

Future Studios: Aboriginal Student Pathways Program into the Visual Arts

Adelaide Contemporary Experimental

Lion Arts Centre
North Terrace
(West End)
Kaurua Yarta
Adelaide SA 5000

ACErlu tampinthe, ngadlu Kurna yartangka
inparrinthe. Kurna miyurna yaitya yarta-
mathanya Wama Tarntanyaku. Parnaku yaitya,
parnakuta tapa purruna, parnakuta yarta ngadlurlu
tampinthe. Yalaka Kurna miyurna itu yaitya, tapa
purruna, yarta kuma puru martinthe, puru warri-
apinthe, puru tangka martulayinthe. Ngadlurlu
tampinthe purkana pukinangku, yalaka.

ACE respectfully acknowledges the Kurna
people are the traditional custodians of the
Adelaide Plains. We recognise and respect their
cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the
land. We acknowledge that they are of continuing
importance to the Kurna people living today. We
acknowledge Elders past and present.



Government of South Australia
Arts South Australia



CONTEMPORARY
ARTS
ORGANISATIONS
AUSTRALIA

ACE is supported by the South Australian Government through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments. ACE is also assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body. ACE is a member of Contemporary Arts Organisations Australia.

About Adelaide Contemporary Experimental



Opening Celebration, Mark Valenzuelas: *Bantay-Salakay* (2025), Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Lana Adams.

Adelaide Contemporary Experimental (ACE) is South Australia's leading independent contemporary visual arts organisation located in Adelaide's iconic Lion Arts Centre precinct. Through exhibitions, studios, public programs, education, professional development opportunities and publications, ACE expands the edges of contemporary visual art practice, embraces diversity and provides a space for artists to take risks.

The annual ACE studio program offers rent-free CBD-based studios for selected South Australian professional artists working in contemporary visual arts. As the only opportunity of its kind in the state, the ACE Studio Program is an invaluable pathway for local professional artists to gain national recognition and opportunities. In addition to the annual studio residency program is a short-term residency program that hosts artists from interstate, regional locations, and artists working towards outcomes in the ACE exhibition program.

Future Studios



Opening Celebration, *Future Studios: 2024*, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Lana Adams.

The ACE Future Studios is a free program that provides fully-supported, CBD-based studios to young Aboriginal South Australian students in years 10–12. The program offers a one-week intensive studio experience, as well as ongoing mentoring and professional development throughout the year.

Following the week-long intensive, young artists are supported by the First Nations Future Studios Coordinator in developing and completing artwork for presentation in the Future Studios exhibition, hosted within the gallery spaces at Adelaide Contemporary Experimental.

Participants also have access to additional artist workshops, career information sessions, and guidance to apply for further presentation opportunities throughout the year.

To ensure full participation, young artists are provided with materials suited to their individual artistic practice, enabling experimentation and reducing barriers, and eligible participants receive a public transport travel allowance.

From 2026 to 2027, ACE will continue partnering with the Department for Education Student Pathways and Careers to deliver a full program for Aboriginal student artists each year, providing a unique opportunity to gain hands-on industry experience, develop practical skills, and explore pathways into visual arts careers.



Government of South Australia
Department for Education

Overview

Program Outcomes



10 Stage 1
SACE credits



Understanding of
expanded forms of artistic
techniques



Exhibition
inc. paid artist fee &
option to sell art works



Continued Support and
Opportunities

Intensive Week

Monday - Friday 10am - 4:15pm



Arts Materials
Provided



Discover Tertiary
Pathways into the
Arts



Workshops &
Connection with
Leading First
Nations Artists



Create New and
Exciting Art



Travel Assistance



Meet Artists leading
Experimentation



Visit Adelaide CBD
Galleries



Expand Cultural
Knowledge and
Application



Develop an Artistic
Voice



Catered Lunch

The Future Studios Program provides diverse artistic and cultural development opportunities for Aboriginal students. It supports young artists to build confidence, develop a distinctive artistic voice, and gain a real understanding of professional studio practice. By combining hands-on experience, mentorship, and industry exposure, the program bridges the gap between secondary education and professional art practice. For First Nations and regional students in particular, Future Studios expands access to creative opportunities that may otherwise be out of reach, fostering pathways into further study and careers in the visual arts.

