomes for bachelors and masters coursework were submitted to scrutiny and for feedback at many forums throughout 2010. The discipline scholar attended conferences for each of the peak creative arts organisations and conducted a range of workshops for teachers and academics in creative arts at universities across Australia. At the 2010 Annual Conference of the AAWP held at RMIT University, Melbourne, Professor Holmes, in a keynote presentation 'Creative Arts as a Discipline', spoke of the LTAS CAPA project and its outcomes, not only in their contribution to benchmark standards for Creative Arts, but also in terms of the potential for interdisciplinary collaborations in creative arts practice and learning and teaching. At this conference, the Executive Committee of Management, endorsed the CAPA learning outcome statements on behalf of members. Also in November, the Council of Professors of Writing (CoPoW), which has particular lobbying and professional interests in research outcomes for the sector and in higher degree and doctoral degree standards, endorsed these outcome statements at their meeting. The writing discipline, through the AAWP and the work of its executive members and chair in 2010, gained much from its participation in this project which had the effect of engaging thinking and conversations about benchmarking in the context of the professionalism of higher education creative writing.

The final LTAS CAPA learning outcome statements for bachelors and coursework masters levels is represented below in Figure 1.

Upon completion of a bachelor degree in Creative and Performing Arts, graduates will be able to:	Upon completion of a masters by coursework degree in Creative and Performing Arts, graduates will be able to:
Demonstrate skills and knowledge of the practices, languages, forms, materials, technologies and techniques in the Creative and Performing Arts discipline	Integrate specialised and advanced skills with a developed knowledge of the Creative and Performing Arts discipline.
Develop, research and evaluate ideas, concepts and processes through creative, critical and reflective thinking and practice.	Generate, research and explore ideas, concepts and processes in the field through integrated creative, critical and reflective thinking.
Apply relevant skills and knowledge to produce and realise works, artefacts and forms of creative expression.	Apply and refine technical skills and specialist knowledge within a sustained and resolved body of work.
Interpret, communicate and present ideas, problems and arguments in modes suited to a range of audiences.	Interpret, communicate and present complex work and ideas to specialist and non-specialist audiences using professional conventions.
Work independently and collaboratively in the Creative and Performing Arts Discipline in response to project demands.	Initiate, lead, negotiate and interact with others in planning, adapting to and executing creative and performing arts projects.
Recognise and reflect on social, cultural and ethical issues, and apply local and international perspectives to practice in the Creative and Performing Arts Discipline	Engage critically with social, cultural and ethical issues and apply local and international perspectives to extend practice in the Creative and Performing Arts Discipline

Figure 1. Creative and Performing Arts Learning Outcome Statements

With regard to higher degree benchmarking, in its general notes, the 2010 ALTC CAPA LTAS statement points out:

Part of the reason for focusing on bachelor and coursework masters degrees rather than ... other higher degrees, has been that the higher degrees, for the most part, have a longer tradition of using benchmark standards across institutions through the use of the external examination process' (9).

However, as the statement confirms, it 'remains the case that there are substantial variations in the ways in which higher degrees in the creative and performing arts are offered in Australia' (9)—a variation that will need to be addressed in the next phase of the project. During 2011, members of the AAWP at both chair and past chair levels have been involved in another ALTC project aimed at reviewing and articulating standards for creative writing PhD theses. Subsequent to the final outcome of the CAPA LTAS project at the end of 2010, members of the AAWP Executive Committee were successful in an ALTC project application on 'Examination of Doctoral Degrees in Creative Arts: process, practice and standards', a project on national benchmarking of standards and examination processes. This is an agenda the AAWP has pursued since close to its inception in the mid 1990s, in its focus on supervision and the nature of the exegesis, and on issues arising from differences in institutional degree structures and expectations which are frequently canvassed in

TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Programs and in AAWP annual conference themes and papers. Benchmarking was, indeed, already under consideration for higher degree creative writing, because higher degree research occupies much energy in supervision and examination. CoPoW is in the process of framing a set of standards for Creative Writing PhD theses.

