

# Accounting for creative writing

Preliminary report of the Accounting for Creative Writing student survey (May 2008)

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This research was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at the University of Melbourne.

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## **About the study**

This report is a preliminary outcome of the PhD thesis 'Governing Cultural Fields: creative writing as liberal discipline and cultural practice'. This thesis reconsiders the post-Foucauldian account of arts education in the historical context of advanced liberalism. It draws on Ian Hunter's genealogies of modern European aesthetic education in order to consider the significance of those more 'enterprise' orientated forms of liberal governance that have substantially revised the goals and techniques of western education systems. More specifically, it reassesses the current relevance of the liberal educational rationales for tertiary creative arts education in the light of two competing accounts of the social and economic utility of creativity in post-war developed nations; that of cultural capital research, and that of the more recent Creative Industries policy agenda.

The thesis takes as its case study the expanded field of tertiary creative writing programs in the post-Dawkins reforms Australian University. This event accompanies the general expansion of the creative arts in Australian higher education since the development of a unified national tertiary sector in the late 1980s, and would appear to have parallels in the UK and North America.

## **About this report**

The report is divided into three sections. Section one situates the study in the context of the recent 'creative turn' in cultural policy and tertiary curriculum reform. It then introduces the emergent field of tertiary creative writing programs in Australia in relation to debates about the research capacity of the creative arts and the industry relevance of creative writing courses. Section two looks at student load in the

creative arts in the post-Dawkins reforms university, and in particular student load in the Detailed Discipline group 'Written Communication' for the years 2001 and 2006.

Section 3 reports the findings of the Accounting for Creative Writing student survey conducted in May 2008. This survey investigates how undergraduate students enrolled in creative writing subjects account for their interest in creative writing, as well as their broader forms of cultural participation and consumption. This preliminary report addresses the question of the extent to which the survey respondents are motivated in their studies by an interest in literary writing and literary publishing. The report therefore analyses results for two sets of survey instruments; those designed to demonstrate how respondents prioritise motivating rationales for enrolling in creative writing, and those designed to measure reading habits.

## **1 Context of case study**

Since the late 1990s the noun 'creativity' has become a key term for a wide range of policy fields traditionally unrelated to arts and cultural policy, including economic development, organisational management and urban planning. During this period the adjective 'creative' has been annexed to numerous forms of analysis that traverse this policy terrain, such as 'creative industries', 'creative cities', 'the creative class', 'creative communities' and 'creative capital'. Behind the 'creative turn' of the last decade lies the concept of a knowledge (or information) society. Although informed by a number of distinct economic analyses, the notion of a knowledge society rests on the general proposition that the production of knowledge and symbolic value has become of central importance to the economies of advanced western nations during the last quarter century. It is in this policy context that renewed attention has focused on the notion of creativity as a key economic input. While the harnessing of creativity

to instrumental rationales based on economic discourses has a long history in the twentieth century, it is only in the last decade and with the advent of the OECD's support for the idea of a 'knowledge-based economy' that this literature has produced a series of specific policy initiatives capable of implementation (Peters 2009).

In response to the policy terrain of the knowledge economy the Australian Arts Faculty has developed two distinct models for curriculum reform. The creative industries model is strongly aligned with the attempt to articulate the value of arts education and the arts sector specifically to the broader policy paradigm of an innovation economy. (Cunningham 2004: McWilliam 2008). This model is accompanied by an international literature that argues for the increased economic importance of creativity and has already exerted a significant influence on Australian cultural policy generally. At the level of tertiary education the creative industries model of curriculum reform has found strongest support in the more prestigious tier of the 'new' universities (post-Dawkins reforms) known as the Australian Technology Network.

The second model is associated with claims for the increased relevance of liberal arts education in the context of rapid and unpredictable changes in the nature of professional occupations. This model is associated with the liberal college tradition in North America and the international Bologna Model. In the US calls for a strengthening and renewal of 'liberal' or 'general' education in the face of a knowledge economy have received strong support from curriculum researchers drawing on cognitive psychology (Berieter 2002) and from a longitudinal study on the benefits accruing to graduates (Pascarella, Wolniak, Seifert, Cruce and Blaich 2005).

This model has recently found a foothold in the elite tier of the Australian university sector known as the ‘sandstone’ universities.<sup>1</sup>

Both approaches to arts curriculum seek to engage a number of social and economic phenomena associated with the idea of a knowledge economy, such as the decline in full-time and lifelong forms of employment, the increased economic significance of the service industries, the internationalisation of professional labour markets, and the increased importance of ICTs. Both models emphasise the increased importance of broad and adaptable skill-sets for new kinds of complex problem-solving, and the need for interdisciplinary undergraduate education and lifelong learning. Both developments also respond to the recent well-noted increase in demand for postgraduate study in Australia (see **Table 8** and related discussion below), an event which is most plausibly explained in terms of increased labour market competition and the declining value of tertiary qualifications in general (Linsley 2005; Marginson 1995).

Despite these similarities there are significant differences, especially at the level of curriculum planning and implementation. Where the liberal model draws on the history of the social sciences and humanities and focuses broadly on the social and ethical capacities required for liberal citizenship in a global economy, the creative industries approach focuses squarely on the economic significance of creativity and foregrounds the fields of the creative arts and media and communications. This emphasis on creativity has occasioned a return to discussions of the vocational value of creative arts education. In the Australian Arts Faculty, the creative industries agenda for curriculum reform seeks to establish the value of creativity in terms of both the inculcation of general or transferable skills required by

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<sup>1</sup> See for example ‘The Melbourne Model: Report of the Curriculum Commission’ (The University of Melbourne 2006).



a contemporary 'creative workforce', and as the training and qualification of personnel for specific cultural industries. For instance, the recent report 'Educating for the Creative Workforce: Rethinking Arts and Education' articulates this distinction as the difference between 'education through art' and 'education in art' (Oakley 2007: 7). This report conducts an extensive literature review and concludes that although there is only minimal evidence of a relationship between arts education and academic achievement, there is strong evidence for a relationship between arts education and 'a variety of social or non-cognitive skills, from self-confidence to communication skills' that appear to match the kinds of skills employers increasingly seek (Oakley 2007: 6). The report calls for further research on what it calls 'the demand side', which it glosses as 'the needs of the evolving workplace' (Oakley 2007: 6).

The value of such research notwithstanding, this study approaches the question from the opposite direction. In place of considering industry demand for creativity the present study investigates student demand for creativity through a case study of demand for creative writing courses. A focus on student demand for tertiary creative arts education would be significant in the context of knowledge economy policy-making given the assembling of a quasi-market for domestic and international higher education in Australia over the last two decades (Marginson 1997). During this period the figure of 'student demand' has been increasingly cited as a driver of university expansion, diversification and quality control, while the management of student demand is debated in curriculum planning (OECD 1997: Brennan and Bennington 1998: Cruikshank 2003). The Commonwealth government's response to the recent Bradley Review sets ambitious targets for expanding participation and

seeks to further consolidate the role of student demand in the allocation of government support (DEEWR 2009).

Australian creative writing programs would be significant in this context as evidence suggests they have undergone significant growth during this period, expanding both horizontally across the tertiary sector and vertically into postgraduate studies. Creative writing courses in Australia currently articulate with a range of educational objectives and are found in a variety of academic locations, including programs in Creative Arts, English Literary Studies, Professional Writing and Publishing. Furthermore, teachers in creative writing increasingly promote their courses in terms of a new 'creative economy' (Dale 2006). However, the expanded presence of creative writing programs has resulted in the emergent field becoming problematised along two distinct lines, both of which have direct and indirect effects on curriculum planning.

Firstly, both teaching staff and administrators at many levels of the university system have encountered the problem of how the research output of creative writing is to be quantified. In the context of reduced government funding for university research in general, and funding-formulas that disadvantage research in the creative arts in particular, there has been a significant push to consolidate and legitimate creative writing as an academic discipline capable of both training and certifying research students, and competing for research funding (Krauth 2000). In 1996 the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs funded a two-year research project designed to assess the research output of the creative arts and to develop appropriate research performance indicators for the sector, however the terms of reference for this project did not include creative writing (Strand 1998). This event catalysed the field of writing programs and in 1996 the Association of

Australian Writing Programs (AAWP) was formed as a national association for all university-based writing programs. Although the association has facilitated the work of scholars from a broad range of disciplines, the AAWP's annual conferences and peer-reviewed journal (*TEXT*) have been the preeminent forums in Australia for developing arguments in support of the research-capacity of creative writing specifically.

These arguments have coalesced around two distinct accounts. The first is based on the historical genesis of creative writing in English literary studies and assumes the latter's disciplinary priorities. This approach suggests creative writing is primarily a mode of training in applied literary formalism, one that enables practical knowledge of 'the structure or general laws of literature' through the application and refinement of formalist methodology. (Dawson 2005: 178). This account holds that literary writing is primarily a craft, and that the analytic practices of literary formalism assist in both teaching and producing knowledge of this craft.

The second account of the research capacity of creative writing comes under the banner of 'practice-led research' and can be described as post-disciplinary in so far as it attempts a coalition with other creative arts disciplines in citing an extra-academic genealogy for its research methodologies (Webb and Brien 2008). The practice-led research model emphasises the role of the practicing artist in producing knowledge via their experimentation with the immanent and material processes of art making. This account has been linked to arguments for the innovation-capacity of the creative arts and has received strong endorsement from the Creative Industries Faculty at Queensland University of Technology where it is defined on the Faculty website for prospective students.

Artists and creative practitioners have been researching their disciplines and their practice at QUT's Kelvin Grove campus for over two decades. In the process of creating new works these artist-researchers have made original contributions to the store of knowledge about their discipline through a rigorous investigation of practice. [...] Typically these works challenge traditional understandings of the arts through their interdisciplinarity, arresting use of technology and playfulness of form.<sup>2</sup>

These two ways of accounting for the research capacity of creative writing clearly differ in strategy. While the former looks to the artist as craftsperson and the history of the humanities, the latter looks to the artist as innovator and the future of a creative economy. While the former confidently assumes the structuralist proposition that historically enduring forms can be excavated from the literary canon and objectively known, the latter proposes a phenomenological openness to the 'outside' of structure. This difference in orientation might even be further discussed in terms of the distinct agendas of the liberal and creative industries curriculum models introduced above. Despite these significant differences however, it needs to be noted both accounts foreground the artistic status of the work and its author. Whether we consider the research capacity of creative writing is based on further objectifying the principals of a historically established repertoire of literary genres, or on producing new knowledge through material experimentation that exceeds inherited forms, both approaches rest on 'literary art' and 'the artist' as a first principle in delimiting their object. Taken together, they attest to what we might

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<sup>2</sup> See the 'Practice-led research' webpage, QUT Creative Industries Faculty, QUT. Available at <<http://www.creativeindustries.qut.com/research/practice-led-research.jsp>>

describe as the 'literary paradigm' of creative writing.<sup>3</sup> Such a paradigm rests on the well-established notion that the purpose of creative writing programs is to provide an apprenticeship to aspiring literary authors. This notion has animated foundational debates around the question of whether creative writing can be taught, and whether it can be taught at undergraduate level (Lodge 1996). Such a paradigm is premised on a substantive value-commitment held by teaching staff concerning the value of artistic or literary writing. Following the work of Ian Hunter on the history of literary education, we might note that while such a value commitment may be central to the professional identities of those recruited to teach, it has always harboured the potential to come into conflict with the more instrumental and mundane rationales of education systems.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, to note such a paradigm exists is not to overlook the fact it is articulated within different kinds of writing programs and attached to different educational goals, as noted above.