SACE Community Learning



Future Studios Workshop (2025), workshop documentation, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Lana Adams.

Aligned with the SACE Community Learning framework, the Future Studios program is a recognised Community Development program that allows students to earn 10 Stage 1 SACE Credits. Participation in the program contributes directly to students' SACE, with accreditation ensuring that their creative and cultural learning is formally acknowledged as part of their secondary education.

To achieve SACE credit, students are expected to;

- actively engage in all program components, including the week-long intensive, mentoring sessions, workshops, and exhibition preparation;
- develop a resolved artwork or body of work that demonstrates exploration of concepts, materials, and techniques;
- produce an artist statement articulating their ideas, processes, influences, and creative decisions;
- complete a reflective piece examining their learning journey, cultural insights, challenges, and future goals;
- and maintain process documentation, such as a journal, sketchbook, or digital log, showing development from initial ideas to final exhibition.

Assessment recognises both process and outcome, valuing not only the final artwork but also students' engagement, critical thinking, and personal growth. Feedback is provided by the Future Studios Coordinator and mentor artists in a culturally safe and supportive environment. Through this structure, SACE accreditation formally acknowledges the skills, knowledge, and capabilities developed in Future Studios, supporting students' achievements and strengthening pathways into tertiary study and creative industries.

Application and Selection Process



Future Studios Workshop (2025), workshop documentation, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Lana Adams.

ACE will work with the Department for Education Student Pathways and Careers team on the recruitment and selection of Aboriginal student artists, utilising both the Department and ACE's networks.

Based on our learnings from the delivery of the 2025 program, from 2026 ACE proposes a stronger focus on regionally based First Nations students by extending expressions of interest to multiple regional schools. In particular, we will prioritise engagement with the Central Yorke School, Roxby Downs Area School, and Port Lincoln High School.

Through this targeted outreach, ACE aims to provide clear pathway opportunities for regional students, recognising the strong interest and enthusiasm we have seen from past regional students to participate in the program.

The Aboriginal student artists will be selected based on:

- Prior demonstration and willingness to experiment and take risks in their art practice;
- Dedication to developing their art practice;
- The impact of the program on the young artist's creativity and wellbeing;
- Interest in visual arts tertiary education and careers; and
- Ability to participate in the full five days.

ACE will offer three Future Studios groups, each comprising 4–6 students, with a maximum of 27 students participating in the annual program.

Student Assessment

As part of the Future Studios Program, students will be assessed on their creative and professional development, with a focus on cultural learning, identity, and personal growth. The assessment is designed to support the students journey as an emerging artist, rather than test them in a formal way. Students will be required to complete the following:

1. Active Participation

- Provide consistent involvement in all parts of the program:
 - Studio visits
 - Mentor sessions
 - Workshops
 - Group discussions
- Student participation will be observed by the Future Studios Coordinator and mentors, this includes attendance, engagement, and contribution to the group.

2. Final Artwork

- Students will develop and complete a final artwork (or body of work) to be presented in a public exhibition.
- Students final artwork should demonstrate a clear artistic voice and development from initial concept to completion.
- Students final artwork will be assessed for creativity, resolution, presentation, and technical quality.

3. Artist Statement

- Students will write an artist statement to display alongside your final work.
- Students Artist Statement is to be 150 - 200 words and includes:
 - Intention and influences
 - The materials and methods you used
 - A reflection on your creative process and ideas

4. Cultural Learning and Engagement

- Students are encouraged to actively engage with the cultural knowledge shared during workshops with First Nations artists.
- Students are expected to demonstrate cultural awareness, respect, and sensitivity throughout all stages of the program.

