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Designing an Electronic Arts Degree

In 2005, UWS introduced a new degree model with the intention of fostering multi-disciplinary collaborative school wide projects, breaking down the discipline boundaries to develop student attributes more in line with the prevalence of multi-disciplinary practice in the creative arts.

Figure 1 is a model of the overall Bachelor of Electronic Arts, showing school wide project units and elective slots. You will note that the degree model has been extended to include an elective fourth year including two large school wide projects; it is planned that sufficient students will enrol to provide budgets capable of contracting major international figures to direct these projects and facilitate touring.

The Digital Musics, Screen Arts and Digital Arts major units are central offerings from Electronic Arts. All Electronic Arts students must undertake all units in the first year and the Electronic Arts Lab 1 + 2.

The Contemporary Arts units form a theory stream, with Con Arts 3 + 4 being discipline specific and the other units in the stream containing shared lectures (school wide) and discipline specific tutorials and workshops.

Sonic arts pedagogy in SoCA

In 2005 the delivery of a new strand of six units of study in Digital Musics commenced within the School of Contemporary Arts at the University of Western Sydney's Penrith Campus. These units form sub-majors for degree programs in Music and Electronic Arts and are available as electives to student from any degree program within the university.

In developing and delivering these units we have attempted to strike a balance between achieving a solid grounding in the practical and theoretical principles of the field while allowing skills to be applied within the context of creative practice. While striving to achieve a broad and inclusive approach to the field it is inevitable that some aspects will receive greater priority than others. This focus defines the unique culture that characterizes the academic offerings at UWS.

UWS Electronic Arts Studio Report

An introduction to the field is presented in the first year Digital Musics units. In the first of these units students acquire a grounding in experimental and electroacoustic repertoire, acoustics and electroacoustic systems, basic stereo sound recording techniques, and music sequencing. Great scope is allowed in the interpretation and use of technologies for individual expression and creative experimentation. Students are encouraged to be critical of the role of technology in shaping their cultural context. The second unit divides its focus between the theories and techniques of sound synthesis and sound manipulation in the studio on the one hand, and a challenge to contemporary listening practices on the other. Conventional musical acoustics provides integrate terminology and practice.

Students may elect to continue a Digital Musics major in second year, studying intermediate level studio practice in parallel to an introduction to interactive performance system development with Max/MSP. Students are evaluated on two major creative projects, one for recorded media and one for live performance. This work is supported with a series of contextual lectures on various aspects of sonic arts culture and practice. During the second semester students are introduced to aspects of physical human computer interaction through the use of basic sensing technologies. This approach to embodied performance interaction is developed in the third year with a focus on principles of interaction design and software design for efficient and creative solutions to control mapping. This work runs parallel to advanced studio techniques delivered within a professional level studio and recording environment.

Students are encouraged to develop an integrated approach to the application of sonic arts techniques within their broader creative practice, encouraging a creative approach to the informed and appropriate use of technology and a more sensitive response to the possibilities and use of aural media in the culture at large.

Current postgraduate study focuses on interactive performance systems and soundscape composition.