The existence of such a paradigm is supported by a recent census of all Australian PhD and DCA theses in creative writing successfully submitted between 1993 and 2008. In a study of 199 creative writing theses undertaken at 27 Australian Universities Nicola Boyd found that 85.6% (N=167) of all submissions were in literary genres and that 13.3% (N=26) of submissions were in popular genres (1.1% (N=2) of submissions were both literary and popular) (Boyd 2009: 26). Across all the individual texts submitted for assessment (N=208) the three most common forms

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<sup>3</sup> That the practice-led research model of creative arts education is supported by Creative Industries tertiary programs in Australia would be local evidence for the broader relevance of Nicholas Garnham's argument that creative industries policy reform in the UK has been aligned with the interests of the arts sector and represents (in the final analysis) 'a return to an artist-centred, supply side defence of state cultural subsidies [.]' (Garnham 2005: 15)

<sup>4</sup> Drawing on Max Weber's sociology of vocations Ian Hunter has suggested that a substantive commitment to literary culture has historically reflected the status-ethics of English instructors as a professional caste required to exemplify a commitment to higher ethical values that transcend worldly concerns. (Hunter 1988). While the migration of creative writing pedagogy from secondary to tertiary level in the US during the 1930s strongly supports Hunter's thesis, further research would be required to establish whether this genealogy can be applied to other creative arts disciplines.

were the novel (69.2%/N=144), poetry, (13.9%/N=29) and plays (7.2%/N=15) (Boyd 2009: 25). This finding contrasts with the publishing success rates reported for each of these forms. The census shows that literary genres had a lower chance of publication (48%) than works in popular genres (65%) (Boyd 2009: 32). This difference in publication success is striking given that Boyd's figures do not distinguish between creative works published in part or in toto (i.e. minor works were not distinguished from book-length publications), or between university collections dedicated to publishing student work and industry publications.<sup>5</sup>

This leads to a consideration of the second set of problems, which lie on the industry-side of the demand equation. Creative writing researchers have noted a perception amongst publishers and some prominent authors that the curricula of creative writing programs are not aligned with the needs of the publishing industry. In their review of these controversies, Jen Webb and Donna Lee Brien note;

Publishers, social commentators and professional writers in Australia (and to a lesser extent Britain) have made negative assertions about the function, role and value of university training for creative writers. Generally this is connected to perceptions that universities do not train students to produce publishable work, or fit them for careers; that is, they satisfy neither the aesthetic nor the economic aspects of creative life. (Webb and Brien 2006: 7)

Based on anecdotal evidence, criticisms from publishers have been both qualitative and quantitative in scope; that is, they have claimed there is an oversupply of

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<sup>5</sup> The higher rate of publishing success enjoyed by popular genres in relation to literary genres leads Boyd to ask '[i]f the assessment for a creative work continues to be its potential as published work, then universities may wish to reconsider their position regarding popular genres.' (Boyd 2009: 52).

graduates without the requisite skills to work in publishing and an oversupply of manuscripts ill-suited for publication. (Webb and Brien 2006: 7)<sup>6</sup>

Such claims appear to be supported by recent industry developments. In 2007 the Australian Publishers Association, the peak body for the Australian publishing industry, developed a curriculum review and accreditation process that enables qualifying tertiary writing programs with an industry-focus to carry its imprimatur. This accreditation process seeks to further consolidate the identity of publishing and professional writing programs as a field of teaching that is distinct from creative writing.<sup>7</sup>

While this perceived misalignment between Australian tertiary writing programs and the publishing industry may be an effect of the recent expansion and public visibility of writing programs, it may also be an effect of a decline in the commercial viability of literary genres, an event that has been described by publishing researchers as ‘the decline of the literary paradigm in Australian publishing’ (Davis 2007). While numerous authors and public intellectuals have lamented the state of Australian literary publishing, publishing researcher Mark Davis has provided the first evidence-based study on the structural changes to the publishing industry that have led to the decline in interest by publishers in Australian literary writing during the 1990s. Davis’ account includes an analysis of the government policies and industry structures that were previously in place and which

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<sup>6</sup> Further evidence in support of this perception on the part of publishers is supported by Andrew Wilkins, publisher of *Australian Bookseller and Publisher*. ‘From an industry perspective, I think there is a lot of cynicism about creative writing programs. What are all these people writing for? If they’re writing for their own personal enjoyment and skills development, that’s great, but if they’re writing to get published that’s something else. [...]The closer the connection between such courses and the marketplace (publishers, magazines, newspapers etc), the better. [...] Book publishers and literary agents certainly don’t seem to appreciate the extra manuscripts they receive in their slush piles as a result of these courses . [...] Many publishers have started to refuse to look at MSS at all, such is the avalanche of unpublishable material they receive each year.’ Andrew Wilkins, private communication, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> See the ‘Accreditation guidelines’ available from the Australian Publishers Association’s website. <[http://www.publishers.asn.au/training.cfm?doc\\_id=507](http://www.publishers.asn.au/training.cfm?doc_id=507)>

enabled a 'literary paradigm' to rise in the first place. According to Davis the rise of the literary paradigm in Australian publishing took place during a period of strong 'cultural nationalism' in the 1960s and 1970s, a time when industry protections, the birth of a new era of state funding for the arts, and the absence of multinational media conglomerates enabled Australian literary publishing to flourish within the commercial publishing sector. Significantly, this period coincides with the first tertiary writing programs to be established in Australia (Dawson 2005: 135-155). In terms of the decline of this publishing paradigm, Davis cites a number of causes, including the vertical integration of Australian publishers within multinational media groups, the rise of new publishing media, and the reduction in government assistance schemes and tariffs. Significant too has been the new subscription-based market research company Nielson Bookscan that since 2000 has tracked around 85% of Australian book sales and enhanced the capacity of publishers to analyse market demand. Davis demonstrates that while this period does not correspond to a decline in the profitability for Australian publishing in general, it does signal the end of a period of government-sponsored 'cultural nationalism' as underpinned by strong industry protections.<sup>8</sup>

It is significant in this context that arts sector organisations have recently begun to fund research that assesses the economic viability of literary publishing and the needs of small and independent publishers specifically.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Davis' findings

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<sup>8</sup> Davis' account has received two considered responses from David Carter (Carter 2007) and Katherine Bode (Bode *forthcoming*), both of which substantially qualify and complicate the 'narrative of decline' Davis puts forward. Analysing much broader datasets than Davis draws on, both Carter and Bode suggest that although recent figures do suggest a decline in the interest of large publishers in Australian literary fiction relative to other book genres, such a decline may not be all that exceptional historically, and that it remains to be seen whether this event indicates a long term trend.

<sup>9</sup> See the report prepared for the Australia Council by SGS Economics and Planning *Economic Analysis of Literary Publishing In Australia* (Australia Council for the Arts 2008) and the report prepared for the Small Press Underground Networking Community (SPUNC) by Kate Freeth 'A Lovely Kind of Madness: Small and Independent publishing in Australia' (Freeth 2007). Although the SGS Economics and Planning report presents



are supported by a recent Australia Council survey report that shows the mean earned income from 'all arts related work' by Australian writers who can be defined as 'practicing professional artists' has declined from \$27,100 p/a in 1986/87 to \$24,000 p/a in 2000/01 (Throsby and Hollister 2001: 51).<sup>10</sup>

Although these developments might be expected to place some pressure on the literary paradigm of creative writing in general, it has been suggested the decline in interest of large publishers in Australian literature may be accompanied by an increase in 'DIY', niche-market and subsidy publishing (Davis 2007: Bode *forthcoming*). Such a shift might be discussed in terms of alternate economic models available for the analysis of literary production, one which pays closer attention to the *producer*-led economies that result from the 'symbolic capital' that accrues to literary writers and their readerships (Bourdieu 1996). Furthermore, as noted above creative writing in Australia is located in a diverse range of programs and articulated with a range of rationales, including historically enduring educational rationales that are quite independent of the market for literary genres. However, rather than explore these educational rationales or economic models for literary production, the current report is concerned with student demand for creative writing. Before considering a recent survey of creative writing students, the following section analyses new data on student load in the creative arts with a specific focus on the Detailed Discipline Group 'Written communication'.

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an optimistic picture of Australian literary publishing that contrasts with Davis' account, this is explained by the blunter measure for defining literary publishing used. For instance, the report defines all Australian fiction as 'literary publications' without distinguishing between popular fiction genres, such as Fantasy and Horror, and literary fiction genres, such as Natural and Social Realism (Australia Council for the Arts 2008: 9). This measure should of course be compared with the actual genres funded by the Literature Board of the Australia Council.

<sup>10</sup> The survey population of 1062 artists was sourced from the databases of arts sector organisations. See *Don't Give Up your Day Job: an economic study of Professional Artists in Australia* (Throsby and Hollister 2001)

## 2 Student load in the creative arts and creative writing

Published data suggests student demand for creative arts education in Australia was strong during the 1990s and has increased dramatically in certain fields of study. Statistics on student load for the years 1994 and 2000 published by the Australia Council (**Table 1**) show that although enrolments for the Major Field of Study 'Visual and Performing arts' fell slightly below global average increases during this period (38.9% as opposed to 41.4%), there were substantial above-average increases in the Minor Fields of Study 'Film and photographic arts' (109.5%), 'Dramatic arts' (85%) and 'Graphic arts and design' (77%).

