



# MASTER THE CREDIBLE IN INCREDIBLE

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Prospectus 2025



## HELLO!

Welcome to the National Institute of Circus Arts – known more commonly as NICA – where we catapult you from the mat to the stage.

We put the credible in the incredible. We set the standard for the spectacular. We are a global authority on the awe-inspiring.

### We are NICA.

We make the extraordinary world of circus arts a professional reality with world-class training, innovation, evidence-based research, and development. It's through these tools that NICA creates truly extraordinary, industry-ready artists.

Proudly flying under the flag of Melbourne's Swinburne University of Technology, NICA is an internationally renowned centre of excellence providing tertiary-level, innovative education, training, performance, research, leadership and talent to the local, national and global circus arts industry.



All photography in this Prospectus is by *Cameron Grant, Parenthesy* unless credited otherwise.

## ALWAYS WAS, ALWAYS WILL BE, ABORIGINAL LAND

NICA respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri People, and their Elders past and present, who are the Traditional Owners of the land on which NICA's campus is located in Melbourne's east. We also acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait nations across Australia, their Elders, Ancestors, cultures, and heritage.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are encouraged to apply. We have a number of scholarships on offer. Please contact [auditions@nica.com.au](mailto:auditions@nica.com.au)**





Photography by Rob Blackburn

## THE NICA STUDENT EXPERIENCE

NICA students train in unique, custom-built facilities including:

- The Guang Rong Lu National Circus Centre
- The Sidney Myer Circus Studio
- Movement Studio
- Drama Room

### NICA Staff

NICA is the proud home to some of the world's top-tier circus and performance practitioners.

Our global reputation has always, and continues to, attract elite-level, industry-experienced staff, trainers, academics and more from Australia, Canada, China, England, France, and Russia, who have worked with some of the greatest circus companies in the world including Circus Oz, Circus Royale, Cirque du Soleil, Great Moscow Circus, Legs on the Wall, Circa and Shanghai Acrobatic Troupe.

### Student Support while at NICA

#### Course Coordinators

During the course of your studies your year level coordinators are your first point of call to assist with your individual academic needs. They work to optimise your training experience and ensure your training, safety, health and well-being are always valued.

#### Swinburne University

As we operate under the banner of Melbourne's Swinburne University of Technology, NICA students enrolled in one of our accredited courses can access support services provided by Swinburne University.

#### NICA Medical

NICA students are also supported by a specialised health team – NICA Medical – comprising a physiotherapist, sports doctor, and sports psychologist. More information about studying at the National Institute of Circus Arts is available at the NICA website: [nica.com.au/ed](http://nica.com.au/ed)

### Student Support after NICA

The NICA point-of-difference is not only in the support and guidance you receive as a student, but also post-study as a graduate and working professional.

#### NICA Connects

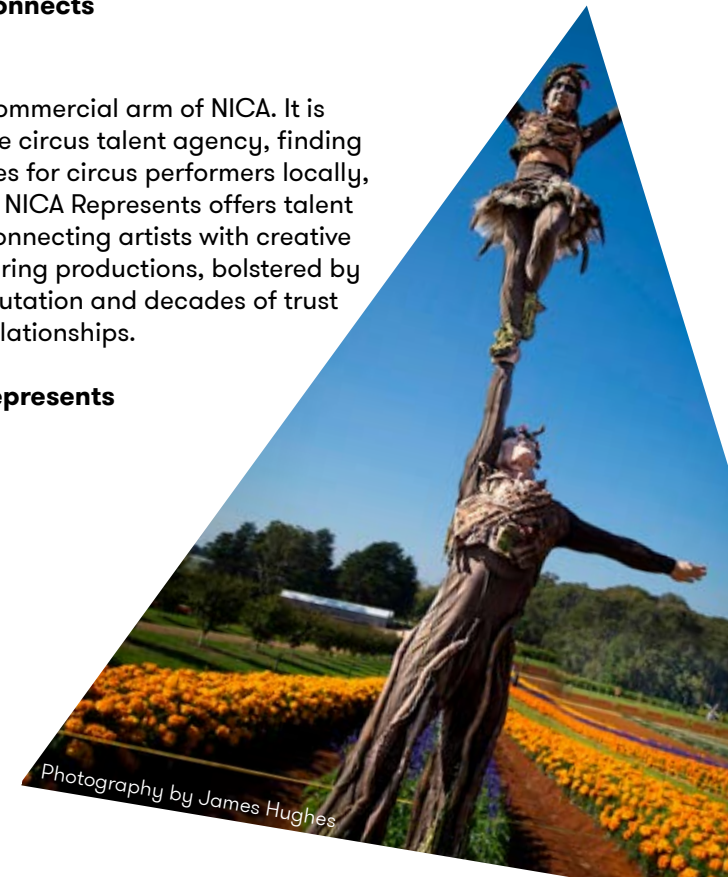
NICA Connects is all about doing just that – connecting and bringing together communities, students, alumni, and industry to foster mutually beneficial, ongoing relationships. It is an offer that involves connecting artist residencies, social circus outreach, alumni support, professional development, industry and community engagement and sector advocacy and leadership.

