



FACULTY OF
**VCA &
MCM**

VCA MUSIC THEATRE

STUDENT GUIDE

2017

In the spirit of reconciliation, The Faculty of VCA & MCM recognises that it is situated on country for which the people of the Kulin Nations have been custodians for many centuries and on which they have performed age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. We acknowledge their living culture and unique role in the life of this region and offer our deep appreciation for their contribution to, and support of, our artistic and academic enterprise.

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Disclaimer: reasonable endeavours have been used to ensure that material contained in this guide was correct at the time of publication. Changes may be made if deemed appropriate and where possible will be notified. Check for confirmation with your relevant course coordinator if uncertain.

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HELPING YOU DEVELOP YOUR POTENTIAL

Welcome to the Victorian College of the Arts, a vibrant and energetic community which respects and encourages creativity. Here you can find a sense of belonging and creative energy that is important to your success.

You are among a select number of students who demonstrate the level of ability and commitment required for admission. Dedication each day to discipline and hard work, in collaboration with your fellow students, will support your preparation for professional success. We hope that you will be as proud of your work at the VCA, as we are to have you collaborate with us.

You may be unprepared for the challenges you will experience here. If you become confused or unsure about new ideas and experiences - persevere. During your time here, you will experience a broad range of work that will put your abilities to the test. Respect your colleagues' work; be alert and sensitive to their needs. Support your fellow students in the way that you would wish them to support you.

Our staff are highly experienced professionals who understand the challenges of training, and are willing to help you in every way possible. Our role is to provide training to help you develop your potential in your chosen discipline. This is a process whereby we work and explore with you, and as such, you are required to be a "partner" in this interactive process.

The VCA supports and encourages you to do your best, and is a community bound by mutual respect for individuality, creativity and diversity.

STATEMENT OF STUDENT COMMITMENT

As a student of the Faculty of the VCA & MCM, I affirm that I will:

- demonstrate and maintain the highest ethical standards in my studies
- value and respect the relationships with my teaching staff
- attend and participate actively in learning activities
- strive for excellence in the pursuit of wisdom by encouraging free and open enquiry
- seek to strengthen the community by promising to stand against behaviours and actions of others that breach this commitment and demean others, this includes students, faculty staff, and visitors
- embrace a spirit of cooperation
- respect our Indigenous Australian culture and knowledge
- respect the policies and procedures of the University

UNIVERSITY POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND STATUTES

All students are bound by the University of Melbourne Statutes and Regulations, which can be found on the University's web page at the following address: <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/governance/statutes>

You are especially asked to read the Student Conduct Policy (MPF1324) <http://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1324> and the

Student Academic Integrity Policy (MPF1310) <http://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1310>.

In order to protect the interests, health and safety of all students, harassment, bullying or aggressive behavior will be subject to disciplinary action.

Students are strongly encouraged to read the following University Policies:

Student Conduct Policy (MPF1324) <http://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1324>

Student Academic Integrity Policy (MPF1310) <http://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1310>

Student Complaints and Grievances Policy (MPF1066) <https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1066>

Academic Progress Review Policy (MPF1291) <https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1291>

Enrolment and Timetabling Policy (MPF1294) <https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1294>

Privacy Policy (MPF1104) - <http://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1104>

Further key policy documents relevant for Students are located at:
<https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/audience/Students>

EXPECTATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY – Student Conduct Policy

The Student Conduct Policy (MPF1324) is located at <http://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1324> and applies to all students at the University of Melbourne:

1. Academic experience

Students must:

- be well informed about their course and course requirements, and plan their studies accordingly
- attend classes and submit work in a timely manner
- prepare for and actively participate in learning experiences such as discussion and debate
- take joint responsibility for their learning and accept responsibility for moving towards intellectual independence
- incorporate feedback into their learning experience, and be aware of the specific rules and course requirements applying in the relevant faculties
- conduct themselves in a professional manner while undertaking professional placements and fieldwork
- provide considered and honest feedback to the University and its staff on the quality of learning and teaching and University services
- actively participate in and contribute to any University committees on which they are representatives or members.

2. Human rights

Students must:

- Treat staff and other students with respect and courtesy
- Comply with the Equal Opportunity Policy and treat others fairly and equitably, and not engage in harassing, bullying or discriminatory behaviour
- Respect the rights of other members of the University community to express dissent or different political or religious views, subject to those actions or views complying with the laws of Australia and not endangering the safety of other members of the community
- Show awareness of and sensitivity towards other cultures
- Respect the opinions of others and engage in rational debate in areas of disagreement.