**Table 1:** EFTSU for Major Field of Study 'Visual and performing arts', 1994 and 2000.

Field of Study	1994	2000	% change
Visual and Performing Arts	2,869	3,286	14.5
Conservation of Arts and Cultural Material	110	113	2.7
Crafts	618	176	-350.0
Dance	335	494	47.4
Dramatic Arts	846	1565	85
Film and Photographic Arts	703	1473	109.5
Fine Arts	4065	4305	5.9
Graphic Art and Design	2636	4666	77
Music	3428	4351	26.9
Other Arts	802	2368	195.3
<b>Total Arts</b>	16,410	22,797	<b>38.9</b>
<b>Total Tertiary</b>	394,486	557,763	<b>41.4</b>

Source: *Some Australian Arts Statistics* (Australia Council for the Arts 2003: 6)

The Field of Study classifications used in this table were based on similarity of potential vocations rather than similarity of content. If we look at enrolment figures in

the Discipline Groups that group fields of study according to similarity of course content, we see a significant increase in student load in the Major Discipline Group 'Visual and performing arts' relative to other Arts Faculty groupings. **Table 2** shows student load between 1990 and 2000 increased by 55.34% for the Major Discipline Group Visual and Performing Arts, as compared with 32.68% for the Humanities and 50.37% for the Social Sciences

**Table 2:** EFTSU for Major Discipline Groups, 1990,1995 and 2000.

Discipline Group	1990	1995	2000	% change
Humanities	34,648	40,236	45,974	32.68%
Social Sciences	32,705	44,196	49,179	50.37%
Visual and performing arts	15,335	19,289	23,822	55.34%

Source: 'An Australian Perspective on the Humanities', (Pascoe 2002: 20).

Unfortunately the Field of Study classifications used by the Department of Education, Science and Training to collect statistics during the 1990s do not permit the analysis of student load in creative writing programs specifically. In 2000 the Field of Study classifications were replaced by the Field of Education classification system with the introduction of a new Australian Standard Classification of Education (ABS 2001). Field of Education classifications permit a more detailed analysis of individual areas of study whether these are grouped around potential vocational outcomes (Field of Education) or similarity of content (Discipline Group).<sup>11</sup> Significantly, the Broad Field of Education classification 'Creative Arts' emerged as a far more comprehensive classification than the earlier 'Visual and performing arts' which it included as a Narrow Field of Education alongside new groupings such as 'Communication and

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<sup>11</sup> For a comparison of the Field of Study classifications with Field of Education classifications, see Appendix 4, *Students 2001: Selected Higher Education Statistics* (DEST 2002).

Media Studies'. Significantly, the Narrow Field of Education 'Communication and Media Studies' includes the Detailed Field of Education 'Written Communication'. Communication and Media Studies is described in *The Australian Standard Classification of Education* as 'the study of creating, producing, disseminating and evaluating messages', while the Detailed Field of Education 'Written Communication' is further described as 'the study of developing effective written communication skills' and as including copy writing, letter writing, poetry writing, story writing and technical writing (ABS, 2001: 187). A list of subjects coded to this discipline group by the University Planning Office at the University of Melbourne shows the range of creative, professional and academic modes of writing that might be covered under this heading (see **Appendix 1**). Although the detailed discipline group Written Communication does not focus exclusively on creative writing, it provides the best measure of total national student load in this area.

**Table 3** shows student load by Narrow and Detailed Discipline Groups within the Broad Discipline Group 'Creative Arts' for the years 2001 and 2006. For purposes of comparison, the table includes student load for the Broad Discipline Group 'Society and Culture' in which are located the humanities and social sciences. The discipline groups are based on similarity of course content and show student load irrespective of the faculties or schools students were studying in or the courses they were studying for. It is therefore the best indicator of total student demand for these subject areas in these years.

**Table 3:** EFTSL for Broad Discipline Group 'Creative Arts' by Narrow and Detailed Discipline Groups, and Broad Discipline Group 'Society and Culture', 2001 and 2006.

<b>Discipline Group</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>%change</b>
100100 Performing Arts	2035	733	- 63.98
100101 Music	4133	6051	46.41
100103 Drama and Theatre Studies	2187	2114	- 3.34
100105 Dance	311	470	51.12
100199 Performing Arts not elsewhere classified	472	421	-10.80
100300 Visual Arts and Crafts	2430	1547	-36.33
100301 Fine Arts	4264	4277	0.30
100303 Photography	1135	1237	8.98
100305 Crafts	121	85	-29.75
100307 Jewellery Making	73	58	-20.54
100399 Visual Arts and Crafts not elsewhere classified	933	916	-1.82
100500 Graphic and Design Studies	1484	2420	63.07
100501 Graphic Arts and Design Studies	3369	3245	-3.68
100503 Textile Design	197	128	-35.02
100505 Fashion Design	292	464	58.90
100599 Graphic and Design Studies not elsewhere classified	706	1015	43.77
100700 Communication and Media Studies	4000	4939	23.47
100701 Audio Visual Studies	2870	3081	7.35
100703 Journalism	2581	3141	21.70
<b>100705 Written Communication</b>	<b>2495</b>	<b>3798</b>	<b>52.22</b>
100707 Verbal Communication	221	270	22.17
100799 Communication and Media Studies not elsewhere classified	6374	7368	13.49
109900 Other Creative Arts	388	346	10.82
109999 Creative Arts not elsewhere classified	458	1206	163.31
<b>Total 'Creative Arts' (Broad Discipline Group)</b>	<b>43549</b>	<b>49328</b>	<b>13.27</b>
<b>Total 'Society and Culture' (Broad Discipline Group)</b>	<b>159203</b>	<b>185967</b>	<b>16.81</b>

Source: DEST Higher Education Statistics. Datasets extracted by author, Jan 2008.

Although the table shows student load in the Broad Discipline Group Creative Arts increased less than for the Broad Discipline Group Society and Culture (13.27% as opposed to 16.81%), there are several distinct Detailed Discipline Groups in the

Creative Arts that show much higher than average increases. The table shows that there were significant increases in Music (46.41%), Graphic and Design Studies (63.07%) and Written Communication (52.22%). This figure lends support to recent claims that student demand for writing programs is not only strong but has been increasing.

So what do the statistics reveal about the kinds of students taking creative writing? The following four tables show the composition of student load for Written Communication and cognate disciplines in 2006 according to Citizenship, Language background, Socioeconomic Status and Course Type.

**Table 4** shows that Overseas Students made up 12.58% of total student load for Written Communication, a figure that is significantly lower than the percentages of Overseas Students found in Communication and Media Studies (24.09%), Journalism (15.15%), and the percentage totals for the Broad Fields of Education 'Creative Arts' (17.48%) and 'Society and Culture' (19.10%).

**Table 4:** EFTSL by selected disciplines by citizenship, 2006.

	<b>Overseas</b>	<b>Domestic</b>	<b>Total</b>
Written Communication	478 (12.58%)	3321 (87.42%)	100%
Communication and Media Studies	1190 (24.09%)	3749 (75.91%)	100%
Journalism	476 (15.15%)	2665 (84.85%)	100%
<b>Creative Arts total</b>	8623 (17.48%)	40706 (82.52%)	100%
Literature	348 (7.22%)	4469 (92.78%)	100%
<b>Society and Culture total</b>	35447 (19.10%)	150132 (80.90%)	100%

Source: DEST Higher Education Statistics. Datasets extracted by author, Jan 2008.

**Table 5** shows that Non-English Speaking Background students accounted for 1.57% of total domestic student load, a figure that is comparable to other cognate discipline groups shown.

**Table 5:** EFTSL by selected disciplines by language background (domestic students), 2006.

	<b>ESB</b>	<b>NESB</b>	<b>Total</b>
Written Communication	3269 (98.43%)	52 (1.57%)	100%
Communication and Media Studies	3687 (98.35%)	62 (1.65%)	100%
Journalism	2642 (99.14%)	23 (0.86%)	100%
<b>Creative arts total</b>	39941 (98.12%)	765 (1.88%)	100%
Literature	4436 (99.26%)	33 (0.74%)	100%
<b>Society and Culture total</b>	146227 (97.40%)	3905 (2.60%)	100%

Source: DEST Higher Education Statistics. Datasets extracted by author, Jan 2008.

**Table 6** shows domestic student load in 2006 by socioeconomic status. The table reveals that the percentage of student load for high SES domestic students in Written Communication in 2006 was substantially lower than for the other discipline groups. Conversely, the table shows that student load for Medium and Low SES students was significantly higher than for all other discipline groups.

**Table 6:** EFTSL by selected Disciplines Groups by Socioeconomic Status (domestic students), 2006.

	<b>Low SES</b>	<b>Med SES</b>	<b>High SES</b>	<b>SES unknown</b>	<b>Total</b>
Written Communication	539 (16.46%)	1665 (50.86%)	1047 (31.98%)	23 (0.70%)	100%
Communication and Media Studies	478 (12.86%)	1605 (43.17%)	1617 (43.49%)	18 (0.48%)	100%
Journalism	359 (13.57%)	1204 (45.50%)	1068 (40.36%)	15 (0.57%)	100%
<b>Creative arts total</b>	4950 (12.28%)	17412 (43.20%)	17680 (43.86%)	268 (0.66%)	100%
Literature	659 (14.86%)	1963 (44.25%)	1781 (40.15%)	33 (0.74%)	100%
<b>Society and Culture total</b>	19888 (13.37%)	63400 (42.62%)	64325 (43.24%)	1157 (0.78%)	100%

Source: DEST Higher Education Statistics. Datasets extracted by author, Jan 2008.

One explanation for the higher percentage of low-SES student load is offered in **Table 7**. This table shows the distribution of student load for all students of Written Communication according to Course Type. It shows that enabling courses made up a substantially higher percentage of student load (7.24%) than for any of the other disciplines shown. Enabling courses are courses designed by tertiary education providers to assist students from designated equity groups, such as students from low-SES backgrounds, gain access to tertiary programs as well as equip such students with the necessary skills to succeed in these programs. (Clarke, Bull, Neil, Turner and Bull 2000).

**Table 7:** EFTSL by selected Discipline Groups by Course Type, 2006.

	<b>Undergraduate</b>	<b>Postgraduate</b>	<b>Enabling</b>	<b>Non-Award</b>	<b>Total</b>
Written Communication	3076 (81.03%)	363 (9.56%)	275 (7.24%)	82 (2.16%)	100%
Communication and Media Studies	4181 (84.65%)	587 (11.88%)	62 (1.26%)	109 (2.21%)	100%
Journalism	2737 (87.17%)	368 (11.72%)	0.00 (0.00%)	35 (1.11%)	100%
<b>Creative arts total</b>	42541 (86.24%)	5661 (11.48%)	450 (0.91%)	677 (1.37%)	100%
Literature	4161 (86.38%)	469 (9.74%)	64 (1.33%)	123 (2.55%)	100%
<b>Society and Culture total</b>	148179 (79.68%)	33177 (17.84%)	887 (0.48%)	3723 (2.00%)	100%

Source: DEST Higher Education Statistics. Datasets extracted by author, Jan 2008.

The level of student load in enabling courses coded to the Detailed Discipline Group Written Communication is even more striking when looked at in terms of absolute EFTSL. In 2006 enabling courses in the Detailed Discipline Group Written Communication (275 EFTSL) accounted for more than half of all student load in enabling courses across the entire Broad Discipline Group Creative Arts (450 EFTSL). Furthermore, although the higher percentage of student load within



enabling courses would contribute to increased representation of low-SES students, it would not account for the comparative trend away from High SES student load and toward Medium SES student load that is shown in **Table 6**. Further research would be required to account for why Written Communication is more attractive to Medium SES students and less attractive to High SES students relative to other discipline groups.

