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Academics call for separate music uni

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ACADEMICS at Melbourne University's prestigious music school say the 115-year-old institution's future is at risk and have called for it to split from the Victorian College of the Arts and Music.

The music school - known as "The Con" - merged with the Victorian College of the Arts in April last year but staff say the arrangement is damaging its international reputation.

Following a furore over the future of practical arts training, the university launched a review of the newly formed faculty, headed by former Telstra chief Ziggy Switkowski.

In a submission to the review, 31 academic music staff call for the creation of an autonomous "University of Melbourne Conservatorium of Music".

"The current and future welfare of Music is ... jeopardised by the existing structure of the new faculty of the VCA and Music, in which there is debilitating cross-subsidisation from music to other disciplines," its authors say.

Describing the current structural position of music at Melbourne University as "weak", the submission calls for control over staffing, student load and budgets.

A lack of dedicated facilities at the Parkville and Southbank campuses was detracting from students' experiences and threatening the former music school's national competitiveness, it said. The review follows public outrage over changes at the former VCA. Critics say introduction of the university's broad-based curriculum will limit practical experience, while the university says practice will remain central.

This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/academics-call-for-separate-music-uni-20100309-pvx7.html>