5. Final Reflection

- Students will complete a reflection equivalent to 800 words to be submitted with their Artist Statement and Final Artwork.
- While the reflection may resemble what is stated in the artist statement, it must be more in-depth and display critical thinking.
- This could be a:
 - Written report
 - Video diary
 - Oral presentation
- Students reflection should explore your development in areas like:
 - Confidence and skill-building
 - Cultural learning
 - Challenges you've faced/overcome
 - Future goals

Student Assessment

	A	B	C	D	F
Creative Process and Studio Practice Students are expected to actively participate in studio-based exploration, mentorship sessions, and personal experimentation as they develop their artwork.	Demonstrates an original, confident artistic language. Actively engages in research, studio experimentation, and mentorship, fully integrating feedback to produce a coherent, well-resolved body of work.	Demonstrates a strong, developing artistic language. Actively applies research and studio time to shape a considered work. Engages with feedback and demonstrates thoughtful development throughout the process.	Demonstrates an emerging artistic voice. Participates in basic research and studio experimentation to develop a resolved work. Responds to feedback with some evidence of integration.	Demonstrates a limited personal style. Needs more active engagement with research and studio work, and applies feedback inconsistently.	Demonstrates minimal development and engagement. Shows little participation in research, experimentation, or mentorship. Feedback is not applied, and work is incomplete.
Final Resolved Artwork Quality, originality, and clarity of the final artwork or body of work.	Final artwork demonstrates a refined and dynamic artistic language. Presentation is resolved, spatially considered, and responsive to audience. Technical execution is professional and complete.	Final artwork demonstrates clear intent and consistent refinement. Presentation reflects spatial and audience awareness. Most technical elements are resolved.	Final artwork is conceptually sound but may benefit from further refinement. Presentation shows some spatial or audience awareness. Technical finish is developing.	Final artwork is partially resolved or underdeveloped. Presentation lacks cohesion or clarity. Technical aspects may be unresolved.	Final artwork is incomplete, lacks resolution or conceptual clarity. Presentation and technical finish are inadequate.
Artist Statement Written expression of artistic intent, process, materials, and influences.	Artist statement clearly articulates concept, influences, and process using informed and fluent language. Demonstrates strong contextual awareness and reflection.	Artist statement articulates concept and process clearly, with some contextual awareness. Written expression is mostly clear and considered.	Artist statement communicates intent and process adequately, but with limited contextualisation. Expression is functional but may lack depth.	Artist statement presents basic ideas with limited clarity. Few connections between process, influences, and outcomes.	Artist statement is vague, unclear, or incomplete. No meaningful insight into process or intent.
Cultural Learning and Engagement Exploration of cultural identity and engagement with Aboriginal and perspectives.	Demonstrates deep engagement with cultural identity. Research and references to cultural knowledge are rich, relevant, and meaningfully integrated into studio practice and reflection.	Demonstrates consistent and respectful engagement with cultural knowledge. Cultural references support and inform the development of ideas and practice.	Demonstrates basic engagement with cultural perspectives. Some integration of cultural knowledge is evident, though not fully developed.	Demonstrates limited engagement with cultural learning. Cultural perspectives are present but under-explored or disconnected from practice.	Little or no engagement with cultural knowledge or identity. No integration into studio work or reflection.
Cultural Learning and Identity Engagement Exploration of cultural identity and engagement with Aboriginal and perspectives.	Offers sophisticated, insightful reflection on artistic, cultural, and personal growth. Demonstrates strong self-awareness and ability to critically assess development and future direction.	Reflects meaningfully on learning journey. Identifies key developments in skills, ideas, and confidence with clarity.	Offers a structured reflection on progress. Identifies general areas of growth but lacks depth or specificity.	Reflection is limited or overly descriptive. Connections to learning outcomes or future goals are unclear.	Provides minimal or no reflection. Unable to articulate learning, growth, or intentions.

*Students are to achieve a grade of A-D to qualify for SACE Credits



Future Studios: 2025, exhibition view, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Andre Castellucci.

Regional Focuses



Future Studios Workshop (2024), workshop documentation, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Lana Adams.

This year, the Future Studios program will be largely focused on providing opportunities to South Australian regional students and schools. Regional students will have the opportunity to meet leading Adelaide-based artists and artworkers, as well as discover tertiary pathways in the arts. To support participation, ACE can support the travel of up to four regional students and one supervising teacher for the intensive week. Teachers attending will also gain valuable professional development, building their knowledge of arts education, First Nations cultural practices, and ways to support students' creative learning. Teachers with students from regional schools interested in attending are encouraged to contact education@ace.gallery for further information and assistance.