**Table 7** and **Table 8** provide some perspective on the significance of postgraduate student load for creative writing programs. It would appear from both anecdotal evidence and the recent census of creative writing theses that there has been a major increase in postgraduate study in creative writing since the early 1990s (Boyd 2009). This has led to substantial academic attention being focused on the needs of postgraduate creative writing students specifically.<sup>12</sup> Such efforts would appear justified. **Table 8** shows a dramatic increase of postgraduate EFTSL in Written Communication between the years 2001 and 2006. This table shows that postgraduate student load in Written Communication increased by 109.83%, an increase that is more than eight times the percentage change for postgraduate load in Communication and Media Studies, and seven times the percentage change for postgraduate load in Literature.

**Table 8:** EFTSL by selected Discipline Groups and Course Type, 2001 and 2006.

Discipline / Course Type	2001	2006	% change
Written Communication / Undergraduate	1986	3076	54.88
Written Communication / Postgraduate	173	363	109.83
Written Communication / Enabling	265	275	3.77
Communication and Media Studies / Undergraduate	3374	4181	23.92

<sup>12</sup> In 2006 the Australian Learning and Teaching Council funded a research project on the needs of creative writing postgraduate students and the development of an online Australian Postgraduate Writers Network. See 'Australian Writing Programs Network: Final Report' (Webb, Brien and Bruns 2008).

Communication and Media Studies/ Postgraduate	518	587	13.32
Journalism / Undergraduate	2334	2737	17.27
Journalism / Postgraduate	228	368	61.40
<b>Creative Arts total / Undergraduate</b>	38671	42541	10.00
<b>Creative Arts total / Postgraduate</b>	3882	5661	45.83
Literature / Undergraduate	3770	4161	10.37
Literature / Postgraduate	409	469	14.67
<b>Society and Culture total / Undergraduate</b>	134003	148179	10.58
<b>Society and Culture total / Postgraduate</b>	21519	33177	54.18

Source: DEST Higher Education Statistics. Datasets extracted by author, Jan 2008.

However, this increase does need to be seen in the context of a general increase in postgraduate load within the Broad Discipline Groups Creative Arts and Society and Culture. **Table 8** shows that total postgraduate load within the Creative Arts and Society and Culture grew by 45.83% and 54.18% respectively. Indeed, these dramatic increases would seem to reflect a global shift toward postgraduate student load. Statistics published by DEST show that between 2001 and 2006 postgraduate EFTSL for all disciplines increased by 39.34%, while undergraduate student load for all disciplines increased by 13.43%. (DEST 2002, 2007). While the increase in postgraduate load in Written Communication is indeed substantial, there are several other detailed discipline groups in the Creative Arts and Society and Culture groupings to have undergone dramatic rates of increase, including Drama and Theatre Studies (92.41%), Political Science (127.57%), Business and Commercial Law (202.30%) and Taxation Law (546.51%).<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, **Table 7** shows that in comparison with the other Detailed and Narrow Discipline Groups shown (Communication and Media Studies, Journalism

<sup>13</sup> Source: DEST Higher Education Statistics. Datasets extracted by author, Jan 2008.

and Literature), Written Communication in 2006 had both the lowest level of postgraduate student load in absolute terms (363 EFTSL) and in terms of percentages for total student load by discipline group (9.56%). The percentage of postgraduate student load in Written Communication was also significantly lower than the percentage averages for the Broad Discipline Groups of Creative Arts (11.48%) and Society and Culture (17.84%). Indeed, considered in relation to absolute EFTSL, student load at postgraduate level in written communication was only marginally higher than the combined student load for enabling and non-award courses.

This suggests that although there has been a significant expansion of student demand for creative writing at postgraduate level in line with the increasing availability of such courses, the level of demand in 2006 was in fact comparable to cognate discipline groups. More recent and more extensive data would be required to assess whether the 2001/2006 comparison reflects a continuing upwards trend for postgraduate student load in Written Communication relative to neighbouring disciplines.

Relative to the percentage increases for other discipline groups between 2001 and 2006, the increase in undergraduate student load in Written Communication shown in **Table 8** would appear more striking. While average percentage increases for undergraduate student load in the Broad Discipline Groups Creative Arts and Society and Culture were 10.00% and 10.58% respectively, undergraduate load in Written Communication increased by 54.88%. In terms of cognate and neighbouring disciplines, undergraduate student load in Literature increased by 10.37%, in Journalism by 17.27% and in Communication and Media Studies by 23.92%.

From the tables above it is clear that some areas of the creative arts have experienced significant levels of increased demand in the post-Dawkins university. A comparison of student load for the years 2001 and 2006 suggests student demand for the Detailed Discipline Group 'Written Communication' has increased at a faster rate than for neighbouring and cognate discipline groups. Within this discipline group, student load for Overseas and Non-English Speaking students is comparable to that of other disciplines. However, domestic student load reveals a distinct pattern in terms of socio-economic status, one that trends towards students from Medium and Low SES backgrounds and away from students from High SES backgrounds. This can only partly be explained by the substantially above-average percentage of student load from enabling courses.

Finally, although the increase in postgraduate student load between 2001 and 2006 is clearly striking, this period coincides with a substantial global increase in postgraduate student load. Indeed, the level of postgraduate student load in 2006 for Written Communication was comparable to neighbouring and cognate disciplines. The percentage increase of undergraduate EFTSL during this period relative to the percentage changes in undergraduate student load in both neighbouring disciplines and across all disciplines would appear more significant.

### **3 The Accounting for creative writing survey**

The Accounting for Creative Writing survey was designed to investigate the cultural interests of undergraduate students currently enrolled in creative writing subjects. It sought to investigate how students prioritise the various forms of training creative writing subjects offer, and the forms of extra-mural cultural participation and consumption they were involved in. In particular, it sought to investigate the different ways in which students account for their interest in creative writing, and establish the extent to which students enrolled in creative writing subjects were interested in literary writing and literary publication. It also collected substantial background information in order to assess whether there were correlations between particular kinds of interest in creative writing and background variables such as education, language background, and socioeconomic status.

#### **3.1 About the survey**

The questionnaire was administered at three writing programs all of which are located in Melbourne. These are the Creative Writing Program in the former Department of English with Cultural Studies and Creative Writing, the University of Melbourne, the Professional Writing program in the Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development, Victoria University, and the Professional Writing and Editing Program in the School of Creative Media, RMIT University. The three programs were selected for the strong contrast they provided in terms of university type, program profile, course type, and student catchment. In terms of course type, students from the University of Melbourne and Victoria University were enrolled in bachelor degrees, while students from RMIT were enrolled in a Diploma of Professional Writing and Editing. The sample group were recruited from subjects that were all

described by their instructors as subjects in creative writing, were all workshop based, and were all designed to offer training in prose writing, particularly 'novel writing', 'non-fiction writing', 'short stories' and 'personal writing'. In selecting subjects that focused on prose writing the recruitment process sought to avoid introducing the bias that might result from including cohorts enrolled in subjects that are orientated to literary or work-place applications specifically. It was considered prose writing skills are highly transferable across both literary and popular genres, as well as non-publishing applications, such as report writing, and non-professional applications, such as personal writing and community history. The recruitment process also excluded subjects available to students in the first year of their studies as enrolment trends from the University of Melbourne suggest 1<sup>st</sup> year creative writing subjects may serve a function in relation to degree students in the first year of their studies. (See **Appendix 2**) Students from Melbourne and Victoria Universities were studying in the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year of their degrees while students recruited from RMIT were studying in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of their diploma. In the case of students from RMIT, it was at second year that students were able to choose from a range of writing and creative writing subjects. In the case of Melbourne and Victoria universities, the survey sample included students enrolled in dedicated writing degrees, i.e. Bachelor of Arts with a Major in Creative Writing (University of Melbourne) or Professional Writing (Victoria University), as well as students who were picking up one or more creative writing subjects as part of other degrees.

Melbourne was considered a germane location in which to scope the diversity of rationales for engaging in creative writing as it has a highly differentiated field of literary production. It is home to several large and medium level Australian publishing houses and a number of independent publishers and book retailers. State and

municipal government bodies provide substantial support to the literary arts in a variety of forms (from community writing programs through to some of the nation's most prestigious literary festivals and prizes) and the city is home to several nationally significant initiatives to support young and emerging writers. The Victorian state government increasingly promotes Melbourne as Australia's 'cultural capital' and in 2008 was successful in its bid to UNESCO to join the global Creative Cities Network as a recognised City of Literature. The showpiece of this bid was the proposed Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas, a city based arts hub designed to host 1,000 events a year and accommodate several major literary arts organisations.<sup>14</sup> Of significance too are recent state-level developments in secondary school curriculum, with the introduction in 2000 of a Vocational Education and Training certificate in Desktop Publishing for year 11 and 12 students as part of their secondary school completion certificate (VCE),<sup>15</sup> and the development within the Victorian Essential Learning Standards program (VELS: a program of teaching modules designed to promote national standards in key learning areas) of teaching modules on zine-making.<sup>16</sup> Melbourne is recognised for the dynamism of its independent writing and publishing scene and has a very large zine-making network which is increasingly supported by both arts funding bodies and retailers willing to stock zines and other forms of independent publication (Poletti 2008).

While Melbourne is home to a range of private and public organisations and programs that support what we might describe as a 'literary field of production', their

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<sup>14</sup> Significantly, the Victorian State Government was committed to the centre independently of the success of the bid and had already contributed 19.4 million dollars in its 2007 and 2008 budgets (Steger 2008: 3).

<sup>15</sup> See Desktop Publishing and Printing at the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority website. <http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/vet/programs/desktop/desktop.html>

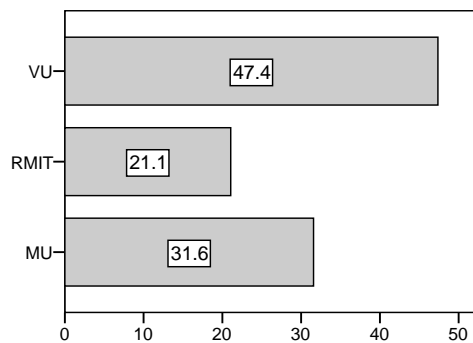
<sup>16</sup> See Zines – Level 6 Sample Unit at the Victorian Essential Learning Skills website. <http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/support/units/zines/index.html>

operational missions are distinct and reflect a range of educational, commercial, arts sector and community development/access rationales.

