

Proceeding Paper

Major Selection Tendency among Creative Arts Students, Academy of Arts and Creative Technology, UMS[†]

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Abstract: Both teachers and students are concerned about choosing majors. The gap between initial student expectations and external circumstances might lead to inferior academic performance and higher dropout rates. The purpose of this study was to determine the majors chosen by university freshmen and the factors that influenced their selection of creative arts majors. They filled out surveys about ASTiF's Creative Arts majors. Results show that desire, family, lecturer, and course difficulty influence student major selection. According to the survey, students have their own perceptions of majors before pursuing these specialisations. Academic accomplishment, personal and social growth, and retention must be outlined in advance. Better preparation and communication between teachers, students, and parents are needed to identify more appropriate majors for each student. Universities could perhaps offer courses geared toward the aspects of academic choices, attitudes, and social skills. This should be a process, not an event, and should include peer-mentoring and staff—student engagement to choose an ASTiF Creative Arts major.

Keywords: creative arts; higher education; student perceptions



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1. Introduction

The Academy of Arts and Creative Technology (ASTiF) is a new faculty of Universiti Malaysia Sabah created in 2021 [1]. ASTiF was founded in accordance with the reorganisation of the Social Sciences and Arts cluster, which had been united under the Faculty of Humanities, Arts, and Heritage since its establishment in 2014 [2]. The existence of ASTiF implicitly recalls the existence of the School of Arts (*Sekolah Pengajian Seni*), a former body at Universiti Malaysia Sabah that offered arts-focused study programmes such as the Creative Arts Programme, the Music Arts Programme, and the Visual Arts Technology Programme [3]. Compared to the School of Arts, ASTiF is an academy that concentrates on subjects attributed with the creative sector by offering three main programmes, namely the Creative Arts Programme, the Music Arts Programme, and the Visual Arts Technology Programme, as well as a forthcoming programme, the Cinematography Programme. Creative Arts is one of these programmes that frequently has an imbalance of students between the various majors. This makes the programme so unique that it merits thorough observation.

2. Creative Arts Programme

The Creative Arts Programme (UH2162002) is a programme that channels the specialisation of students into three branches: dance, theatre, and writing. This three-year, six-semester programme awards a Bachelor of Arts with Honours upon completion (Creative Arts). This programme offers both theoretical and practical courses, including Dance Art Analysis, Art Criticism, and Comparative Art Analysis, as well as Dance Art Fundamentals, Acting Fundamentals, Direction, Composition, and Choreography, New Media Writing, and Short Story Writing, and others [4]. However, the distribution of students according to their chosen major is unequal and follows a consistent percentage trend year

after year. This percentage is displayed in Table 1, which depicts the number of students per strip from 2019 to 2021.

Table 1. Number of Creative Arts Students Based on Specialisation/Strip from 2019 to 2021.

Strip	Year		
	2019	2020	2021
Writing	74 students	67 students	64 students
Theatre	37 students	40 students	31 students
Dance	20 students	6 students	10 students

Based on the distribution of students indicated in Table 1, we can conclude that, on average, only 14 percent of students opted to concentrate on the dance strip, 29 percent chose the theatre segment, and the remaining students chose the writing segment. This has increased the significance of the study examining the primary selection parameters used by students in the Creative Arts. This study’s objective was to assess the factors that influence students’ choices in dance, theatre, and writing. Understanding students’ attitudes, trends, and interests is crucial, especially for guiding and assisting students to define their talents at the beginning of the semester and choosing a field that matches their abilities, which is essential for their success in their professional careers.

3. Research Methodology

The purpose of this study was to evaluate student major selection by requesting responses to six essential factors that may influence their major choice. Using a random selection technique to obtain a sample, this study remained only focused on Year 1 Creative Arts Program students. This study was conducted between December 2020 and February 2021. Using Google Forms, questionnaires were distributed. Each respondent was given a questionnaire containing a total of 24 items. The level of respondents’ agreement was measured using a Likert scale, with 1 representing “strongly disagree” and 5 representing “strongly agree.” According to this study’s findings, a total of 78 valid questionnaires were collected.