Following the intensive, ACE can also deliver a series of workshops at regional schools, led by the Future Studios Coordinator, a First Nations artist, and a local Elder. These workshops are fully funded and provide hands-on creative opportunities for other First Nations students in the school, supporting them to explore diverse art forms, engage with First Nations cultural knowledge, and connect with stories of resilience and creativity.

The workshops also introduce students to the various pathways in the arts and provide insights into the career journeys of artists. By embedding these experiences within regional schools, ACE aims to extend the reach of Future Studios, inspire new cohorts to consider creative futures, strengthen connections between schools, communities, and the professional arts sector. Importantly, these workshops act as a pathway into the program itself, encouraging students to participate in future iterations of Future Studios.

Metro Students



Opening Celebration, *Future Studios: 2024*, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Lana Adams.

The Future Studios program also provides opportunities for South Australian metro-based students. ACE can support 1–2 metro students per group to attend the week-long intensive in Adelaide, providing fully supported studio access, mentorship, and professional development alongside established First Nations artists. Eligible students will receive a travel allowance to support their participation.

During the intensive, metro-based students will receive hands-on guidance in developing their exhibition artworks, participate in mentoring sessions, and engage with professional studio practices. They will also have the opportunity to receive additional face-to-face support outside of the intensive week from the Future Studios Coordinator where required, ensuring they can progress their work and fully engage with the program.

Metro students will also be invited to participate in future workshops and educational programs at ACE, providing ongoing opportunities to deepen their artistic practice, explore First Nations cultural knowledge, and engage with creative career pathways.

Key Deliverables

Studio Week Intensive

Students will be provided with fully supported CBD-based studios for a one-week intensive. This unique industry placement nurtures creativity and practical skills with the support of mentor artists and ACE staff, and gives young artists an understanding of the activities involved in professional studio practice.

The young artists will gain an understanding of the impact of studio work and the daily activities involved in a professional artistic practice. They will also experience working alongside their peers, as well as ACE studio artists, in a professional studio setting within a highly regarded contemporary gallery and art organisation.

The young artists will also be provided with art materials appropriate to their individual artistic practice to enable experimentation and reduce any barriers to participation. A public transport travel allowance will be offered to the participants.

Intensives take place from 10am - 4:15pm, Monday to Friday.

Intensive Layout

Day 1

- ACE Studio Induction
- Create plan for studio activities and outcomes with ACE Future Studios Coordinator
- Curator Tour of ACE Exhibition(s)
- Creative research and experimentation

Day 2

- Morning and afternoon check-in with ACE Future Studios coordinator
- Two-hour First Nations artist workshop
- Tour of Tertiary Institutions

Day 3

- Morning and afternoon check-in with ACE Future Studios coordinator
- Two-hour First Nations artist workshop
- Creative research and experimentation

Day 4

- Morning and afternoon check-in with ACE Future Studios coordinator
- Two-hour First Nations artist workshop
- Creative research and experimentation

Day 5

- Morning and afternoon check-in with ACE Future Studios coordinator
- Curator studio visit with ACE Artistic Director
- Creative research and experimentation
- Studio pack-up
- Complete feedback and evaluation

Key Deliverables

Intensive Workshops

Throughout the intensive week, First Nations artists will lead workshops for the young artists, sharing their expertise and introducing new materials, techniques, and approaches to creative practice. These sessions will support concept development, experimentation, and strategies for preparing work for exhibition.

Tertiary Pathways & Professional Experiences

Students will be invited to tour the campuses of tertiary institutions offering visual arts training and meet key staff. Students will also be provided with information on each course available, comparisons between tertiary institutions, and testimonials from First Nations artists who have graduated from the different institutions.