EXPECTATIONS OF FACULTY

The Victorian College of the Arts is a close-knit community of diverse artists, who share similar goals and motivations, pursuing their life's dream, challenging and supporting one another. Staff strive to create a nurturing atmosphere, while challenging students to develop their talents and further their ambitions.

Every moment is designed to support and enhance your individual development as an artist. As a student you will need discipline and determination. Graduates who rise to this challenge have a great opportunity to become leaders in their field. It is, therefore, important to understand the role of the School and the staff, as well as what is expected of you as a student.

This is an active partnership in which we seek to foster a creative atmosphere, and encourage you to take intellectual and artistic risks. Collaboration is the best means for achieving artistic growth, and with this you are expected to bring to class the highest level of commitment, participating fully.

In an atmosphere of continual group learning, it is essential that students know how both to give and to receive feedback. Giving feedback must at all times be: respectful, follow the teacher's example, considered, objective and useful. Comments which are flippant, shallow or offensive may have the effect of injuring another student's potential, cause doubt about your own assessment and academic future, and flout the Student Code of Conduct. Social media is in particular to be used sparingly when discussing other people's work.

When receiving feedback it is essential to remember that comments only relate to the work under discussion, not to your basic talent or future as an artist. Both you, and your work, will constantly grow and develop, and no one's specific comments on one occasion can define or determine your capability.

Self-care is another basic factor. VCA courses are stimulating, heavy and demanding, and students are advised to organise sufficient sleep, diet and exercise, as well as to analyse time management, socialising, family and work commitments, and reduce distractions. Students are expected to make a commitment to professional excellence and discipline while at the VCA.

BEHAVIOURAL EXPECTATIONS

At the VCA we promote good behaviour in all our students. No student should feel unable to reach their full potential because of inappropriate behaviour by others in studios, classrooms, ensembles, in fact, anywhere on campus.

The University is committed to providing staff and students with a healthy, safe and respectful environment for work and study. Workplace bullying is unacceptable and against the University Policy - Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Bullying Policy and Procedures, which applies to staff, students and contractors of the University.

An ethos of mutual respect between staff and students is essential for effective teaching and learning, and we are committed to fostering and developing students' social skills.

BEHAVIOURAL BOUNDARIES

There are three levels of disruptive/unacceptable behaviour:

1. Low Level
 - anything that affects the learning in the classroom
 - arriving late to the lesson

2. Medium Level

- rudeness
- crudity
- threat of violence
- racial or sexual harassment
- an isolated bullying incident
- minor damage to school property
- any actions that may offend or upset either other students or staff, including through use of social media

3. High Level

- physical violence
- repeated bullying
- theft
- any action considered by staff to flout the Student Code of Conduct

INJURY AND ILLNESS

Students are responsible for their own injury management. Staff will not make any judgments about whether you are fit to work or not: only you can know your own body well enough. Students must take responsibility for your own physical and mental well-being and if you are injured or unwell should seek medical advice. If you attend Performance Medicine for physiotherapy they will send regular reports about student injuries to your year-level coordinator and dance staff which is of great assistance in understanding your particular challenges: you are not obliged to use PM but we certainly have a clearer line of communication with them than outside physiotherapists.

Incident reporting:

- All injuries, near-misses, breakages or incidents of student unwellness in class must be reported.
- Log books situated at the sound systems in GST and each of the Red Shed studios should be used to log minor issues in dance, like reports of muscle soreness. You will be asked to enter your own details.
- Injuries and breakages must be reported using an online incident report: more information and the link to filing a report can be found here:
<http://safety.unimelb.edu.au/emergency/incident/key/index.html#overview>. Please note that damage to property should also be reported immediately so we can arrange for immediate repair. Incidents of students being unwell like fainting or vomiting in class must also be reported.

ACCIDENT AND INJURY

A report must be made if a staff member or student is injured or involved in an accident or near miss whilst engaged in any VCA activity, either on or off campus. Please contact the Facilities Officer to assist in the process of making an incident report.

FIRST AID OFFICERS

Name	Room	Phone Number
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James Welch	201	903 59412
Jayde Kirchert	317	903 59419
Operation Support Officers		903 59311

First aid kits and ice packs are located in the staff room on level three of the Music building, in the Music Administration office 220 on level two and ice packs in staff room fridge.

RED SHED STUDIOS

Ice packs and first aid

- First aid kit is located in the central area between Red 1 and Red 2.
- Ice packs are stored in the fridge in the central area between Red 1 and 2. Please ensure you return icepacks after usage.

Entrances

- The only entry to Red 1 and Red 2 should be through the central void, which is labeled 'Entrance' from the outside. This is in order to keep the floors clean all day for classes where students may need to work lying down. Particularly, please do not enter Red 2 from the double doors on the cafeteria side of the studio or the single door next to the roller door.
- There will be a student roster posted to ensure that studios are checked, re-set and tidied on a weekly basis. Please ensure all items are secured in lockers: loose items may be thrown out. No food or drink is allowed in the studios and you must not leave dirty dishes in the kitchen area of Red Studios.

