

The Critical Role of Academic and Business Integrity in Tertiary Music Education

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At an institutional level, a culture of integrity *must* exist as the fundamental core of an organization. Building such a culture requires honest action and commitment at the top, bottom, and throughout an organization. ICAI (2023) notes that promoting the fundamental values of academic integrity in education requires balancing high standards of integrity with the educational mission, as well as compassion and concern.

Australian Higher Education Providers also have a legal responsibility to provide accurate information to potential students. In an increasingly competitive sector promotional imperatives place pressure on providers to 'sell' degrees to an ever-decreasing marketplace. Hall (2019) notes that given the indeterminate nature of performing art's careers, not to mention the 'intangible product' that is higher education, the implicit or explicit indication of an assurance of career success upon completion of the degree could be regarded as being overstated. In the current recruitment climate, the integrity of marketing campaigns by some tertiary music providers has become dubious.

This article examines the foundation and cultural elements of business integrity that the Australian Academy of Music and Performing Arts (AMPA) operates. The central pillars upon which this has been conceived remain as quality, truth and respect. As the idiom goes AMPA believes that not only should you 'talk the talk' but also 'walk the walk'.

TEQSA (2023) describes Academic integrity as *'the expectation that teachers, students, researchers and all members of the academic community act with: honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.'* Protecting individual and institutional reputation is a responsibility of both the student and provider as 'actions that undermine the academic integrity of your course or institution could affect your reputation in the future.' As such academic integrity is a critical element of the business integrity of tertiary music education providers.

As outlined in Esterday (2022), the *Seven Principles of Business Integrity* are trust, quality, follow-through, corporate citizenship, value creation, willingness to change and respect.

Corporate quality and honesty are further distilled by Camberlion (2021) into the areas of 1) Moral Principles, 2) Leadership, 3) Communication, 4) Respect and 5) Personalisation. These principles guide AMPA's approach to dealing with staff, students and the wider community.

Moral Principles

Most companies have a mission statement that announces their message and main moral principle. It's the first insight into a business's values, and it allows customers and in the case of higher education providers, potential students, the ability to decide whether they want to study and ultimately support the business.

AMPA has based the Mission and Vision Statement on moral principles that are the cornerstone of the beliefs and pedagogical goals held by the business owners and senior management alike. These goals were best defined during the early commencement years of the institution by its' founder, Kyunghye Lee, who dreamed of an institution "where learning is experienced not only as classes, methods and means to an end, but as a way of life built on

guidance and support; where staff and students feel a part of a family – where each individual is nurtured and encouraged to develop his or her abilities to their richest, most personal fruition.”

Vision Statement - AMPA is committed to becoming a leader of music and arts education in Australia and beyond, constantly striving towards distinction in performance, creativity and scholarship. Students are educated to the highest standards based on the best possible professional practice. Through our graduates, faculty and community alike, AMPA seeks to leave a positive impact on the music and performing arts arena.

The *Mission* of AMPA is to provide the highest standard of music and performing arts education through:

- * The delivery of tertiary programs, training and research of international quality;
- * Graduates empowered with greater knowledge, ability and professional practice; and,
- * The inspiration of creativity, appreciation and commitment to music and the arts in all people.

Lead by Example

In the words of Albert Schweitzer, "example is not the main thing in influencing others; it is the only thing". Integrity in leadership is crucial, and the best way to promote a specific behaviour in your workplace is by promoting it with your own.

While organisations often depend on HR, policies and training programs to regulate behaviour, leaders that openly embrace integrity will have the greatest influence on staff. Leaders at AMPA, as key role models, are expected to not only communicate the appropriate behaviours but also follow through with actions and decisions based on these values. Staff and students will often be the first to notice a leader that doesn't "practice what they preach", resulting in grey spots on the moral compass or encouraging them to emulate the behaviour. As stated by the Queens School of Business (n.d.), leaders should also reward and encourage good moral behaviour while addressing inappropriate behaviour swiftly to foster an environment where integrity can thrive. These principles are significant as AMPA develops leaders of the future who will enter the workforce with acquired behaviours and values.

Open Communication

Perry (2022) notes that leadership has moved towards "social skills, not power and control". Communication should therefore be central to the leadership process and build trust through the exchange of information between leaders and followers.

AMPA was founded with the traditional European conservatoire in mind, where students could specialise and develop knowledge through individual relationships in an intimate learning environment. The emphasis on interpersonal relationships is key and has carried across into AMPA's '*family model*', where a culture of personal conversation is preferred over top-down, vertical communication. The strictly open-door policy for staff, highly specialised courses and intake limits, feedback mechanisms and emphasis on individual study programs combine to provide students with a nurturing environment where they feel safe and supported. From the first week students will commence individual lessons in their major and minor studies, while forming ensemble and project groups where they will learn the essence of teamwork. This

intimate environment leads to increased levels of engagement, operational flexibility, honest communication and overall alignment with AMPA's integrity principles (Kamm, 2019).

Respect

Respect is threaded into the fabric of the AMPA '*family*', where no two people are the same and differences in culture, talents, ideas, and expression of creativity are valued. The precedent of treating others in a way that you would like to be treated is the baseline for all interactions, whether it is students giving weekly peer feedback during performance classes or recruitment staff providing course advice in the best interest of the student.

Personalisation

The '*family model*' is also extended to prospective students and the greater public in AMPA's marketing approach. Advertising guidelines are controlled closely to ensure common university and performing arts pitfalls are avoided (Bradley, 2018; Hall, 2019). Each applicant is assigned a single admissions officer guiding them through the application process, through to a one-on-one audition and consultation with the Head of Dance or Executive Dean. At orientation new students will be buddied with current students and join small groups of up to six, and music students will each meet with the Head of Music or Head of Dance to discuss a personalised course plan. The use of international education agents is also limited to under ten agencies at any given time to ensure a high level of quality control. Although contrarian, the approach at AMPA is worth considering in a sector that revolves around mass enrolments, AI sales tools and extensive agent networks.

AMPA's inherent values of business integrity have built the nationally recognised, high standard tertiary music provider that exists today. To achieve this AMPA has been conducting business with honesty and strong moral and ethical principles. In practice, this has meant doing what we say we are going to do and holding both our staff and students accountable for our actions. Conducting business with integrity has also involved adherence to our values through our actions, behaviours and decisions and having the character and courage to always do what is right, not just what is easy.

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