Students will have the opportunity to engage with professional arts environments both on-site at ACE and in other Adelaide-based studios and galleries. The Future Studios Coordinator will guide students through visits to city-based galleries and artist studios, including opportunities to meet resident artists, observe their practices, and gain insight into how different creative spaces operate. These experiences are designed to provide a deeper understanding of professional arts practice and the diverse pathways available in the sector.

Post-Intensive Engagement

Following the Studio Week Intensive, ACE will continue to support students as they prepare their work for the Future Studios Exhibition. This includes finalising and preparing artworks, completing titles and artist biographies, arranging delivery, and coordinating installation and the exhibition launch. Regional workshops will also be delivered in participating schools to provide additional support, guidance, and mentorship for students developing their exhibition works.

Exhibition

Exhibiting is an essential part of an artist's practice, and Future Studios places strong emphasis on developing the skills and confidence required to present work publicly. Following the week-long intensive, young artists will be supported and guided by the Future Studios Coordinator in the development and completion of artworks for presentation in the annual Future Studios exhibition at ACE.

The young artists' completed works will be installed for public display in a two-week exhibition, with schools and youth services invited to attend. The exhibition will be documented throughout, and at its conclusion, artists will be supported to de-install their work and complete the required paperwork to receive their exhibiting artist fee.

In addition to exhibiting at ACE, students will be encouraged and supported to apply for the Adelaide Festival Centre's Our Young Mob exhibition. Further opportunities will be identified throughout the year, with tailored support provided for students to submit applications or participate in group exhibitions, ensuring their work reaches broader audiences and strengthens their pathways as emerging artists.



Learning Outcomes

Key Deliverable	Program Activity	Learning Outcomes
Studio Intensive	Workshops with First Nations artists working across a range of mediums in contemporary and experimental contexts. There will be 3 workshops per intensive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cultural knowledge – Artwork skills and techniques – Conceptual thinking – Industry pathways – Tertiary pathways – Communication of ideas
	Guidance from the Future Studios Coordinator in other mediums students may want to explore, e.g. oil painting, soft sculpture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Artwork skills and techniques
	Time for exploration and experimentation to explore techniques and mediums learnt in workshops.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Artwork skills and techniques – Conceptual thinking – Self-directed learning
	Artist journals to track ideas and record information about techniques and mediums.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Artwork skills and techniques – Conceptual thinking – Self-directed learning
	Studio tours to learn about other studio spaces and how they function and what they offer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Industry pathways
Exhibition Tours and Industry Information Sessions	Curator tour of ACE Exhibitions and Artist Studios	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cultural knowledge – Artwork skills and techniques – Conceptual thinking – Industry pathways – Communication of ideas
	Curator tour of current exhibitions around Adelaide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Industry pathways – Cultural knowledge
	Country Arts SA and Ku Arts sessions in regional areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Industry pathways
Tertiary Pathways Information Sessions	Tours of campuses, meeting key staff, information and resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tertiary pathways
Exhibition Outcomes	<i>Our Young Mob</i> exhibition at Adelaide Festival Centre (application process)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Curation and presentation – Communication of ideas
	Future Studios exhibition at ACE	
	Additional presentation outcomes to be explored (e.g. SALA)	
Workshops	First Nations artist-led workshops delivered in the week-long intensive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cultural knowledge – Artwork skills and techniques – Conceptual thinking – Industry pathways
	First Nations artist-led workshops delivered at regional schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cultural knowledge – Artwork skills and techniques – Conceptual thinking – Industry pathways – Collaborative Learning

ACE Studio Program



Open Studios (2023), Teresa Busuttil's studio, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Thomas McCammon.

The annual ACE studio program offers annual and short term rent-free CBD-based studios for selected South Australian professional artists working in contemporary visual arts. As the only opportunity of its kind in the state, the ACE Studio Program is an invaluable pathway for local professional artists to gain national recognition and opportunities.

Situated alongside the ACE Studio Program dedicated studios will host the young artists, with the proximity to the ACE Studio Program providing the opportunity for the young artists to work alongside professional artists, observing their daily studio practices and gaining a deeper understanding of professional artistic workflows. This proximity fosters peer collaboration, practical skills development, and creative growth in a professional contemporary gallery setting.

ACE

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