The fridge and locker areas will be cleaned out every Friday afternoon and anything left behind will be thrown away.

Sound bleed

Sound bleed is a particular issue in some of the Red Shed studios. The metal roller door in Red 2 leaks all sound in and out of the studio. Students and staff are asked to keep the volume of the sound system to the minimum volume required to teach your class, rather than what might feel good to you or the students. Classes that cause too much sound bleed from Red 2 may be moved into Red 1 which is significantly smaller but more protected. Please also be aware that talking in the alleyway between GST and Red 2 will disturb classes in Red 2, so please assist us in making that area a silent zone.

ATTIRE

All staff and students are required to wear shoes when on Campus.

Students who do not wear the required task-appropriate clothing or shoes to class may be asked to observe rather than participate.

CANCELLATION OF INDIVIDUAL LESSONS

Due to the complexity of the schedule and staff availability it is not possible to rearrange lesson times by student request. Occasionally students will swap for a later lesson in the week with another student in their year level if they are ill; but otherwise we are not able to make up lessons. Students should contact their teacher directly if they are ill so they know not to wait for you.

CLASS TIMES

If a lecturer or tutor is 10 minutes late the class may be re-scheduled. If this should occur, the Course Coordinator must be informed so that appropriate action can be taken.

Any student who is more than ten minutes late to class may be asked to observe but not participate in the class and will be marked N/P (non-participant) on the roll.

ABSENCE - STUDENTS

Students must attend 80% of all scheduled classes and attempt all elements of assessment to be eligible for a pass in each subject.

Students are required to advise their year level coordinator (in advance whenever possible) by email if they cannot attend for any reason. For the sake of courtesy, it is also preferred that you contact another student who is in your class so they can inform the sessional teaching staff member taking your class, who cannot always be reached by your coordinator in advance.

Absences due to ill health (including counseling sessions for mental health reasons or physiotherapy appointments for injuries) must be supported by a Medical Certificate. Absences for these reasons will not count against hurdle, though multiple absences for any reason can significantly impact on your training as our training is experiential and cumulative.

It is the student's responsibility to follow up with teaching staff on any teaching/assessment material missed due to absence.

Process for medical certificates:

- For Music Theatre, you must show your medical certificate to the staff member(s) whose class(es) you missed so they can correct the roll at the start of your next class with them.
- When you have shown the certificate to all staff whose classes you missed, you must supply a copy to your student coordinator, keeping the original for your own records.
- More than 20% of classes missed (per subject component) is deemed a non-pass. However, under certain circumstances (e.g. illness or grief) the Board of Examiners may take into account written requests for Special Consideration. Please liaise with the Stop 1 about how to apply for Special Consideration.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Unexpected things sometimes happen in life that make it very difficult to continue in your studies. If this is the case you may be able to apply for a leave of absence. Note that because of the structure of your course, taking less than a year's leave of absence (ie only one semester) is not possible

Students who take leave of absence for one semester or more will be required to get approval from the course coordinator prior to taking leave, upon return students are also required to meet with the coordinators to demonstrate that artistic practice has been maintained.

<http://students.unimelb.edu.au/admin/leave>

LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (LMS)

The Learning Management System or LMS is an online teaching and learning resource that provides students with access to information and resources to support your learning, and to technologies that enable online collaboration and interaction <http://lms.unimelb.edu.au/>



Download the free [Blackboard Mobile Learn app](#) so you can access the LMS on the go.

ROOMS FOR PRACTICE, REHEARSALS AND CLASSES

The rooms in the Southbank Music building are strictly for practice purposes related to studies.

You are responsible for tidying the practice/class room when you have finished your session. All equipment, stands and chairs must be returned to their respective places, and both keyboard and top lids on pianos closed fully. Amps and kits must be locked up in the lockups and any keys borrowed returned to Facilities or the drop-box at the main building exit. Make sure you turn off the lights and air conditioning when you vacate the room.

If you have booked the room, (either during the day or after hours) you will be held responsible for the state of that room. If it is found to be in an unsatisfactory state, you may lose further booking privileges.

NORMAL HOURS ROOM BOOKINGS

Access is available from 7:00 AM to 11:30 PM Monday – Saturday and 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM on Sunday.

Small individual practice rooms along the corridors in the Music building during normal hours cannot be booked – they are available on a first in, first served basis.

You will find two main booking folders in the Music building foyer (level two, outside room 201) for booking of larger rehearsal spaces.