### 3.2 About the sample group

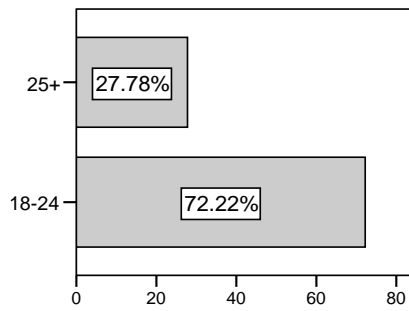
The Accounting for creative writing survey was quite comprehensive and included 64 individual survey instruments across 24 pages (29 screens online). The survey was made available to the target group both online and in hardcopy and received 38 returns without the use of incentives. While the sample group was diverse in terms of university, age group, and language background, it was significantly over-representative of students from High SES backgrounds. 62.16% of the sample group were from High SES backgrounds while 32.43% and 5.41% of students were from Medium and Low SES backgrounds respectively (**Figure 4**).

**Figure 1:** Sample group by University

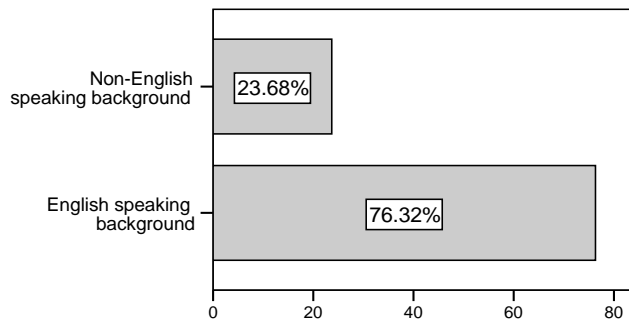




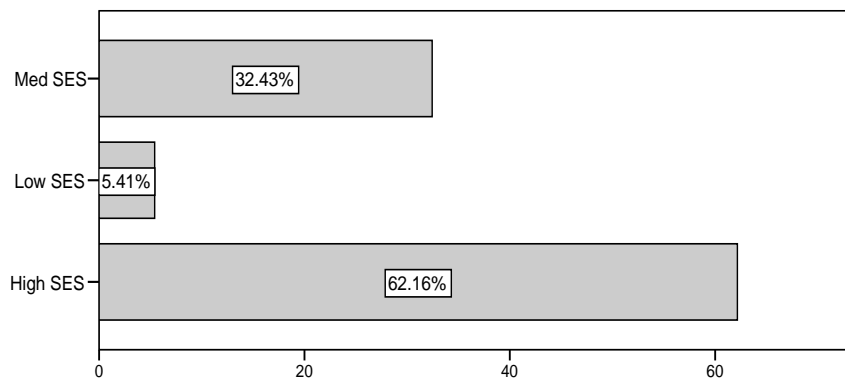
**Figure 2: Sample group by Age**



**Figure 3: Sample group by language background (language spoken at home while growing-up).**



**Figure 4: Sample group by parental SES.<sup>17</sup>**



<sup>17</sup> The process of determining SES groups followed the model developed by Roger Jones as an alternative to current ABS classifications based on students' postcodes (Jones 2002). Stated briefly, this involves ascribing each respondent to an ANU4 occupational status category based on highest parental occupation (and where necessary highest parental level of education). Each ANU4 category is then assigned to eight occupation classes which are then further divided into three SES groups. According to this method 'Low SES' occupation classes will account for roughly 25% of the Australian population and 'High SES' occupation classes will account for approximately 30% of the Australian population as shown in the 2001 Australian census. Although this procedure may partially account for the larger percentage of High SES students in the sample group, the difference may also be evidence of the educated bias often observed in social research surveys.

The sample group revealed a significant interest in the survey process; 85% of respondents indicated they would like a report of the survey's findings sent to them, and around 50% volunteered for follow-up interviews.

### **3.3 Student interests and literary education**

The survey's principal instrument for investigating how students account for their motivations to enrol in creative writing asked respondents to rank four statements on a scale of one through to four, where '1' indicates the statement that most reflects their motivations to enrol, and '4' indicates the statement that least reflects their motivations. (**Figure 5**). These four statements were based on a list of 19 statements used in a Likert-style rating scale in a pilot study. This list of statements was developed after analysing the stated objectives of a number of creative writing subjects found in student handbooks, promotional materials for undergraduate writing courses, and through discussions with creative writing staff. Based on the results of the pilot study a series of statements were identified that both reflected pedagogic rationales and received strong endorsement from students. These statements were then grouped according to four pedagogic rationales that were regarded as conceptually distinct, even if they overlap in teaching practice.

**Figure 5:** Question 8 from the Accounting for Creative Writing survey

***Q.8 I am taking this subject for reasons of ...***

**Writing skills**

You are enrolled in this subject because you want to understand writing from a technical perspective, develop skills in editing and proofreading, and/or improve your general written expression.

**Literary writing**

You are enrolled in this subject because you want to gain an understanding of how literary authors approach their craft and/or improve your knowledge and appreciation of literary writing generally.

**Personal skills**

You are enrolled in this subject because you want to develop your creative potential, learn to express yourself with confidence, and/or discuss writing from a more personal perspective.

**Career in writing and publishing**

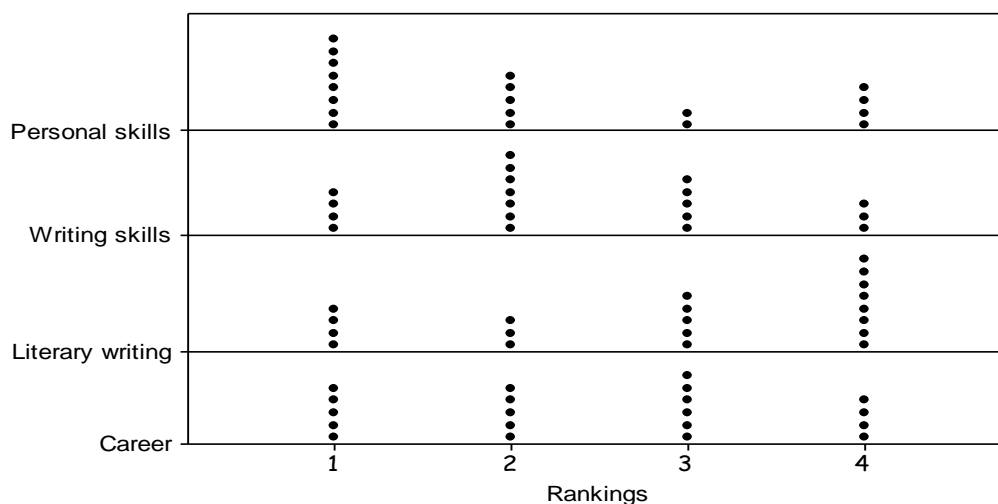
You are enrolled in this subject because you want to learn how to produce writing that can be sold to commercial publishers and/or gain the skills necessary for a career in the publishing industry.

Three points need to be made in relation to this instrument. Firstly the statements are based on pedagogical rationales and do not therefore attempt to capture the full range of reasons a student might have for enrolling in creative writing. We might say that respondents are being asked to 'rationalise' their interests in the light of accepted pedagogical rationales. Secondly the exercise is retrospective in that respondents had already experienced between four and eight weeks of the course when they filled in the survey. Responses to this question therefore tell us less about enrolment decisions than how respondents account for this decision during their studies. Finally, the instrument can only offer relational rather substantive data. That is, the instrument alone does not tell us whether the four statements are significant or insignificant to any individual respondent.

**Figure 6** shows the distribution of rankings for each of these statements. This figure shows that although all motivational variables were widely distributed across

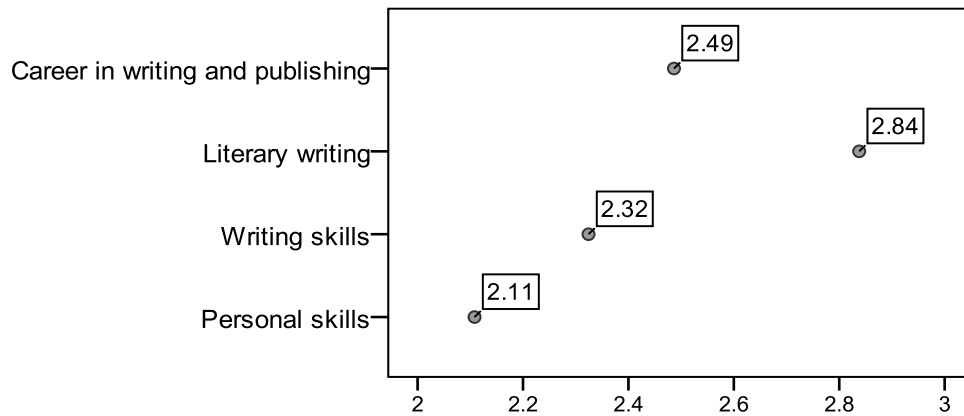
all rank positions, the distribution varied for different motivations. We can see that 'personal skills' received the highest number of 1<sup>st</sup> place rankings, followed by 'career in writing and publishing'. 'Writing skills' received the highest number of 2<sup>nd</sup> place rankings, and 'literary writing' received the lowest number of 2<sup>nd</sup> place rankings. 'Career in writing and publishing' received the highest number of 3<sup>rd</sup> place rankings and 'personal skills' the lowest number of 3<sup>rd</sup> place rankings. 'Literary writing' received the highest number of 4<sup>th</sup> place rankings and 'writing skills' the lowest number of 4<sup>th</sup> place rankings.

**Figure 6:** Distribution of respondent rankings for Question 8



**Figure 7** shows the mean ranks for each motivational variable. Here we can see that 'personal skills' with a mean of 2.11 is at the lower end, consistent with receiving more 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place rankings relative to the other categories. We can also see that the category of 'literary writing' received 2.84, consistent with it receiving the highest number of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> place rankings.