The first section evaluates respondents’ feedback on preference tendency factors, the second section measures the influence of respondents’ friends and family on major selection, the third section focuses on aspects of impact from lecturers and mentors, the fourth section focuses on the effect of course difficulty level, the fifth section assesses curriculum factors, and the final section focuses on career factors on student major selection. All obtained data will be evaluated using statistical packages for social science programmes (SPSS), with frequency analysis and percentage analysis serving as the fundamental analyses.

4. Results

4.1. Student Demographics

According to the number of students who responded to this survey, 59 (75.6%) are female students and 19 (24.4%) are male students. Sabah accounted for 82.1% of the students, followed by Peninsular Malaysia with 10.2% and Sarawak with 7.7%. A total of 65.4% (51 individuals) of students are from rural areas, while 34.6% (27 individuals) are from urban areas. This indirectly indicates that the majority of student households belong to the low-income B40 category, which is documented at 70.5%. (55 individuals). In terms of student entrance routes to the Creative Arts Program, the UPU offer, which registered 64 students, accounts for the majority of students. Meanwhile, 14 more individuals have passed through the appeals process. However, no student recruitment through talent has been documented as yet. This is evident from Table 2, which displays the proportion of students’ personal information.

Table 2. Student Personality Information.

Student Personality	Percentage
Gender	
• Male	24.4%
• Female	75.6%
Residential area	
• Urban Area	34.6%
• Rural Area	65.4%
Household income	
• B40	70.5%
• Others	29.5%
Methods of entering the Creative Arts Program	
• UPU System	82.1%
• Appeal	17.9%
• Entry through talent	0.0%

When asked about their selection within the Creative Arts Program, the majority of students (60.3%, or 47 individuals) chose writing. A total of 22 students, 28.2%, chose theatre, while 9 students, 11.5%, chose dance. Again, this percentage implies an inconsistent selection pattern for specialisations. This is shown in Figure 1.

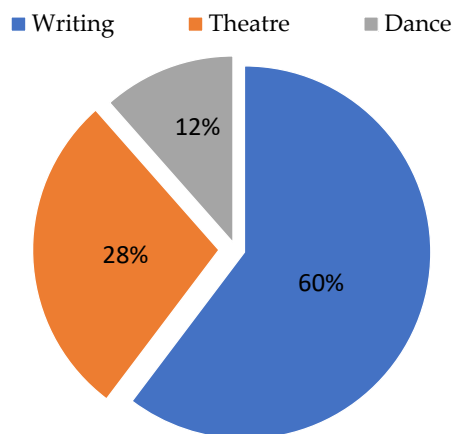


Figure 1. Student Choice Specialisation.

4.2. Tendencies and Preferences

Students in the Creative Arts Program base their choice of specialisation firstly on their own inclinations or interests, uninfluenced by any third party. This is the factor that academics are most interested in observing, as it has the most influence on students’ choice of academic direction [5]. To examine this factor, three questions have been outlined in order to precisely determine the tendencies of students. On the first question regarding their level of interest in their chosen major, 70.5% responded “strongly agree,” while 25.6% responded “agree” and 3.8% responded “quite agree.” Regarding the second question, which inquired about the target major they had chosen since the beginning of the course, 62.8% of the students responded “strongly agree,” 25.6% responded “agree,” and 11.5% responded “quite agree.” The same answer was also displayed on the answer scale for question three, which examined the relationship between students’ major selection and their ambitions, with a score of 60.3% “strongly agree”, 32.1% “agree”, and 7.7% “quite agree”. On the basis of the percentage of students’ responses, it can be concluded that the majority of Creative Arts Program students are very clear and confident in their personal decisions. This is clearly displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Tendencies and Preferences.

No.	Tendencies and Preferences	SA	A	QA	D	SD
1.	I am interested in my preferred major.	70.5	25.6	3.8	0.0	0.0
2.	I have been aiming to follow this major since the beginning of my studies.	62.8	25.6	11.5	0.0	0.0
3.	I chose this option major to achieve my ambitions.	60.3	32.1	7.7	0.0	0.0

4.3. Influence of Society and Media

Peer and family influence is also one of the variables that influences students’ decisions and choices regarding their academic choices [6]. “Strongly agree” was selected by 26.9% on social media, followed by “agree” with 35.9%, “quite agree” with 33.3%, “disagree” with 3.8 percent, and “strongly disagree” with no responses. The influence of family members resulted in the second highest percentage for “strongly agree” with 25.6%, followed by 23.1% for “agree”, 26.9% for “quite agree”, 15.4% for “disagree”, and 9% for “strongly disagree”. Peer influence resulted in the lowest percentages of “strongly agree” with a score of 3.8%, “agree” with a level of 6.4%, “quite agree” with a score of 26.9%, “disagree” with a score of 15.4%, and “strongly disagree” with a score of 28.2%. This is evident from Table 4, which provides percentage breakdowns for each question in this section. Through the total percentages shown in Table 4, it is clear that major selection among Creative Arts students is not influenced by their peers, but more by the influence of social media as well as their family members.