ENSEMBLE ROOMS for use within NORMAL HOURS. This book contains a page for each day of the week one week in advance.

SPECIALISED ROOMS: Percussion (rm 103, 105, 107, 108), drum kit rooms (rm 111, 118, 120), surround sound lab (rm 424) and harp (rm 305) for use within NORMAL HOURS.

All studios in the Dance and Theatre Buildings as well as the Red Shed and GST must be booked via the central booking service: vcamcm-bookings@unimelb.edu.au, please note formal curriculum classes take preference on space bookings.

Please refer to the [VCA & MCM Faculty Student Guide](#) for all outside of business hours bookings.

FOOD, DRINK, BAGS & INSTRUMENTS

Please note that food and drink MUST NOT be consumed in classrooms or practice rooms. Bottled water is permitted. The only exception to this is on medical grounds, supported by appropriate documentation.

Do NOT place any items on pianos, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES - including bags or instruments.

Do not leave bags or instruments unattended in rooms or corridors. VCA takes no responsibility for the safety of your property.

ROOM TIDINESS

All equipment, stands and chairs must be returned to their respective places (stacked), and both keyboard and top lids on pianos closed fully. Amps and kits must be returned to storage cupboards where appropriate. For reference there are storage plans displayed in each large ensemble room.

PRACTICE ROOM WINDOWS

Practice rooms have windows set in the door. These are important for our Health & Safety regulations. It also means that we can locate people and/or equipment without interrupting people's practice. Please DO NOT cover these windows under any circumstances.

GRAND PIANO MOVEMENTS

Staff and students are required to follow the Safe Operating Procedures implemented by the School. SOP's are displayed in rooms where Grand Pianos are located.

HEARING CONSERVATION

Please be mindful that exposure to excessive sound levels may pose a risk to the future health of your hearing. This can be via exposure to your own instrument via amps, music listening via headphones, nights out at clubs, undertaking casual work in noisy environments and so on.

Wearing earplugs should form an essential part of your plan to minimise risk to your hearing-health over the life of your career.

To that end, the Facilities Officer will supply earplugs adequate for temporary use to any Music student upon request (high density foam variety).

In addition, the School shall continue to disseminate information on this aspect of safe practice via information presentations or brochure material. Other avenues to reduce risk in this regard shall be pursued by the School in line with University policy.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Source: "Social Media – Implications for staff and students" (Fairness and Diversity Unit, Department of Human Resources)

SOCIAL MEDIA - A UNIVERSITY ISSUE

Why?

- Use of university email address
- "friends" are fellow students/colleagues
- University is identifiable
- Accessed using University equipment
- Visible at work/class (on screen, print outs)
- Viewed during work hours
- Content includes work/study-related information (examples include: discussing laboratory work, workplace issues, copyright and commercial in-confidence issues)

APPLICATION OF UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Case law supports the view that University policies apply to social media use (including where such use occurs out of university hours on a home computer) where it can be sufficiently linked to the University.

This means that targets of cyber-bullying have access to University complaints procedures and perpetrators may face sanctions under those procedures.

- Employment law tells us that the line between work and home, public and private has become more blurred with the rise of social media use

- Dismissal is valid if the conduct is sufficiently linked to the employment relationship (“friending” of staff/students, even where the target is not the “friend”)
- Cyber-bullying has been clearly identified as a potentially criminal offense (amendment to the Crimes Act otherwise known as Brodie’s Law. Victims of cyber-bullying may also be able to take out intervention orders against perpetrators)

CYBER-BULLYING IS HIGH-RISK BEHAVIOUR

The University’s definition of bullying is: *Repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed toward a staff member or student, or a group of staff or students by a staff member/s or student/s that may create a risk to health and safety.*

Cyber bullying is repeated cruel or hurtful behaviour that is carried out over SMS, e-mail, blogs, chat rooms, discussion boards, instant messaging, and social networking pages such as Facebook.

Some examples of cyber bullying include:

- Sending cruel and threatening messages or material;
- Putting embarrassing photos of people on the web;
- Creating fake profiles that are mean or hurtful; and
- Sending unwanted messages online, teasing and making fun of others
- May be considered stalking in some circumstances
- May be defamatory
- May be a breach of University policy

Cyber-bullying is particularly dangerous because:

- It often involves mobbing of one person by a group
- Individuals often feel less responsible for their behaviour in a group (group loyalty/peer pressure may also contribute to more extreme behaviour)
- Perpetrators believe (often mistakenly) that their posts are private and language and threats may therefore be more extreme
- Important not to send messages when you are angry or your judgment is impaired (by alcohol, anger, tiredness)

Be a Good Citizen/ fellow student/colleague

- Bystanders have a positive role to play to stamp out cyber-bullying
- Speak out whenever you see someone being mean to another person online. Most people respond better to criticism from their peers
- Remember that cyber-bullying is serious and can have devastating consequences (including a number of reported suicides in Australia and abroad)

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media makes it very easy to share information with others, and while convenient, you need to be aware of the risks and potential issues associated with using social media.

