A C U Australian Council
A D S of University Art
& Design Schools

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The Australian Council of University Art & Design Schools (ACUADS)
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SUBMISSION BY
THE AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF UNIVERSITY ART & DESIGN SCHOOLS (ACUADS)
TO
JOBS AND SKILLS AUSTRALIA ON THE NATIONAL SKILLS TAXONOMY DISCUSSION PAPER

This submission is made on behalf of the Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools (ACUADS). As the peak body for Australian art and design education we thank Jobs & Skills Australia for the opportunity to make a written submission responding to the National Skills Taxonomy (NST) Discussion Paper. To begin, we describe ACUADS showing our unique placement to respond to the proposed NST which is informed by our scholarship, training and research concerning the nation's art and design graduates.

The Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools (ACUADS) is the nation's peak organisation representing the interests of art and design schools within Australian universities. ACUADS currently represents over twenty Australian higher education art and design faculties, schools and departments and other academic units offering university degrees at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in art, craft and design. This submission is made on behalf of the ACUADS Executive Board (Associate Professor Veronika Kelly (University of South Australia), Professor Mitchell Whitelaw (Australian National University), Associate Professor Katherine Moline (University of New South Wales), Associate Professor Charles Robb (Queensland University of Technology), Associate Professor Lyndall Adams (Edith Cowan University), Dr Janelle Evans (University of Melbourne), Professor Kit Wise (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology), Associate Professor Spiros Panigirakis (Monash University), Monte Masi (Adelaide Central School of Art) and Associate Professor Simone Slee (University of Melbourne). The submission drew on expertise from ACUADS member institutions, including Professor Cameron Tonkinwise (University of Technology Sydney).

We believe a carefully revised NST has potential to bridge the gap between tertiary programs and professional practice, highlighting the value and transferability of skills gained through art and design education. However, we are conscious that capturing the nuances of these dynamic fields of practice presents unique challenges. With respect to the visual arts, an effective NST should balance the need for standardisation with the recognition of the experimental, emerging, and often intangible aspects of artmaking. With respect to design, an effective NST would recognise the increasing breadth of application of design skills, as well as the shifting landscape of design professions and their nomenclature. With this in mind, we offer the following perspectives on shaping an NST that better serves our sector.

1. Lessons from existing taxonomies

Visual Arts
The existing classification of Visual Arts and Crafts Professionals under the Australian Skills Classification (ASC)—ANZSCO 2114 provides a broad and accurate account of the main transferable skills that are gained through art education; however, it has the following limitations:

- Potential oversimplification of complex artistic processes
- Emerging and experimental practices are overlooked
- Creative, critical and conceptual skills are underrepresented
- Does not recognise the unique and complex cultural and creative skills of First Nations artists and cultural practitioners.

Design
ACUADS members provided detailed comment on a number of points related to design skills and professions. University-based design educators are dedicated to teaching people how to become careful designers—of communications, products, environments physical and digital, services and experiences.

Designers often refer to themselves as professionals, but their practices are not formally licensed. It is not necessary to be a member of a professional association such as the Design Institute of Australia (DIA) to practice as a designer. Professional associations, such as the DIA, advise and even evaluate design education programs, but do not have the power to formally accredit programs training designers.

This situation means that university-based design educators are key stakeholders in determining the skills associated with expert designing. Universities have a commitment to research-led practices and governance structures that quality assure their own degree programs. Design educators in universities are engaged in continuous development of the practice of design, specifying the design skills they teach toward and the most effective way of fostering those skills in their graduates. University-based design educators therefore play a crucial role with respect to design skills, compared to those teaching other formally professional domains. From this perspective we recognise the following limitations in the current ASC, which should be addressed in a future National Skills Taxonomy:

1. Design should be registered as a Family Cluster of Skills in a future National Skills Taxonomy.
Having a practical understanding of how designers approach challenges is now core to innovation across most sectors: business, education, engineering, health, even law. Most larger businesses now offer training to their staff in design-driven innovation techniques and most universities do the same for students studying non-design professions. Singapore's Skills Framework includes Design as a stand-alone sector. Design should therefore be registered as its own Family Cluster of Skills that includes:

- Investigating diverse people's needs, now and anticipated future conditions, in collaboration with those people (Design Research, Co-Design)
- Understanding value creation and value constellations (Problem Solving, Delivering Quality at Quantity)
- Attention to material quality
- Anticipating consequences of the adoption of designs at scale.