Conclusion

The 2010 LTAS CAPA statement notes the potential for studies in the creative and performing arts to produce graduates with the capabilities identified by the project:

Typically, graduates in Creative and Performing Arts will be able to demonstrate a range of skills and knowledge relating to the discipline of their choice and will have the capacity to think creatively, critically and reflectively. They will be able to communicate effectively in a range of modes and contexts and will have the capacity to produce works, artefacts and forms of creative expression for public display. They will be able to work independently and to collaborate with others and can be expected to have a sound knowledge of national and international developments in their discipline (11).

As the LTAS CAPA project could not have its funding renewed because of the withdrawal by the Australian Government of funding for the ALTC after 2010, the foundation it has laid and the implementation of the threshold learning outcome statements it has outlined must be taken up, regulated and regularly reviewed by the disciplines themselves and their leadership bodies. As a result of the extensive consultation processes it adapted, there is broad awareness of the LTAS project's achievements so far. The threshold learning outcome statements, prior to their endorsement and to the end of 2010 were also presented nationally at workshops at most metropolitan universities during October and November 2010, for program convenors and others to discuss likely impact on their programs, assessment practices and course design. This process of broad, thorough and constructive engagement with stakeholders has promoted thinking and discussion about what teachers, directors and convenors expect students to be able to do when they qualify with bachelors and masters coursework degrees in creative arts courses and degree programs and focused the need for clear learning outcome statements in course curriculum planning, materials and information.

The demonstration project was necessarily circumscribed in its scope, but its processes and development have been implemented with far wider reach than the framework of the project implies. It has done this by creating professional networks across the higher education creative and performing arts community and linking this community in a shared purpose in articulating its benchmarking in setting standards and for quality assurance processes from 2011. With Australian Government higher education policy aiming that universities should increase their inclusiveness and facilitate the higher education participation of at least 20% of low SES or equity students by 2020, and the increasing demands for programs and degrees in creative arts (Brook 2008), the demand for clarity and benchmarking of academic standards and learning outcomes in creative arts subjects, programs and disciplines will become

more urgent. It is the aim of the LTAS project that the demonstration project TLOS will act as models in process and outcome standards to be extended to other disciplines and sub-disciplines.

Endnotes

1. The discipline groups participating in 2010 were architecture and building; arts, social sciences and humanities; business, management and economics; creative and performing arts; engineering and ICT; health, medicine and veterinary science; law; and science (2010 ALTC LTAS).
2. The ANZSRC Division has six groups: 1901 Art theory and criticism; 1902 Film, television and digital media; 1903 Journalism and professional writing; 1904 Performing arts and creative writing; 1905 Visual arts and crafts; 1999 Other studies in creative arts and writing.
3. See Macquarie University's *Assessment policy, procedure and guidelines to implementing assessment policies and procedures* (2008).
4. The Bologna Process is named after the Bologna Declaration, signed in the Italian city of Bologna on June 1999 by European ministers of education with the aim of developing a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) 'based on international cooperation and academic exchange', as a program of higher education reform (Bologna Secretariat 2010).
5. For example, Macquarie University recommends graduate capabilities include cognitive, interpersonal and personal capabilities as: discipline specific knowledge and skills; critical, analytical and integrative thinking; problem solving and research capability; creative and innovative capabilities; effective communication; engaged and ethical local and global citizens; socially and environmentally active and responsible; capable of professional and personal judgement and initiative; commitment to continuous learning (Macquarie University 2008b).
6. The following motion was passed: The meeting of Deans and Directors of Faculties, Colleges and Schools of Creative and Performing Arts held at the University of New South Wales on 15 October, 2010: 1. Commends the 2010 national consultation process undertaken by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council for the development of the threshold learning outcomes for the disciplines in Creative and Performing Arts at the Bachelor and coursework Masters degree level; and 2. The meeting endorses in principle the Creative and Performing Arts Academic Standards Statement as a comprehensive and achievable statement of the threshold learning outcomes that are required of Bachelor and coursework Masters degree graduates from any Australian higher education provider (LTAS CAPA newsletter November 2010).

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