Social media includes: various blog forums, discussion boards, social networks and websites such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Flickr, YouTube, Pinterest, WordPress etc

The University expects all members of the community to treat each other with respect, courtesy and consideration. You are expected to maintain the same high standards of professional conduct and behaviour online as would be expected elsewhere.

It is never acceptable to engage in harassment, bullying, illegal or otherwise inappropriate activity, whether you use an official or private social media account. What you disseminate using social media can ultimately have consequences for you and failure to abide by the relevant policies and standards may lead to disciplinary action.

SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

Personal Safety and Privacy

Forms of social media (like Facebook and Twitter) can offer real-time information about who you are, what you are doing and where you are. Consider your privacy and safety before broadcasting your location or details about what you are doing.

Also respect other people's privacy and do not discuss a situation involving named or pictured individuals on a social media site without their permission.

Be Respectful of Others

You are more likely to achieve your goals and sway others to your beliefs if you are constructive and respectful while discussing a bad experience or disagreeing with a concept or person.

Be respectful of staff and students with differing beliefs, values and opinions.

Do not use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the University's community.

Be Aware of Liability

You are responsible for the content of what you post and may be held liable for commentary deemed to be copyright infringement, defamatory, or libellous. Be sure that what you post today will not come back to haunt you.

Use your best judgment – there may be consequences to what you publish, and some may be serious.

Think Before You Post

There is no such thing as a "private" social media site. Don't post anything you are likely to regret later as it is very hard, if not impossible to remove content after the event, and especially after something has been distributed through social networks. Search engines can turn up posts and pictures years after the publication date. Comments can be forwarded or copied. Archival systems save information even if you delete a post.

Understand Your Personal Responsibility

You are ultimately responsible for the content you publish. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time – protect your privacy.

Ensure Confidentiality

Where confidential, private or sensitive information is concerned be cautious. Social media is inherently insecure, so unless you have been specifically asked and authorised to share information or research, steer clear of doing so.

Trust and Credibility

On the web you are what you publish, so when engaging in social media always act honestly to ensure your credibility is maintained. If you make mistakes be the first to admit them, and where possible, make public corrections.

SOME LEGAL ISSUES RELEVANT TO SOCIAL MEDIA

DEFAMATION

The Defamation Act 2005 (Vic) came into operation on 1 January 2006.

Defamation is the publication or communication of material to a third party (including by means of the internet), which identifies an individual, and contains defamatory meaning about that individual that could lower or harm that individual's reputation. There is no longer any distinction between slander (verbal communication of defamatory material) and libel (written communication of defamatory material) under the Defamation Act 2005 (Vic).

Publication or communication therefore includes spoken or written words, gestures, exclamations or laughter, printed or electronic images, publications on the internet, communications in person or communications by broadcast – any communication to a third person amounts to publication.

It is important to note that everyone who is involved in the publication or communication of the defamatory material can be sued for defamation. This includes the writer, speaker, publisher and distributor of the defamatory material, and anyone who might simply be repeating defamatory comments or on-forwarding defamatory material.

There is however a defense of innocent dissemination which applies to “subordinate distributors” e.g. internet service providers, newsagents etc. who would not have the capacity to exercise editorial control over the publication or communication. Students should take care when looking to publish or communicate any material which could be considered harmful to a person's reputation.

COPYRIGHT

Copyright refers to the exclusive rights given to a creator to publish, print, perform or copy their own original work.

In Australia, copyright is applied through the *Copyright Act 1968*.

Copyright applies automatically as soon as an idea is expressed in a material form, i.e. written down or recorded in some form, such as a book, music CD or website. It exists in both published and unpublished material as well as in electronic material. Copyright protects all forms of documented expression or works.

These include the following categories of works:

- Literary – e.g. Books, journal articles, short stories, poems, song lyrics, computer programs
- Dramatic – e.g. Plays, television, radio and film scripts
- Musical – e.g. Musical scores, notated music
- Artistic – e.g. Illustrations, images, photographs, maps, graphs, charts

Students are advised not to post copyright material belonging to a third party without permission, and to post links to original creative works rather than reproducing these works.