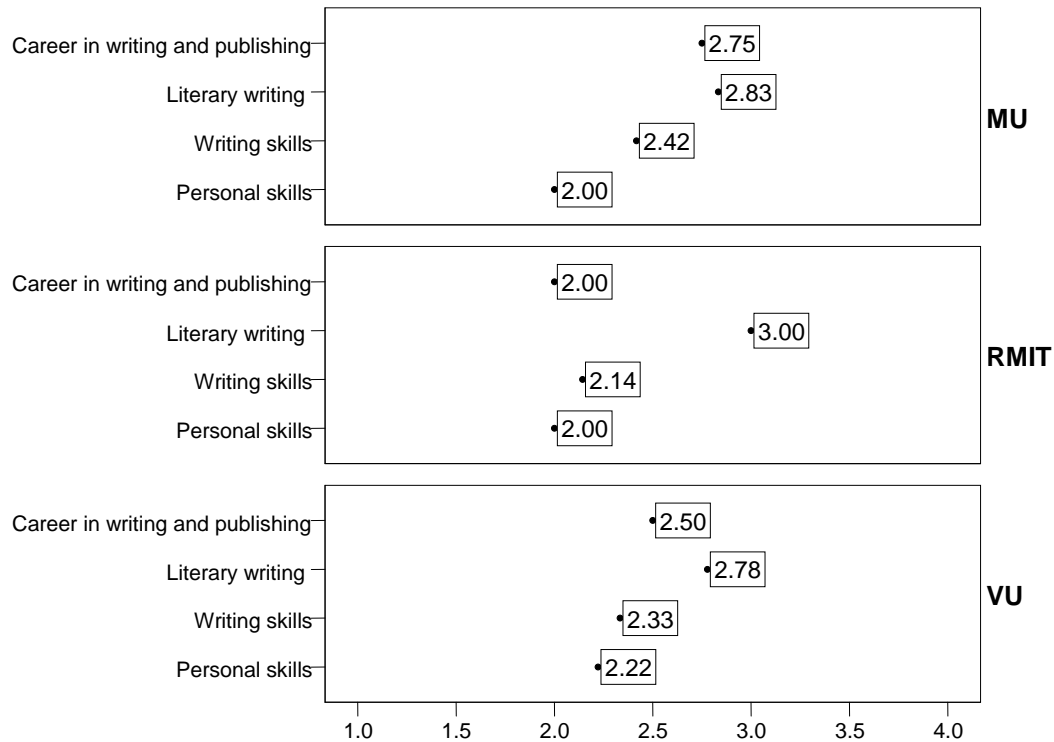
**Figure 7:** Mean scores for respondent rankings (Q8)



Recall that these mean scores do not suggest any of these rationales are unimportant to respondents. The resulting sequence reveals that overall ‘literary writing’ was the least significant of the four available options, and ‘personal skills’ the most significant.

So how robust were the findings shown in **Figure 7** for the sample group? Given the variability of writing programs and universities the sample was recruited from, it would be reasonable to suggest the relative values of ‘personal skills’ and ‘literary writing’ may simply reflect the predominance of bachelor degree students within the sample group. **Figure 8** shows the means for all four variables by university.

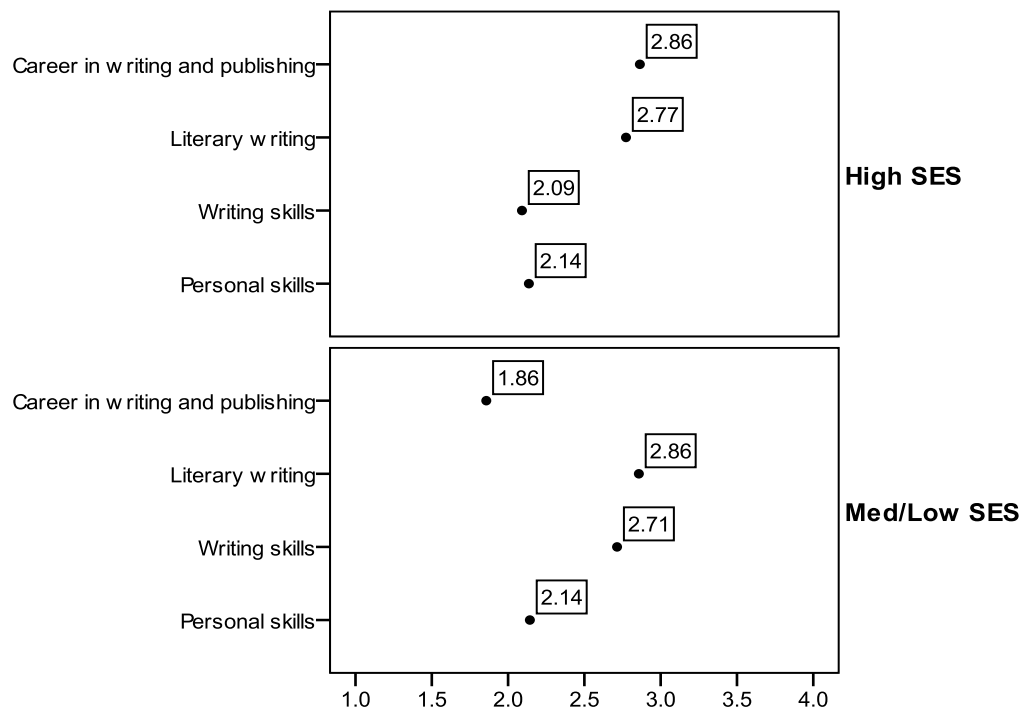
**Figure 8:** Mean scores for respondent rankings (Q8) by university.



The three sets of means in **Figure 8** reveal some interesting differences and similarities. Firstly, they reveal that across the three universities Career in writing and publishing was ranked highest for students at RMIT (2.00) and lowest for students at the University of Melbourne (2.75). Secondly, the narrower range of means for students at Victoria University (2.22—2.78) suggests this group was the least homogenous in terms of how it ranked the motivational variables. Despite these differences, the figure shows that across all three universities the mean for literary writing was the highest mean for each cohort and the mean for personal skills the lowest mean for each cohort.

Similarly, it would be reasonable to consider that the over-representation of High SES students may have lead to a result that does not hold for Medium and Low SES students. In order to explore this possibility, we divided the sample group into two groups, those from High SES backgrounds and those from Medium and Low SES backgrounds, and then calculated the mean scores for each group. **Figure 9** shows the two groups as a comparison. This comparison substantially complicates the sequence of means shown in **Figure 7**. Perhaps the most striking difference lies in the different means for Career in writing and publishing and Writing skills. For the High SES group Career in writing and publishing scored the highest mean (2.86), which implies it was the least significant motivational variable for this cohort, whilst Writing Skills scored the lowest mean, which implies it was the most significant.

**Figure 9:** Mean scores for respondent rankings (Q8) by SES groupings.



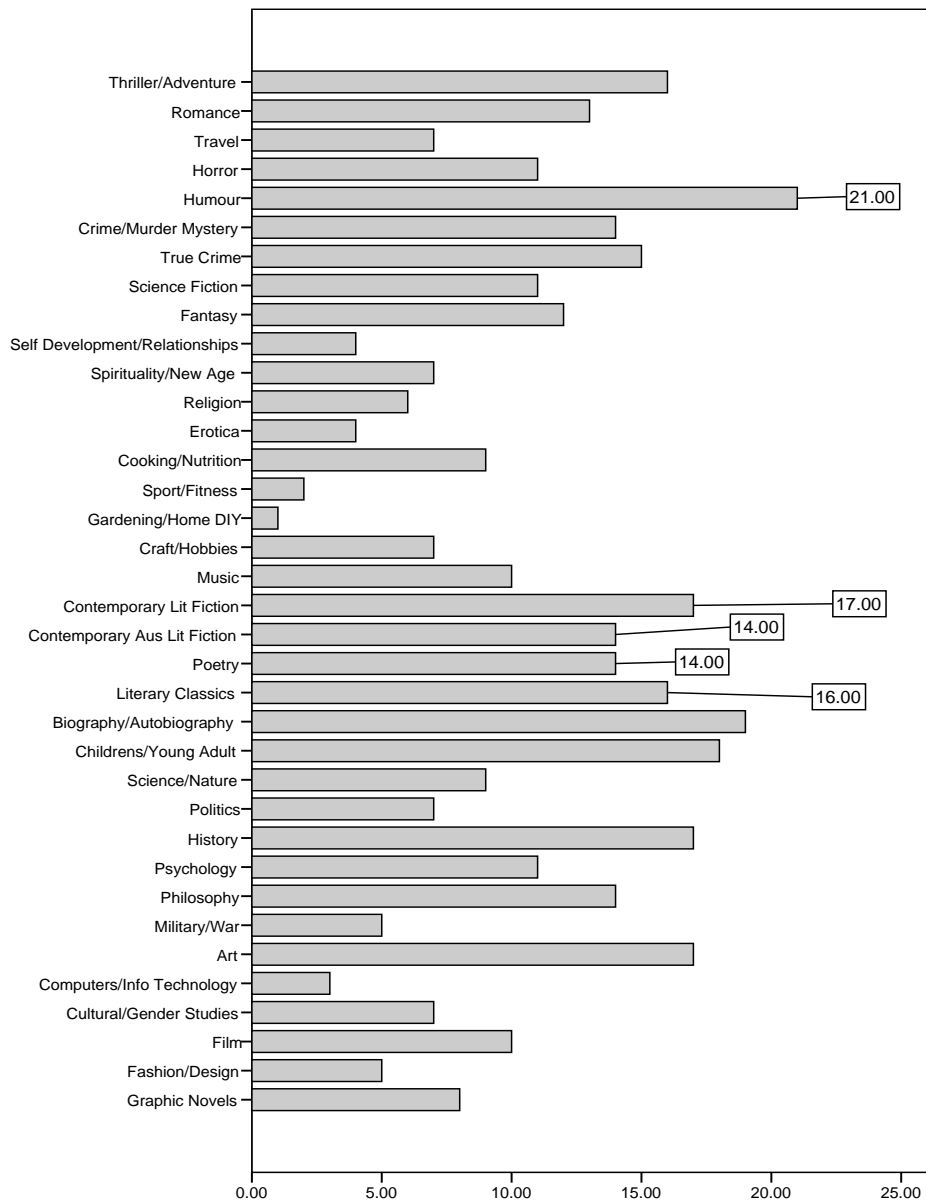
By contrast, Career in writing and publishing was the lowest mean for the Med/Low SES group, which implies it was the most significant motivational variable for this

group, while the mean for writing skills (2.71) suggests it was of lower priority for this group. Although the sequence of means for both groups in **Figure 9** is different from that shown in **Figure 7**, **Figure 9** also shows that the mean scores for Personal skills and Literary writing were relatively stable across both groups. The mean for Personal skills is 2.14 for both groups, and the difference in means for Literary writing is marginal, being 2.77 for the high SES group and 2.86 for the low SES group. **Figure 9** shows that although there is some difference between the two groups in the means for Career in writing and publishing and Writing skills, the means for the remaining two values are relatively stable.

So let's put this result in perspective by looking at student interest in reading literary genres. Question 13 asked students to read through a list of books and then tick the types of books they liked to read, even if only occasionally. The four clearly 'literary' categories available were poetry, literary classics, contemporary literary fiction, and contemporary Australian literary fiction. **Figure 10** shows the list of book types and the number of respondents that indicated they liked to read each type of book, even if only occasionally. This figure suggests students not only read fairly broadly, but that all the literary types of books did pretty well by comparison. 14 respondents said they like reading poetry and contemporary Australian literary fiction, about the same amount as those who said they like the genres of Romance, Crime and Murder Mystery. 17 respondents said they like contemporary literary fiction, placing this category on par with Thriller, Adventure, History and Art books. The category of 'Humour' was the most common book type, with over 50% of the sample saying they like this kind of book.