Table 4. Influence of Society and Media.

No.	Influence of Society and Media	SA	A	QA	D	SD
1.	Peer influence is one of the main factors I take into account in my selection of major.	3.8	6.4	19.2	42.3	28.2
2.	My family exerted a huge influence in my selection of major.	25.6	23.1	26.9	15.4	9.0
3.	Major selection was due to advice and recommendations from my Senior.	11.5	26.9	34.6	16.7	10.3
4.	Looking at the success of my family members in this field, has helped me choose a major.	21.8	26.9	15.4	28.2	7.7
5.	I got input from social media that helped me with major selection.	26.9	35.9	33.3	3.8	0.0

4.4. Influence of Mentor/Lecturer

As shown in Table 5, the third factor employed as a measurement in this survey is the influence of mentors or programme lecturers. This is significant because students are more inclined to select their fields of study based on their idols [5]. Five questions are outlined for measuring the influential factors of mentors or lecturers, and the highest percentage indicates that mentors or lecturers are the primary source of information for students to explain the objectives, content, and assessment methods in the academic programme they will take. A total of 62.8% of students selected “strongly agree”, 30.8% selected “agree”, 6.4% selected “quite agree”, and no student selected “disagree”. In addition, 60.3% of students selected “strongly agree” (60.3%), 35.9% selected “agree” and 3.8% selected “quite agree” regarding the influence of mentors and lecturers in guiding students decisions. Further, none disagreed. By omitting the percentages for “disagree” and “strongly disagree,” the distribution of student responses in Table 5 reveals that the vast majority of items were answered positively by students.

Table 5. Influence of Mentor/Lecturer.

No.	Mentor/Lecturer	SA	A	QA	D	SD
1.	My mentor/lecturer had a huge influence on my selection of major.	23.1	35.9	23.1	10.3	7.7
2.	My mentor/lecturer facilitates communication between students and students and lecturers.	41.0	48.7	10.3	0.0	0.0
3.	My mentor/lecturer gave an overview of the beginning and end of the course we studied in class.	53.8	33.3	12.8	0.0	0.0
4.	My mentor/lecturer maintains an objective and respectful nature towards students.	60.3	35.9	3.8	0.0	0.0
5.	My mentor/lecturer provides clear information on the objectives, content, and methods of assessment in the subject curriculum.	62.8	30.8	6.4	0.0	0.0

4.5. Course Intensity

In addition to the three previously discussed factors, there is a fourth factor that must be considered: the level of difficulty of the Creative Arts Program courses. This is accomplished by outlining the three questions listed in Table 6. Approximately 56.4% responded they “strongly agree” in response to the second of the three questions answered. The response rate for the third question was 50.0%, while the response rate for the first question was 44.9%. On the “quite agree” scale, the percentages for the three questions were comparable, with the first question garnering the greatest percentage (15.4%), followed by the third question (10.3%), and the second question (5.1%). Only the third question on the “disagree” scale recorded a percentage of 1.3%, while the other two questions did not record a percentage figure. The same holds true for the “strongly disagree” scale, which had no graphical representation percentages for the next three items. Table 6 makes this explicitly clear.

Table 6. Creative Arts Program Course Intensity.