More at [nica.com.au/connects](http://nica.com.au/connects)

#### NICA Represents

NICA Represents is the commercial arm of NICA. It is our professional, in-house circus talent agency, finding employment opportunities for circus performers locally, nationally, and globally. NICA Represents offers talent placement services by connecting artists with creative clients and high-level touring productions, bolstered by our staunch industry reputation and decades of trust built through personal relationships.

More at [nica.com.au/represents](http://nica.com.au/represents)



Photography by James Hughes

## WHERE CAN I GO FROM NICA?

So, are you ready for a career in circus? What does that look like? What does that even mean?

Studying at the NICA is your ticket to a career as a professional artist – touring the world, inspiring others, in an almost endless variety of formats and possibilities.

There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ career path for circus artists. At NICA, we guide you in creating a tangible pathway to industry success based on your skills and personalised professional goals.

We prepare you for vocational success – whatever ‘success’ means to **you**.



## Ok, that's great! But what are some of my options?

Circus arts training can lead to work in areas such as:

- contemporary circus and physical theatre,
- traditional circus,
- social circus,
- stunt work,
- film, television, and live stage theatre productions
- corporate entertainment,
- festivals,
- commercial cruise liner contracts
- teaching,
- and many other sectors and combinations of the arts industry.

NICA graduates have and continue to work with the industry's most illustrious and renowned companies such as Cirque du Soleil, Circa, Circus Oz, Cavalia, Dragone, Carnival Australia, Gravity & Other Myths and NOFIT State Circus.

Many graduates have started up their own successful circus and physical theatre companies, touring the international festival circuits including the Edenborough Fringe Festival, and often feature as the ongoing talent-of-choice to perform at events for corporate clients such as Google, Crown Casino, City of Melbourne, L'Oreal – and many more.

You will find NICA Alumni lighting up the cast lists for major productions such as Harry Potter, The Lion King, Peter Pan, Moulin Rouge just to name a few, or even aboard the cruise ships as professional artists for companies such as P&O and Carnival. You may have even spotted a NICA graduate in a tv show, commercial advertising campaign, or a regular headline performer at one (or six) of your favourite hospitality and entertainment venues in the hottest cities and creative hubs throughout the world!

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Across NICA's 20+ years, our graduates have travelled around the globe with big companies and their own genius shows.

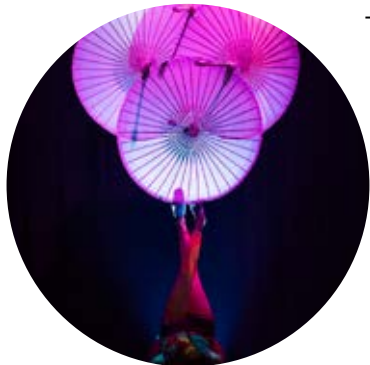
### Graduate highlights:



#### JARRED DEWEY

Graduating from NICA in 2010, Jarred has worked extensively with Brisbane based contemporary circus company CIRCA as a full-time ensemble acrobat. During his time with CIRCUS he has devised, toured and performed in 13 different productions (including OPUS, Wunderkammer, PEESHOW, and more) in over 30 countries worldwide.