For more information visit the University's Copyright Office website
<http://www.unimelb.edu.au/copyright/>

STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

There are two main ways to reduce stress:

1. Change the situation that is causing the stress, or
2. Change your response to the situation

Don't ignore distress

Become aware of the situations that are stressful for you and register your physical and emotional reactions. Try to identify precisely what it is about the situation that is stressful for you. Once you know this, you can work to manage both these situations and the negative effects they have on you.

Identify what you can change about the stressful situation

Can you avoid the stressor, or reduce its intensity by managing it differently? For example, you may be able to reduce exam panic by spending more time preparing and revising; you may be able to limit essay-writing anxieties by planning the task more thoroughly and taking detailed notes. A Language and Learning Skills Adviser could help with these issues.

Work at reducing the intensity of your emotional reactions to stress

Are you making a difficult situation into a disaster by overreacting? Try to moderate extreme emotional responses when considering the consequences of events. Don't focus on the negatives and the 'what if's'; rather, try to consider the realities of the situation.

Learn to moderate your physical responses to stress

Practice relaxing. Slow, deep breathing will bring your heart-rate and respiration back to normal. Relaxation techniques and stretching will reduce muscle tension. You may wish to seek medical advice if stress is affecting your health adversely.

Build your physical reserves

Include aerobic exercise in your daily routines. Eat well-balanced meals; avoid caffeine, alcohol and drugs; reduce your intake of refined sugars. Try to get at least 7-8 hours of sleep a night. Spend time each day relaxing – take a warm bath; go for a walk; play with a pet; daydream, practice yoga or undertake any activity that you find relaxing.

Maintain your emotional reserves

Spend time nurturing mutually supportive friendships and relationships. Choose someone you can trust and talk to them about the things you are finding stressful.

Pursue realistic goals that are meaningful to you; do things that you do well. Expect some frustrations and failures and remember how you have managed to resolve these situations in the past.

MANAGING PERFORMANCE STRESS

We all know the feeling of sickness in our stomach before an important presentation or performance. We have all experienced the sweaty palms, the raised heart rate, and the sense of agitation that we feel as these events approach.

Here are some important techniques and tools that can help you to manage the stress of an important performance or presentation.

ANTICIPATE STRESS

Anticipate the stresses and take early action to manage them. These are rehearsal, reducing uncertainty and reducing the importance of the event.

Reduce Uncertainty

Uncertainty can cause high levels of stress and lead you to make mistakes in your preparation that then undermine your performance. You need to know different things for different types of performance.

For example: What else will happen during your performance? What distractions are you likely to experience?

Asking questions to clarify and reduce your uncertainties is part of professionally preparing for an event.

Rehearsal

Rehearsal helps you to polish your performance and build confidence. It also allows you to identify any areas that may cause you difficulty, and provides you with time to change and eliminate problems appropriately.

The more you rehearse, the more your actions will become automatic. This helps you enter a state of flow turning a stressful event into an enjoyable experience.

Reduce the Importance of the Event

When an event is important to you it can make it very stressful. This is particularly true if you are operating at a high level, or when many people are watching. If you focus on the correct performance of your tasks and place it in its proper context, then the importance of the event will dwindle into the background as it gains a fair sense of perspective.

RATIONAL AND POSITIVE THINKING

Problems during Practice

If some of your practice was less than perfect, then remind yourself that the purpose of practice is to identify problems so that they will not be repeated during the performance. Ask yourself if it is reasonable to expect perfect performance at all times. All that is important is that you perform well when you need to.

Positive affirmation: "I have experimented with and learned from my practice. This has put me in a position where I can deliver a great performance".

Quality of Performance

If you have:

- Trained yourself as well as you reasonably should have
- Gathered the information you need and prepared properly for the event
- Conducted a reasonable number of rehearsals

Then you have done as much as you can to give a good performance.

Positive affirmation: "I have trained hard for this event. I have prepared well and have rehearsed thoroughly. I am well prepared to give an excellent performance."

Worry about other people's reaction

If you perform the best you can, then you should be completely satisfied.

Positive affirmation: "Fair people will react well to a good performance. I will rise above any unfair criticism in a mature and professional way."

BETTER SLEEP

Source: University of Melbourne Counselling Service

Facts

- The average amount of sleep a person needs each day is about 8 hours
- If you are regularly getting less than 8 hours sleep, it is likely that you are mentally under functioning at University
- Good rest is almost as good as sleep
- Sleep comes in waves and like a surfer you need to know when the waves occur and to catch them at the right time
- You won't go crazy if you miss a night or two of sleep

Tips

1. GO TO BED WHEN YOU ARE SLEEPY

Many people make a decision to go to bed after hours of study without thinking about their body's needs. Sometimes if you try to go to sleep after study your mind can be over stimulated and not be ready for sleep.