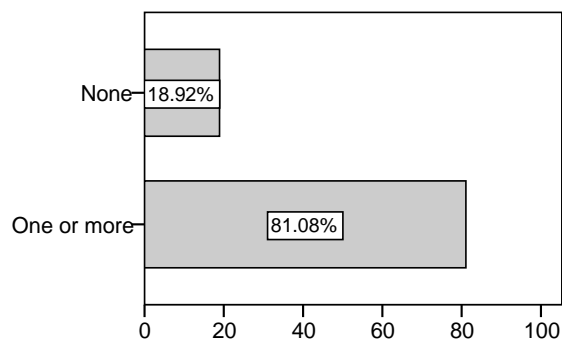


**Figure 10:** Book types by frequency of 'like to read, even if only occasionally' (Q 13).



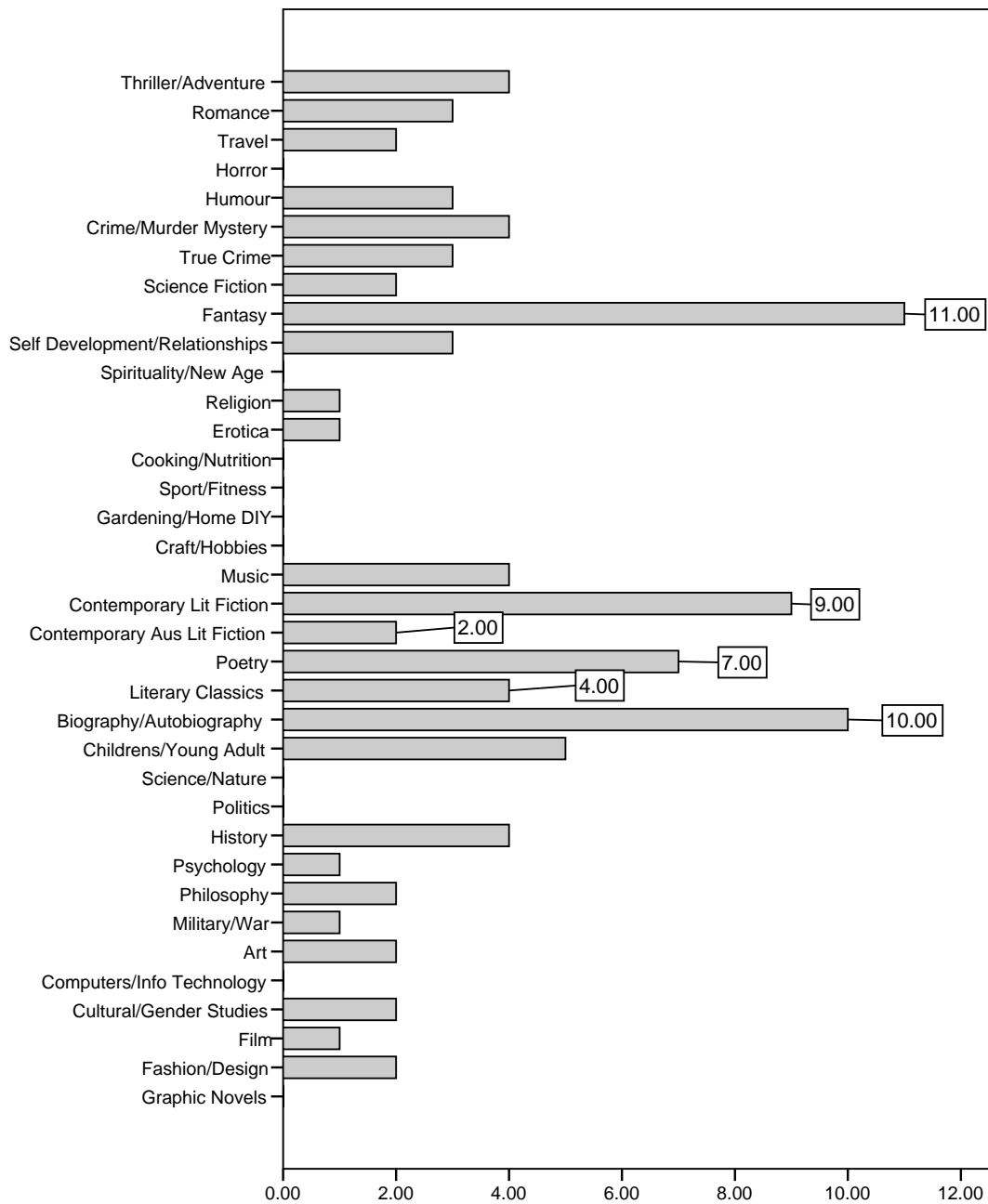
**Figure 11** shows us the number of respondents who didn't include *any* of our four literary types of books at all, 18.92%, as compared with the 81.08% of the sample group who selected one or more.

**Figure 11:** Responses to question 13 as two groups; those who selected one or more literary genres and those who did not.



**Figures 10** and **11** show that a substantial number of students like reading literary books, even if only occasionally, and even if they're not all ranking 'literary writing' as a prime motivator in taking creative writing. However, it's easy with this sort of list to be broad-minded; respondents were able to tick as many boxes as they wished. Therefore, the survey also asked students to nominate their favourite three book types from the list. **Figure 12** shows that 11 respondents included fantasy in their top-3, and 10 included biography/autobiography in their top 3. Interestingly, contemporary literary fiction and poetry didn't do too badly, with, respectively, 9 and 7 respondents including these types of books in their top three. We discover, however, that only 2 respondents were willing to use one of their top 3 preferences to nominate contemporary Australian literary fiction specifically.

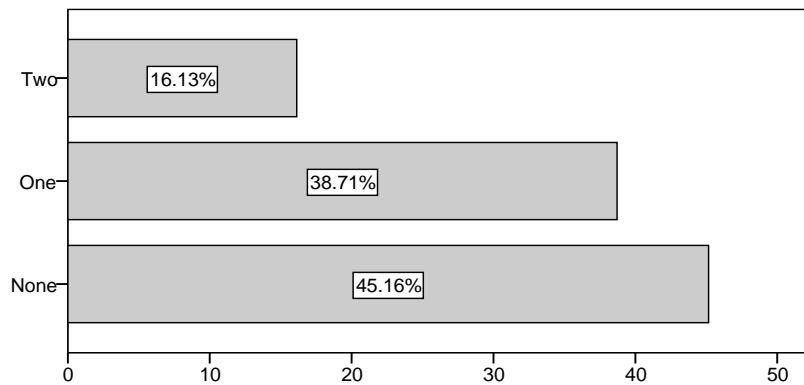
**Figure 12:** Book types by frequency of inclusion in respondent's 'top 3' (Q 12)



**Figure 13** shows us the distribution of this interest within the sample group. The longest bar shows the 45.16% of respondents who did not include any of the four categories of literary books in their top 3; the middle bar shows us the 38.71% of respondents who picked one of these categories, and the smallest bar shows the 16.13% of respondents who picked two of these categories. That is, just over half of

the respondents, or 54.8% of the sample, included at least one kind of literary genre in their top 3; 45.2% of the sample did not.

**Figure 13:** Frequency of literary genres included in respondent's 'top 3' (Q12)

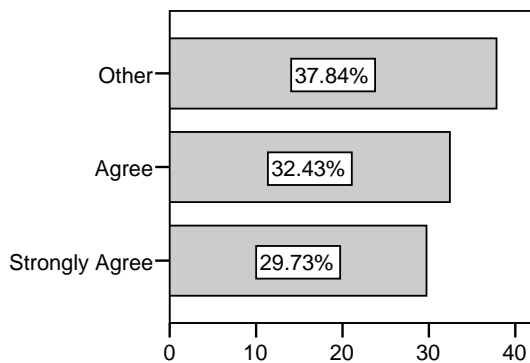


**Figure 14** refers to interest in developing work for publication in literary journals and magazines; these being the main publishing outlets for short stories, poetry, and excerpts from novels. Historically these arenas have been crucial to emerging writers seeking Australia Council Funding and establishing peer-recognition, and are often presented to creative writing students as a testing ground for aspiring writers. Question 9 asked respondents to indicate the extent to which a series of statements reflected their motivations for taking the subject. The last of these statements read 'Improve my chances of being published in literary journals and literary magazines'.

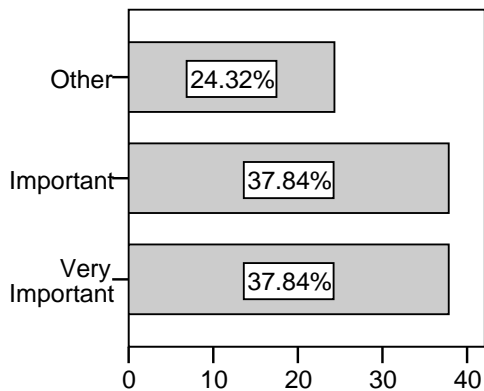
**Figure 14** shows that 62.16% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed they were enrolled in the subject to improve their chances of being published in literary journals and literary magazines, while a total of 37.84%, disagreed, strongly disagreed, or neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. This figure can be usefully compared to **Figure 15** which shows sample group responses to a similar Likert-type scale. This question asked respondents to rate the importance of a series of statements referring to elements of class instruction with the question 'How important

are the following elements of this subject?'. **Figure 15** shows 24% of the sample regarded professional advice on how to get published as 'Not very important', 'Not important at all' or 'Neither important nor unimportant', while 37.84% regarded this element as 'Important' and a further 37.84% regarded it as 'Very important'.

**Figure 14:** (Q9) 'Improve my chances of being published in literary journals and literary magazines'



**Figure 15:** (Q10) 'Professional advice on how to get published'.



### 3.4 Discussion

So what conclusions can be drawn from these preliminary results? It is clear the sample group had a strong interest in reading literary genres, publishing in literary magazines and journals, and gaining professional advice on publication generally. It is also clear, however, that this interest was far from universal. We need to recall that

18.9% of the sample group indicated they didn't like reading any of the literary genres on the list, not even occasionally. And that 37.8% of the sample did not indicate they were enrolled in the subject to improve their chances of publication in literary journals or magazines. Significantly, 24.32% of the group did not indicate that professional advice on publication was important.

Perhaps the most interesting result reported here concerns responses of the sample group to Question 8, and in particular the relative value respondents attribute to the development of personal skills and knowledge of the craft of literary writing. We know from the history of literary education that the founding purpose of studying the works of literary authors was to inculcate precisely those capacities described in the survey as 'personal skills' and which historically have been associated with the notion of liberal education (Hunter 1988).<sup>18</sup> That mean ranks for 'personal skills' and 'literary writing' were at either ends of the scale may suggest a significant number of the sample group not only highly valued this continuing pedagogic rationale for creative writing, but were able to value this rationale independently of their interest in literary writing. But what does this sample group's response to Question 8 tell us about the general population of Australian university students in their 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year of studies taking subjects creative writing? What is the inferential value of this response?