Image: RAVEN MAD captured by Rob Blackburn



#### TARA SILCOCK

Tara graduated from NICA after 5 years of formal training in foot-juggling, hula hooping, group acrobatics and more. Tara has headlined cabaret shows such as *Rouge* and *Popcorn Underground* as well as performed worldwide with The Briefs Factory, Circus Oz and many others.

Image: NICA SHOWCASE captured by Aaron Walker



#### LUKE HA

Graduating from NICA in 2007, Luke joined Shang Hai Lady Killer with Stalker Theatre Company at Brisbane Festival; and was the opening Straps performer in Sydney's Chinese New Year Twilight Parade. Since 2014 Luke has become a graded Stunt Action Performer and a key obstacle course tester and rigger.

Image: MAD MAX 2019 White Night by David Atkins Enterprises

## PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION & ACCREDITATION

The National Institute of Circus Arts is recognised locally, nationally, and internationally as a centre for excellence through affiliated and credited partnerships with official industry governing bodies.

NICA is a current member of the ARTS8: The Australian Roundtable for Arts Training Excellence.

NICA is accredited as a full member of FEDEC (Federation of European Professional Circus Schools).

NICA has relationships with companies such as Cirque du Soleil, Nanjing Acrobatic Troupe, Shanghai Circus School, all the schools in the FEDEC in Europe and Taiwan National Academy of Performing Arts.





# BACHELOR OF CIRCUS ARTS

The Bachelor of Circus Arts equips students with the skills, networks, and knowledge to establish a career on the world stage of circus and physical theatre through immersive and experiential practice-based studies in contemporary circus arts. It is the highest level of accredited circus training in Australia and NICA is a world leader in circus education and training.

Within NICA's world-class facilities, a supportive faculty of talented artists and practitioners teach an innovative curriculum to instil technical excellence and to enable each creative artist to flourish. Students get to develop their performance skills in a variety of settings within NICA's unique suite of performance venues, which combine large-scale, professionally equipped spaces with more intimate studios.

Students not only sharpen their technical skills through individual instruction but develop professionally as performers. The aim is a viable and sustainable career in the performing arts.

Visit our website for more information: [nica.com.au/bachelor](http://nica.com.au/bachelor)

\*This course is undergoing re-accreditation. Please note that the replacement course may have a different course code, title, units and content.

## DURATION AND CONTACT HOURS

3 years full-time. Classes are scheduled Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 6.00pm for 36 contact hours per week.

## START DATE

January 2025

## MAJOR STUDIES

Circus arts specialisations in three apparatus or disciplines; performance and movement studies including: ensemble performance and technical aspects of circus production; and academic subjects in: anatomy and biomechanics; history and culture of circus arts; the business of circus; the contemporary circus industry; and music and circus.

## IDEAL FOR...

Skilled artists and athletes in their field looking for the platform into the industry or emerging circus artists seeking a qualification.

## ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Entry into NICA is by audition, interview, and medical assessment. The audition panel completes an annual tour to Australia's major cities to look at prospective students' physical capabilities, potential and suitability for a long-term circus career.

The day long audition will involve:

- Performance and physical theatre workshop
- Movement and choreography workshop
- Physical testing and assessments including areas of strength, coordination, balance, and flexibility
- Circus skills and acrobatics workshop
- Physiotherapy screening
- Entry interview
- The audition panel will also be looking for ensemble and teamwork attributes, articulation and passion when describing their creative approach and ability to incorporate and apply knowledge and feedback to physical movement.

In addition to the audition requirement, applicants must also provide evidence of academic qualifications including satisfactory completion of one of the following:

- Successful completion of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) or its equivalent, such as an interstate or international Year 12 qualification.
- Completion or partial completion of an approved tertiary qualification (including Certificates, Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas, Associate Degrees, and Degrees).
- Course prerequisites: VCE: Units 3 and 4 – a minimum study score of 25 in any English (except EAL) or 30 in English as Alternate Language (EAL) or equivalent.