2. Service Designer and Strategic Designer should be registered as occupations. We understand that the Design Institute of Australia and the Australian Design Council have submitted evidence that attests to the scale and value of the areas of employment of Service Design and Strategic Design. Many ACUADS member institutions teach postgraduate degree programs in different aspects of Strategic Design, sometimes under the title Design Innovation. Several of our design schools also teach postgraduate degree programs in Service Design. These programs exist because there is a demand for these kinds of positions and the skills they entail in many domains: financial, health, government, aged care, disability support, education. We therefore strongly support the propositions that Service Designer and Strategic Designer be added to the current formally registered employment types.

3. Design Occupations and Groupings. Members noted with approval changes in the recent draft ANZSCO classification, related to Design occupations. Key changes included recognition of Design Professionals in sub-major and minor groups, and the inclusion of Digital Design and User Experience (UX) Design within this group. These changes would improve ANZSCO's representation of current industry practice. By comparison the current ASC reflects ANZSCO groupings which many members found questionable, such as the grouping together of Fashion, Industrial and Jewellery Designers (2323). While the current ASC taxonomy focuses on the outcomes or products of design (e.g., fashion, websites, jewellery), Australian universities increasingly focus on integrated and transferrable design skills which can be applied across materials, domains and contexts.

2. Potential use cases for a National Skills Taxonomy

In the educational context, an NST would create opportunities for clearer learning outcomes and assessment criteria. It could also provide a better articulation of the interdisciplinary skills that are fundamental to many areas of contemporary art and design practice.

In relation to visual arts and the labour market, an NST would assist in the recognition of the value of art skills in other industries, allowing better articulation of artists' skills for non-art sector employment. It would allow the distinctive conceptual and theoretical understandings that artists apply in their practices to be better recognised and differentiated from other types of creative and design-based skills.

Similarly in relation to design skills and professions, an NST could better recognise the increasing prevalence of design skills in innovation across multiple sectors. This would add value for educators and individuals through recognition of the broad value of these skills and the pathways they enable.

The guiding principles underpinning an NST should ensure flexibility in order to reflect rapidly evolving practices, which are characteristic of art and design occupations. It should be sufficiently nuanced to differentiate the unique and idiosyncratic approaches that form part of contemporary art practice – including the incorporation of critical investigation about the very notion of skill or technique. It should also recognise the common skills and processes that underlie recent changes in design occupations. A focus on durable common skills rather than rapidly changing occupational nomenclature would make an NST more effective.

An NST should:
- Include both technical and conceptual/critical skills
- Recognise cultural and contextual knowledge (especially First Nations expertise)
- Include self-efficacy skills that underpin art and design practice (e.g., adaptability, resilience, agility)—listed in the World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs 2023* report under most important skills for workers.
- Recognise the broadly applicable skills that characterise art and design professions, including investigation and research, problem-framing, and communication.
- Balance standardised skill sets with those that are difficult to quantify such as creative exploration, critical rigour, and affectual and conceptual sophistication.

3. Building a National Skills Taxonomy—Implementation considerations

The data informing an NST and how an NST is maintained are key considerations for implementation. To ensure its relevance and uptake, an NST must be shaped by input from diverse art and design practitioners, educators, bodies and professionals, including First Nations Peoples, and include emerging materials, media and practices. Consequently, the NST must be dynamic and updated regularly to reflect new technologies, interdisciplinary groupings and evolution in art and design practices and occupations.

Thank you for your consideration.

ACUADS Member Institutions
Adelaide Central School of Art
Australian National University
Curtin University
Deakin University
Edith Cowan University
Griffith University
La Trobe University
Monash University
National Art School
Queensland University of Technology
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
Swinburne University of Technology
University of Melbourne
University of New South Wales
University of South Australia
University of Southern Queensland
University of Sydney
University of Technology Sydney
University of Western Australia
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