A conventional way to address this question is to submit the mean rankings to a null hypothesis significance test. For this test the null hypothesis proposes that the true location of all the motivational variables in the population is the same and that,

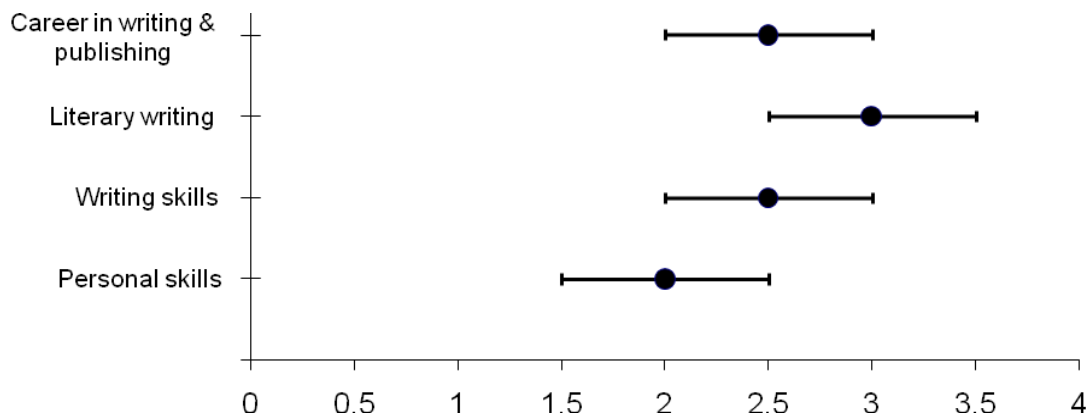
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<sup>18</sup> These founding rationales accompanied the development of both tertiary literary studies and the invention of creative writing pedagogy at the Lincoln Teacher's College between 1920 and 1923 (Mearns 1925). Indeed, one of Hunter's exhibits is the use of creative writing in teacher training (Hunter 1988: 148-153).

by implication, the sample result we have is due to sampling variability. The test then calculates the probability of the given sample result if the null hypothesis is true. If the null hypothesis can be confidently rejected on the basis of the sample result, then the sample is said to be statistically significant. Based on the Friedman test, we find that the P-value of the mean rankings shown in **Figure 7** is 0.093. That is, there is a 9.3% probability of getting this sample result if the null hypothesis is correct. This p-value is higher than the accepted 0.05 (5%) required to reject the null hypothesis. From this we might conclude that although **Figure 7** is an interesting description of how the sample group responded to this question, in the case of this instrument the size of the sample does not permit us to draw any inferential conclusions.

Another approach to inferential analysis is to analyse the confidence interval (CI) for each ranking. As the variables being measured are rankings rather than quantities, for this exercise we calculated the median rather than the mean value of each variable. **Figure 16** shows the median rank and confidence interval for each variable. In this context, the confidence interval shows the plausible locations for the ranking of each variable should the same survey be repeated using different sample groups. A 95% confidence interval states that if the same survey were repeated with an infinite number of different sample groups drawn from the same reference population, the true median location of each ranking would fall somewhere within the confidence interval in 95% of these surveys.

**Figure 16:** Estimated medians with confidence intervals (95%) for motivational variables (Q8)



As we might expect from **Figure 7**, **Figure 16** shows that the CIs for Personal skills and Literary writing are at different ends of the scale. However, the figure also shows that the CIs for all variables overlap at 2.5, and that the median locations (2.5) and confidence intervals (2-3) for 'writing skills' and 'career in writing and publishing' are identical. As with the null hypothesis test above, this does not permit us to establish any inferential conclusions about the sequence of all four variables. However, the relative positions of the confidence intervals for Personal skills and Literary writing does strongly suggest a difference worth investigating.

The strength of this suggested difference is supported by respondent statements collected in Question 11. This question invited open responses with the following; 'Now in your own words, what would be the main reason(s) you are taking this subject?' Of the 36 responses to this question, 4 responses contained clear references to the statements in the gloss provided for Literary writing and 8 included clear references to the statements included in the gloss for Personal skills. Further



qualitative analysis into the relational value of these two variables is currently being undertaken with the transcripts of 10 follow-up respondent interviews.

## **Conclusion**

As this is a preliminary report of an on-going research project it would be inappropriate to offer any conclusions here. However, this preliminary analysis suggests a relational value for Personal skills and Literary writing that holds across the sample group, one which places the former variable at the higher end of the scale of ranked motivating variables, and the latter at the lower end. Given the results of other instruments in the survey, it is clear this finding cannot be taken to imply literary writing was not of interest to the sample group. However, it does suggest students in the sample group were able to value the training in Personal skills offered by study in creative writing, and that they valued this form of training quite independently of their interest in literary writing. This would be significant, given that a substantial number of respondents are clearly not interested in reading literary writing, or developing literary writing for publication. This finding might be interpreted as suggesting there is some 'room for manoeuvre' in terms of the kinds of writing and writing practices creative writing programs draw on as supports for developing personal skills. How this room for manoeuvre is interpreted depends on the specific location in which creative writing courses are embedded. A greater emphasis on popular genres might advance in the light of quite different understandings of 'the popular'; both those published genres with strong market appeal, and those genres of everyday discourse through which 'personality' is assembled. Of course, such room for manoeuvre is unlikely to surprise creative writing instructors. The presence

of a literary paradigm notwithstanding, creative writing pedagogy has been prolific in terms of the communicational practices it has drawn on in the interests of personal development.

Furthermore, the different statements covered by the heading 'personal skills' permits different kinds of emphasis. One approach associated with the creative industries agenda noted above would be to focus on the terms 'creative potential', 'confidence' and 'self-expression' and argue for their significance in the training of flexible, innovative and initiative-taking employees. Such an approach would dovetail with recent accounts of the need for 'entrepreneurial graduates'; i.e. graduates able to capitalise on their capacity for 'innovation, creativity, collaboration, and risk-taking' in order to thrive in a 'volatile economy' (Herrmann, Hannon, Cox and Ternouth 2008: 6).<sup>19</sup>

Another established approach to interpreting personal skills would be to regard creative writing as one of many pedagogical sites distributed across the arts and humanities that were historically built-up to cultivate specific 'forms of the person'. According to this approach, the types of personality produced within the creative writing workshop rest on discrete ethical and rhetorical capacities that are trained through material techniques (such personal self-expression, close-reading and group discussion) and redeemable in a broad range of professional occupations (Hunter 1991: Meredyth 1991). Significantly, this account of the value of aesthetic education was based on claims of a stable set of relations between the Arts Faculty and the fields of government graduates have traditionally been employed within,

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<sup>19</sup> It has even been suggested that structural changes in the economy that have led to less secure forms of employment are not a problem for young people as such conditions accord with their lifestyle preferences. 'The decline in overall employment permanency is not a problem for Yuk/Wows [young people], given their propensity as experience-seekers for being 'here today and gone tomorrow'. [...] They are comfortable with blurred boundaries between work and home, just as they are comfortable with the idea that 'job security' is a thing of the past". (McWilliam 2008: 37)

predominantly school teaching and middle-ranks of the public service (Meredyth 1991). Although such an account stands at a distance from claims of the special vocational significance of creativity, such a methodological understanding is transferable to more contemporary conditions. For instance, we might suggest the policy landscape of the creative economy has its 'forms of the person' too. Significantly, where the figure of the artist was once regarded as exemplary for earlier generations due to the moral sensibility they embodied (Richards 1967 [1925]), such a figure has recently been hailed as 'a template' for the general skills required for competing in the new economy (Hartly 2007; 140).

In relation to student demand, it is clear further research is required on the different meanings and permutations of 'personal skills'; in particular the links between specific communicative practices and the forms of the person they support, as well as the different vocational and social domains in which students anticipate such forms hold value.

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## Appendix 1

### University of Melbourne subjects coded as “100705 Written Communication”

Source: University of Melbourne Planning Office

Professional Writing	Scriptwriting for Screen
Advanced Writing	Theory and Practice of Fiction
Creative Writing 2: Across the Genres	Text and Editor: Practice and Theory
Writing Extended Fiction	Advanced Scriptwriting for Theatre
Writing Scripts	Advanced Screen Writing
Writing Poetry	Poetry, Poetics and Poetic Forms
Writing Literary Non-Fiction	Diaries/Journals and Autobiography
Creative Writing: Autofictions	Writing through Character
Creative Writing: Travel and Place	Reading Australian Writing
Language of Feeling	Creative Writing Advanced Workshop
Writing for Real	Research for the Creative Writer
Writing Nature	Writing the Unconscious
Thinking Writing	Business and Management Writing
Editorial English	Technical Writing
Technical Writing and Editing	Essay Writing for Music Subjects
Writing and Editing for Digital Media	Academic Researcher to Entrepreneurial Writer
Creative Writing Project A	
Creative Writing Project B	
Major Thesis - Creative Writing	
Creative Writing Thesis	
Advanced Book Editing and Publishing	
Advanced Magazine Editing and Publishing	
Research Methodologies	
Creative Writing: Ideas and Practice	
Writing Fiction	
Scriptwriting for Theatre	
Poetry	



## Appendix 2

### EFTSL in the former Department of English with Cultural Studies and Creative Writing, the University of Melbourne, 2003-2007, by Discipline and Subject Level.

Source: University of Melbourne Planning Office

Discipline	Year	1 <sup>st</sup> Year Subjects	2/3 Year Subjects	4 <sup>th</sup> Year Subjects	Honours Thesis
Cultural Studies	2003	58.13	88.79	8.38	8.56
	2004	60.13	77.13	8.00	6.68
	2005	52.63	82.75	8.50	7.19
	2006	38.38	74.75	5.25	6.30
	2007	46.13	31.75	8.00	5.90
	<b>CS Total</b>	<b>255.38</b>	<b>355.17</b>	<b>38.13</b>	<b>34.62</b>
Creative Writing	2003	79.00	80.25	3.38	20.13
	2004	67.88	59.75	1.50	12.88
	2005	89.13	56.00	2.13	7.50
	2006	96.75	70.38	1.38	9.96
	2007	120.13	62.38	4.75	13.77
	<b>CW Total</b>	<b>452.88</b>	<b>328.75</b>	<b>13.13</b>	<b>64.24</b>
English Literary Studies	2003	90.63	225.62	26.13	27.05
	2004	72.75	201.25	22.38	24.68
	2005	73.88	186.00	27.38	27.81
	2006	68.00	175.88	26.38	30.03
	2007	77.88	193.00	19.75	28.15
	<b>ELS Total</b>	<b>383.13</b>	<b>981.75</b>	<b>122.00</b>	<b>137.71</b>