**Course code:**  
BA CIRCA1

**CRICOS provider code:**  
00111D

**CRICOS course code:**  
078080F

# CERTIFICATE IV IN CIRCUS ARTS

Certificate IV in Circus Arts provides aspiring circus artists with an introductory experience into high performance circus arts training. It is a highly disciplined and structured program with a great deal of scope for creativity.

Core foundation training includes strength and conditioning, flexibility, acrobatics, and handstands. Students focus on their own area of specialisation and develop communication, trust and performance skills through group and partner work. A major ensemble circus performance is staged at the end of the year.

For many graduates this course is a great springboard into work in the performing arts industry, including community and contemporary circus, stunt work, theatre arts, dance, and technical production. Alternatively, graduates are equipped with the knowledge and skills to audition for the Bachelor of Circus Arts.

Visit our website for more information: [nica.com.au/certificateIV](http://nica.com.au/certificateIV)

\*This course is undergoing re-accreditation. Please note that the replacement course may have a different course code, title, units and content.

## DURATION AND CONTACT HOURS

1 year full-time. Classes are scheduled Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 6.00pm for 25 contact hours per week.

## START DATE

December 2024

## MAJOR STUDIES

Foundation skills in circus including group acts, individual circus specialty, performance and movement, body awareness and fitness preparation for circus performers, applied practices for circus performers and traditions and trends of circus.

The skills and knowledge encompassed in the program have been identified by industry professionals as the essential elementary introductory skills in circus, suitable for anyone wishing to undertake work in community or recreational circus, or in circus-based school

activities, such as: core circus foundation skills performer, ensemble member, or assistant in properties and bump in/out.

**Training Organisation Identifier (TOID):** 3059

<b>Course code:</b> 10824NAT	<b>CRICOS provider code:</b> 00111D	<b>CRICOS course code:</b> 0101877
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## IDEAL FOR...

Those seeking a one-year circus experience, those who wish to acquire more specific circus skills training; and students preparing for the Bachelor of Circus Arts

## ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants for the 10824NAT Certificate IV in Circus Arts are expected to:

- Undertake an audition to demonstrate technical and artistic skills in at least three of the following areas to NICA Circus Arts Education and Training Benchmark Introductory Elementary Level E:
  - » Fitness and conditioning
  - » Flexibility
  - » Handstands / balance
  - » Tumbling / acrobatics
  - » Strength
  - » Manipulation
  - » Demonstration of body alignment
  - » Movement and performance skills
- Have a demonstrated capacity in learning, reading, writing, oracy, and numeracy competencies to Level 3 of the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF). (We recommend the completion of Year 12, including English Units 3 & 4 and Mathematics Units 1 & 2).

In addition to the above requirements participants must be physically able to undertake the qualification. Provision of medical evidence of suitability for circus training may be required.

# THE NICA AUDITIONS

Applications to audition for the Bachelor of Circus Arts and Certificate IV in Circus Arts will close 23 August 2024.

## WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

Auditions for entry into NICA's accredited courses are held in late September in Melbourne, Australia, and run across two days. It is recommended that you attend an audition in person. Audition via online video footage is accepted for international and geographically remote applicants.

- We want to know about your discipline/s (Circus, Gymnastics, Dance, Tricking, Parkour)
- We want to see your specialty skills
- We want to measure your physical capacity for Circus Arts
- We want to measure your strength flexibility
- We want to see you perform
- We want to hear about your journey to date and your future ambitions
- We will assess your physical condition and discuss pre-existing injuries and injury management

## HOW DO I PREPARE?

Watch the Audition Skills Guide video on NICA's YouTube and practice using our PDF guide available at: [nica.com.au/auditions](http://nica.com.au/auditions). Don't be alarmed if you can't perform all these skills yet, we are looking for your potential as a circus performer.

Sign up to our Inside Track newsletter to be notified of our NICA Audition Masterclass and get inside tips on the audition process.

**PRO TIP: Attend the NICA Audition Masterclass**

This masterclass prepares you for your NICA Audition to give you the best chance of acceptance.

The masterclass is ideal for prospective students to get feedback on their progress and what areas you might need to work on to increase your chances of being accepted into the Institute.

For those with previous experience, this is your opportunity to polish your application with inside knowledge, and ensure you are putting your best foot forward prior to your audition.