No.	Course Intensity	SA	A	QA	D	SD
1.	The courses offered in my preferred major are areas in which I am proficient and I can get excellent marks.	44.9	39.7	15.4	0.0	0.0
2.	I can demonstrate and polish my abilities as well as talents in my chosen major through activities and coursework.	56.4	38.5	5.1	0.0	0.0
3.	I am happy to face the challenges I face in my chosen major.	50.0	38.5	10.3	1.3	0.0

4.6. Curriculum Factors

Through this poll, it was also found that curriculum factors in a programme had a significant impact on students’ decisions regarding their specialisation or major. Table 7 indicates that, as a whole, all 78 students agreed that curriculum variables play a major role in the selection of their profession and major. This is shown by the average percentage score of 56.4% for the “strongly agree” scale across the five question segments. According to Table 7, just 1.3% of respondents who responded negatively to the first question indicated disagreement. Based on the responses to these five questions, the tutor support and assistance factor received the highest percentage (62.8%), followed by the effective learning

module delivery factor (61.5%), the description method at the beginning of the course (57.7%), and the flexibility in teaching delivery for selected majors (48.0%). This is clearly illustrated in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Curriculum Factors.

No.	Curriculum Factors	SA	A	QA	D	SD
1.	My major choice is having flexibility in classroom teaching delivery.	48.7	42.3	7.7	1.3	0.0
2.	The modules in my choice major are delivered effectively and help me improve my skills.	61.5	33.3	5.1	0.0	0.0
3.	Each course is delivered regularly and in accordance with the activities of students being active in the major of choice.	51.3	41.0	7.7	0.0	0.0
4.	Assessment and teaching methods are well explained at the beginning of the course.	57.7	35.9	6.4	0.0	0.0
5.	The tutors are very helpful in carrying out assignments and facilitating learning.	62.8	32.1	5.1	0.0	0.0

4.7. Career Factors

The final factor identified in this research is the career factor, which should be evaluated while choosing a particular major [7]. This is evident by the fact that the overall average percentage of student responses for this career category was 83.3%. In order to measure this aspect, it is divided into three questions, the first of which is a combination of the percentage scales of “strongly agree” and “agree” (89.7%). While the second impact reported 83.3% (strongly agree + agree) who considered career security in major options and 76.9% (strongly agree + agree) on the relationship between the application of IR 4.0 and major options. This conclusively shows that students agree that their choice of major is influenced by criteria related to their future employment.

5. Conclusions

According to the findings of this study, four factors—inclination, family, lecturer, and course difficulty—play a crucial influence in the primary selection of UH2612002 students majoring in creative arts at the Academy of Arts and Creative Technology (ASTiF). The statistics presented in Tables 4–8 provide clear evidence for this conclusion, as can be seen above. The difficulty of the course that will be studied comes in second with a record of 89.33%, followed by the influence of mentors and lecturers with a percentage of 85.12%, and a career factor with a record of 83.3%. Among the factors that have a big impact on student major selection is the co-curricular factor of the course—the content of the course that will be taken by students. The influence of this factor was rated as 93.32%. This alone is sufficient evidence to show that each of the three majors or specialised paths presents a compelling variety of co-curriculum and various complexity levels, as determined by the viewpoints of the students. This highest percentage may also be influenced by the backgrounds of undergraduates in creative arts, the majority of whom have a Malaysian Higher Certificate of Education (Malaysia Higher Certificate of Education) (STPM).

Table 8. Career Factors.

No.	Career Factors	SA	A	QA	D	SD
1.	I chose this major because of the career opportunities I see in the future.	56.4	33.3	10.3	0.0	0.0
2.	I chose this major because of the guaranteed career opportunities in this field.	43.6	39.7	16.7	0.0	0.0
3.	I chose this major because it relates to IR 4.0 applications in this field.	28.2	48.7	20.5	28.2	0.0

Moreover, significant alternatives have direct ties to the teaching and learning (T&L) of existing courses. Particularly, well-structured classes will offer favourable outcomes for students’ decision making. It is noticeable that a learning module that prioritises concept development that facilitates students’ learning skills, flexibility, conceptual knowledge, and skill is chosen by students. Regarding curriculum aspects, leadership (stakeholders) has a crucial role in the enhancement of current majors through various approaches. The dean employs leadership to support a number of initiatives implemented by lecturers to enhance the quality of classroom instruction. In addition, programmes of study can ensure that information, techniques, and resources positively impact the educational environment of students, thereby influencing their major choices. This study’s findings recommend a greater emphasis on the pleasant interaction between teachers and parents of students in order to comprehend students’ learning experiences and, consequently, the selection of acceptable major subjects. In addition, the preparation of workshops for future careers will also encourage students to strive and show good performance in the faculty.

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