Prepare yourself for sleep Sign off the work you have been doing – tick off tasks completed, make a list of things to do tomorrow, put this in a special place, tidy your desk a little, shut down your computer. Wind down – have a cup of warm milk or herbal tea, read a restful book or magazine, listen to quiet music, have a shower. Do all this calmly. Prepare your bed for sleep – make sure it is comfortable and a good place to sleep. Avoid big meals and stimulants like tea, coffee, alcohol, energy drinks or cigarettes within to 2 hours of going to bed.

2. MAKE YOUR BED A PLACE OF REST AND RELAXATION

It is advised that you don't read or listen to music in bed before you go to sleep. Many students will dispute this and do use music and light reading to relax in bed. Sometimes reading academic text seems like it will put you to sleep! It is not a good idea to study in bed. *Your bed needs to be a place of rest and relaxation.*

3. GET UP IF YOU ARE STILL AWAKE AND RESTLESS AFTER HALF AN HOUR

Do something quiet, read a magazine, have a cup of warm milk or herbal tea. Avoid high-energy activities and stimulants.

Go back to bed when you are feeling sleepy and try to go to sleep again. Don't worry if you're not sleepy – more sleep is lost through worrying. Only prolonged sleep disturbance is unhealthy. However if you are lying in bed feeling relaxed and are ok about this, then stay in bed as long as this feeling remains. You will fall asleep. Remember you want to associate your bed with rest and sleep.

4. TRY TIPS 2 & 3 IF YOU WAKE DURING THE NIGHT AND CAN'T GO BACK TO SLEEP

Don't be tempted to get up and do anything too exciting like emailing friends, surfing the net or doing more study.

5. ESTABLISH A ROUTINE

Get up at the same time each morning and go to bed at roughly the same time each night. If possible maintain this routine on the weekends as the body clock will be disturbed if the routine of sleep is radically altered. Set an alarm clock if necessary. Try not to nap during the day as this takes the edge of sleepiness at night. Also don't over sleep – this will not make you more alert, rather the opposite. It will make you feel more tired and sluggish.

6. DO SOME EXERCISE DURING THE DAY EVERY DAY, BUT NEVER LATE AT NIGHT

Choose something you enjoy and exercise with a friend to maintain enthusiasm on a regular basis, three or more times per week.

7. DO SOME RELAXATION BEFORE BED

Use a relaxation tape, do some gentle breathing exercises, some yoga or meditation.

8. THINK ABOUT YOUR PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Is your bedroom a place you like to be? To sleep in? Make changes to the room that will help like adjust the lighting, change the bed covers, pillow, reduce or remove other interrupting sounds like tv or radio, close doors, talk to flat mates about your needs.

9. GET HELP IF YOU'VE GOT WORRIES/THINGS ON YOUR MIND

Maybe they need working through. Talk to a friend, the person concerned, a counsellor, chaplain, your lecturer, parents etc.

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Some useful and practical techniques for relaxing and dealing with the symptoms of stress:

IMAGERY

Imagery in Relaxation

One common use of relaxation imagery is to imagine a scene, place or event that you remember as safe, peaceful, restful, beautiful and happy. You can bring all your senses into the image with, for example, sounds of running water and birds, the smell of cut grass, the taste of cool white wine, the warmth of the sun, and so on. Use the imagined place as a retreat from stress and pressure.

Scenes can involve complex images such as lying on a beach in a deserted cove. You may “see” cliffs, sea and sand around you, “hear” the waves crashing against rocks, “smell” the salt in the air, and “feel” the warmth of the sun and a gentle breeze on your body. Other images might include looking at a mountain view, swimming in a tropical pool, or whatever you want. Other uses of imagery in relaxation involve creating mental pictures of stress flowing out of your body, or of stress, distractions and everyday concerns being folded away and locked into a padlocked chest.

Imagery in Preparation and Rehearsal

You can use imagery in rehearsal before a big event, allowing you to prepare for the event in your mind.

Aside from allowing you to rehearse mentally, imagery also allows you to practice in advance for anything unusual that might occur, so that you are prepared and already practiced in handling it. This is a technique used very commonly by top sports people, who learn good performance habits by repeatedly rehearsing performances in their imagination. When the unusual eventualities they have rehearsed using imagery occur, they have good, pre-prepared, habitual responses to them.

Imagery also allows you to pre-experience achievement of your goals, helping to give you self-confidence.

MEDITATION

The idea behind meditation is to consciously relax your body and focus your thoughts on one thing for a sustained period. This occupies your mind, diverting it from the problems that are causing you stress. It gives your body time to relax and recuperate, and to clear away stress hormones that may have built up.