The NICA Audition Masterclass is a one-day intensive workshop designed to assist all applicants of various skill and experience levels in 'what' and 'how' to prepare for the NICA auditions. The program includes:

- performance and dance classes,
- circus training (including handstands, flexibility, tumbling, strength, manipulation, and basic partner work)
- information about auditions, facilities, and student life at NICA.

Information about our pre-audition workshops and how to register will be available in Inside Track.

## WHAT IT COSTS TO AUDITION

There is a one-off administration fee of \$50.00.

In addition to preparing for your audition, we suggest you also invest some time in:

- Collecting medical information.
- Thinking about your performance and writing a brief description for the audition panel.
- Preparing your body and mind based on the video audition guides and the NICA video application guide.



## FAQs

### Does NICA offer bridging courses for dancers or athletes who would like to transition to a career in circus?

For dancers, gymnasts, performers, or athletes who want to explore circus and prepare to study full-time at NICA we offer advanced short courses and private tuition. Visit [nica.com.au](http://nica.com.au) for more information.

### What does a typical day at NICA involve?

A full time NICA student will usually start their training day with a serious warm up. This will be followed by a good burst of tumbling, handstands and flexibility, before a solid session of group acts and partner work, manipulation and aerial. Later in the day, students will work for an hour on each of their specialties and will even find time for a performance or circus history and culture class. The day will typically end with some stretching, and/or strength and conditioning. Feeling tired?

### How do I choose my specialty skill area?

Bachelor degree students choose two specialties. Certificate IV students select one specialty.

Opportunities to research and try a range of circus specialties under the guidance of experienced trainers are provided for all year levels. Students choose specialties based on their physical capacity, level of skill and the availability of staff and equipment.



### Does NICA offer accommodation assistance for interstate or international students?

NICA students can access the services and assistance available to Swinburne University students, including assistance with housing. Swinburne provide on-campus (Hawthorn) accommodation and can also assist with other housing options. See the Swinburne website for more info.

### Does NICA offer representation for its graduates?

Many graduates and circus professionals are represented by NICA Represents, Australia's leading agency for professional circus performers.

### What are the fees for each course?

Fees for 2025 are yet to be confirmed.\* Fees for each course are available via the Swinburne website.

Further information on fees can be found via the Swinburne website: <https://www.swinburne.edu.au/courses/fees/>

To see if you are eligible for government support follow: <https://www.swinburne.edu.au/courses/fees/loans-discounts-local-students/>

For scholarship information, follow: <https://www.swinburne.edu.au/study/options/scholarships/>

\*This course is undergoing re-accreditation. Please note that the replacement course may have a different course code, title, units and content. Further information will become available on our website, upon enrolment or during your studies. To discuss your study options, please get in touch with us today.

## FAQ's CONTINUED..

### Is there any recognition of prior learning (e.g. experience in circus training)?

Yes. However, in some instances this is not provided where units are delivered as an integrated project. Please contact NICA directly at: [auditions@nica.com.au](mailto:auditions@nica.com.au) for more information.

### Does NICA offer any casual programs?

Yes, NICA offers a wide range of recreation classes, workshops, school holiday programs and private tuition. Our recreation programs cater for all age groups and skill levels.



## HOW TO APPLY

Entry into NICA requires an application via Swinburne University of Technology - followed by audition, interview, and medical assessment.



If you are interested in our Bachelor or Certificate IV in Circus Arts and would like further information about auditions, please sign up to **Inside Track** for audition information and application dates.

## STAY IN TOUCH

Telephone: (+613) 9214 6975

NICA street address:  
39-59 Green Street, Prahran VIC 3181

For further information about the Bachelor of Circus Arts or the Certificate IV in Circus Arts, please contact NICA Student Administration: [auditions@nica.com.au](mailto:auditions@nica.com.au)

Operating hours: Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.30pm, Australian Eastern Standard Time.



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Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,  
Regional Development and Communications  
Office for the Arts



NATIONALLY RECOGNISED  
TRAINING

CRICOS Code: 00111D

The National Institute of Circus Arts is supported by the Australian Government.

NICA's Certificate IV course is nationally recognised. Training Organisation Identifier (TOID): 3059