

Tertiary Interviews

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This file was prepared by Max Darby in August 2009

This file contains advice for students who wish to apply for entry to an Art Course in a Tertiary Institution such as a University or Art School. The information contained here should be cross-referenced to the file on this website titled **Careers in Art**.

Each year, the available places in Tertiary Art Courses are far less than the number of students who apply. Entry to most Tertiary Art Courses requires a student interview. The interviews are usually programmed at the end of the school teaching year.

Tertiary Art staff need to make decisions about which students to offer places in their course or courses. Careful selection processes are employed to ensure that only the best students are admitted. Much more than art skills and techniques are considered necessary by most institutions (although these are an obvious advantage).

There are many other personal qualities related to Visual Arts study that are highly valued by Tertiary Institutions and some of these include

- A love, knowledge and admiration for the Visual Arts Industry

- Knowledge of the various career pathways that are available in the Visual Arts
- Knowledge about the chosen course for which the student is applying
- A sound knowledge of drawing and its various uses, and skills and techniques in a range of drawing styles and forms
- A sound knowledge of the processes and practices of Design and its elements and principals
- Demonstrated expertise in a Visual Arts form, or forms, for example, Painting, Drawing, Ceramics, Sculpture, Graphic Design, Fashion Design Textiles and Fabrics, Mixed and Multimedia work or Photography etc.
- Evidence of an ability to generate and explore ideas, both in breadth and depth
- Evidence of the ability to think and act creatively and imaginatively
- Good written and/or communication skills
- Computer and IT literacy
- Knowledge of art, artists and artworks
- The capacity to analyze and interpret artworks
- Knowledge of the Gallery System and how it works
- Investigation and research skills and techniques
- Other.

Realistically, few students seeking entry to a Visual Arts course are likely to already possess all of the above qualities at the time of the interview. It is worth keeping in mind that Tertiary Institutions have a responsibility to develop in their students the kind of qualities they value. Preferences for some of the qualities they seek will vary from institution to institution. There are various ways you can find out what different Institutions value or prefer (some are listed below).

The following points should be considered before attending a Tertiary selection interview, during the interview and after the interview.

Before the Interview

- Decide which course(s) interest you
- Learn as much as you can about your chosen course(s). You may be asked about it and why you chose it
- Visit the Institutions(s) that offer the course and try to see their facilities
- Try to meet some of the lecturers or speak to students already undertaking the course
- Attend 'Open Days' if they are provided by the institution you want to attend (this is a 'must' if offered).
- Try to obtain a published description of the course(s) from the Institution and check out the details of the course
- Ask questions about things you don't understand
- Ask your current teacher whether any previous students from your own school went to the Institution and try to contact them
- Prepare a portfolio of your Studio Works, Visual Diaries or Workbooks, including working trials and samples (you might need to purchase a special folder for this purpose). If some works are too large or cumbersome to move with ease, a photographic record should be included
- Practice talking about your own studio works and research with anyone who will assist. You can get a friend or relative to ask you specific questions about your own works and about your selected course
- Check the venue, date and time for the interview and arrive about 30 minutes early. You don't want to be interviewed under stress
- Wear appropriate and comfortable clothing
- Check that you have everything you need with you that has been requested by the Institution.
- Know where everything is in your folder so that you can find it quickly without fuss.

During the Interview

- Enter the interview room and introduce yourself confidently. You might say something like *"Thank you for interviewing me and asking to see some of my work"*
- Make sure you are comfortable when you sit down
- Make sure your folder and anything else you might need are close by and ready to access
- Listen carefully to each question and take a short pause before answering. In that time think carefully to be sure what it is they are trying to find out and then determine what information you have that will be useful in your answer
- Provide short and concise answers. The interviewers can follow up with additional questions or comments should they need more from you (a short amount of time will be allocated to your interview so if you take all of it to answer the first question there will be a lot you will not share).
- Always address and look at the person who asks you a question
- If you are not sure about the question asked seek clarification
- Never, try to talk about something you don't understand
- Ask questions of your own at the end if there are things you need to know. It is usually impressive if you show enough interest to want them to clarify things.

After the Interview

- Institutions do not want to be harassed by prospective students about whether they will be successful. It is, however, reasonable to ask for a timeline about when positions will be offered. Should you miss out it can be useful to contact the department and let them know you'd like to be considered for any places that are not taken up if someone drops out
- If you miss out you should try to find out what would make you

more likely to be accepted next year and then go and do what is required

- If you are offered a place it is essential to find out the Registration date for the institution (this is usually sent to you by the Institution)
- Ascertain the starting date of your course and the venue for the commencement of the course
- Ascertain what materials and/or equipment need to be purchased
- Ascertain whether there is any preparatory work or reading that is required before the commencement of the course
- Once again, try to speak with current students about their experiences in the course.

Additional points to keep in mind

You may be placed under pressure at some stage during the interview. The interviewers may want to know how you handle stress and any issues that arise unexpectedly. This gives them an insight into how you will handle the day to day undertaking of the course.

The interviewers may even deliberately try to put off the course to test how committed you are to getting into it. For example, you could be told there is little chance of getting into your course due to high demand and ask whether you have another option. You need to reply strongly and positively about your intentions and desire because they will not choose you if you tell them you have another preference, such as Accounting, that you can take up if you miss out. Successful artists are usually those who *'cannot do anything else!*

You can tell the interviewers that if you miss out this year you will be back next year for another interview. You should try to find out what kinds of experiences would help to improve your chances when you return –

and then go and do those things.

Research 'other ways' of getting into your intended course and/or career in case you miss being selected. For example, there are sometimes short courses you can do that 'lead to' the course you have chosen. In Australia there are often courses that provide this pathway option. There are often also 'part time' avenues for your course that can be undertaken.

You should take time to explore the world of exciting career options in the Visual Arts and related areas. As mentioned at the start, there is another file (**Careers in Art**) on this website that outlines many of these careers.