Meditation is something you can do easily by following these steps:

- Sit quietly and comfortably
- Close your eyes
- Start by relaxing the muscles of your feet and work up your body relaxing
- Focus your attention on your breathing
- Breathe in deeply and then let your breath out. Count your breaths, and say the number of the breath as you let it out (this gives you something to do with your mind, helping you to avoid distraction).

Do this for ten or twenty minutes. Other approaches are:

Focusing on an object:

Here, you completely focus attention on examination of an object. Look at it in immense detail for the entire meditation. Examine the shape, colour differences, texture, temperature and movement of the object. Objects often used are flowers, candle flames or flowing designs, but you can use other objects equally effectively (for example alarm clocks, desk lamps or even coffee mugs!)

Focus on a sound:

Some people like to focus on sounds they make. The classic example is the Sanskrit word "Om", meaning "perfection". Whether or not this is practical depends on your lifestyle.

Using Imagery:

This can be a very refreshing and pleasant way of meditating. Here, you create a mental image of a pleasant and relaxing place in your mind.

DEEP BREATHING

Deep breathing is a simple but very effective method of relaxation. It is a core component of everything from the "take ten deep breaths" approach to calming someone down, right through to yoga relaxation and meditation. It works well in conjunction with other relaxation techniques such as Progressive Muscular Relaxation, relaxation imagery and meditation to reduce stress.

To use the technique, take a number of deep breaths and relax your body further with each breath. That's all there is to it!

PROGRESSIVE MUSCULAR RELAXATION

Progressive Muscular Relaxation (PMR) is useful for relaxing your body when your muscles are tense.

The idea behind PMR is that you tense up a group of muscles so that they are as tightly contracted as possible. Hold them in a state of extreme tension for a few seconds. Then, relax the muscles to their previous state. Finally, consciously relax the muscles even further so that you are as relaxed as possible.

By tensing your muscles first, you will probably find that you are able to relax your muscles more than would be the case if you tried to relax your muscles directly.

Experiment with PMR by forming a fist, and clenching your hand as tight as you can for a few seconds. Then relax your hand to its previous tension, and then consciously relax it again so that it is as loose as possible. You should feel deep relaxation in your hand muscles.

For maximum relaxation you can use PMR in conjunction with breathing techniques and imagery.

The "Relaxation Response"

Studies have shown that these techniques have a very real effect on reducing stress. Direct effects included deep relaxation, slowed heartbeat and breathing, reduced oxygen consumption and increased skin resistance.

You can do this for yourself by following these steps:

- Sit quietly and comfortably
- Close your eyes
- Start by relaxing the muscles of your feet and work up your body relaxing muscles
- Focus attention on your breathing
- Breathe in deeply and then let your breath out. Count your breaths, and say the number of the breath as you let it out (this gives you something to do with your mind, helping you to avoid distraction).

Do this for ten or twenty minutes.

An even more potent alternative approach is to follow these steps, but to use relaxation imagery instead of counting breaths in step 5.

Summary:

“Deep Breathing,” “Progressive Muscular Relaxation,” and the steps leading to the “Relaxation Response” are three good techniques that can help you to relax your body and manage the symptoms of stress.

YOGA

The body is an energy system with close interplay between breathing, heart beat and brain function. Yoga provides a useful maintenance service for this system.

Working from the premise that “Life is breath, breath is life,” yoga places great emphasis on making the breathing deep, rhythmic and effective. The principle is that essential thoughts and messages are delivered more effectively when the body is relaxed and the brain is well-oxygenated, helping the body and mind to work more successfully while feeling less tired and less stressed.

Yoga breathing lowers blood pressure and brings intense relaxation. Of course, shallow breathing does not always cause unclear thinking or low spirits, but it has been medically linked with attacks of depression, mood swings and other various disorders.

Further benefits following a dedicated practice of yoga are improved appearance through better posture, muscle and skin-tone. Bones are strengthened and joints become more flexible. It can be amazing to see how much more flexible the body is and how much more positive one’s outlook becomes with just a few months of yoga practice.

THE FELDENKRAIS METHOD

The **Feldenkrais Method** - often referred to as *Feldenkrais* - aims to reduce pain or limitations in movement, to improve physical function, and to promote general wellbeing by increasing students' awareness of themselves and by expanding students' movement repertoire.

Providing a greater sense of ease and well-being, for all kinds of performers - musicians, singers, dancers, actors and others, *Feldenkrais* offers:

- options for new ways of moving that are healthier for your body
- reduced aches and pains and greater freedom in your movement
- improved relaxation response and relief from the effects of stress
- greater awareness of comfortable and efficient posture
- ways to improve the quality of your performance - and the quality of your rest
- greater awareness that will help you prevent injuries
- new levels of embodied presence in your creative process
- increased expressive abilities

