



NSEAD submission to the Curriculum and assessment review

Art, craft and design

21 November 2024

Background and context

The new government's [curriculum review](#) calls for evidence from all those with an interest in education in England schools. The review will be evidence and data driven, and the panel have said that they welcome examples from the classroom that illustrate the evidence submitted.

It is true that the decline in entries for art and design GCSE and A level is less dramatic than other arts subjects, and D&T, however, the relatively stable position of exam entries conceals an accelerating downwards trend, and a depleted workforce. Without specific changes to encourage take-up, our subject will decline.¹

Study of art, craft and design prepares learners for life and for work. It is a route into a range of careers and vocations across the creative industries. The Ofsted research review for art and design notes that for some pupils, the art and design curriculum is the only subject available to them that aligns closely with future training, education and work opportunities within the creative industries. Many roles in these industries require a qualification in art and design.²

Equally important, art, craft and design offer a unique space in which learners can learn about themselves, the world around them and their place within it. Learning in this subject is at once multi-faceted and specialist, learner centred and contextual. Through making, researching and critical reflection learners develop the skills that support their emerging sense of self, who they are and who they might become. Our subject is all about the vital business of being and becoming.

In our response we have tried to recognise existing successes, emphasise the strength and potential of our subject – but also highlight the barriers to accessing our subject and the dynamics that are undermining the entitlement of all learners to experience a high-quality art, craft and design education

¹ <https://www.nsead.org/news/newsroom/examinations-2024/>

² Art and Design Research Review, Ofsted 2023 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-art-and-design>

at all stages of their education. Our recommendations are not about adding *more* to the curriculum; they are about making the curriculum contemporary and fit for purpose. Our recommendations do not add to teacher workload.

There are several factors that impact on art, craft and design education, many of which fall out of the scope of this review. However, when essential we have referenced issues around initial teacher education, teacher recruitment and retention, CPD, resources and funding as they are frequently intertwined with the way that our curriculum is currently organised.

NSEAD set out our priorities for better art, craft and design education in our manifesto, written in consultation with members from across the UK.

For the entitlement of all learners to an excellent arts education, we need:

- Equity of opportunity for all learners
- A learner-centred, future-facing contemporary curriculum
- A valued, nurtured and diverse subject-specialist workforce

NSEAD members are key to achieving this. As a learned society and subject association NSEAD works with our professional community to support and develop better practice for art, craft and design education. In 2024 we launched the Big Landscape, a subject-specific curriculum toolkit. It aims to improve, refine and help to contemporarise and localise the curriculum. It also helps to up-skill the knowledge and full potential of our subject. The Big Landscape asks three key questions for teachers of all phases: What is the purpose of the curriculum or unit of work; Why is this important to learn; How will teaching be organised?

NSEAD evidence submission

Section two: General views on curriculum, assessment and qualification pathways

10. What aspects of the current a) curriculum, b) assessment system and c) qualification pathways are working well to support and recognise educational progress for children and young people?

The study of art, craft and design enables pupils to understand, appreciate and contribute to a dimension of life that taps into and expresses human innovation, imagination and thought as well as developing confidence to work with ambiguity and risk³. When studying the subject, pupils can specialise in different areas of practical making including painting, sculpture, 3D design, photography, textiles and graphic design. The subject has a significant craft element which intersects with design and art.

³ Granville, G. Creighton. E, Byrne.F (2024) 'Creativity, Designerly Thinking and the Wicked Problems of Life' in Ash. A, Carr.PA *Practical Guide to Teaching Art and Design in the Secondary School*, Abingdon, Routledge, pp 115-127

Making through art and craft develops haptic and fine-motor skills that are revisited and refined through different areas of study within expressive and design contexts. Proficiency and confidence are built through practice and learners can make steady progress through the key stages.

Learning in art, craft and design is concept not content driven, and the curriculum has sufficient flexibility to accommodate both convergent and divergent goals. Teachers can tailor their curriculum to the needs of learners and their local context.

‘Art offers excellent opportunities for inclusion and commenting on areas of social justice. Through exploring and encouraging the use of diverse artists, providing a visual space to work in that champions inclusion and tackles issues associated with social justice and challenging stereotypes. Through provision of a warm and welcoming working space, where students feel valued despite their differences.’ NSEAD member ⁴

11. What aspects of the current a) curriculum, b) assessment system and c) qualification pathways should be targeted for improvements to better support and recognise educational progress for children and young people

Whole school teaching strategies, inappropriate assessment practices, limits on curriculum time and how it is allocated compromise learner progress, particularly at Primary and Key Stage 3.

The Art and Design Ofsted research review (2023) noted: ‘The school’s systems and policies can have a negative effect on art and design education if they do not consider the aspects of subject education that are specific to art and design. For example, whole-school teaching strategies or assessment practices are likely to be too generic to capture the forms of knowledge that pupils build through the art and design curriculum. In some cases, the models underpinning these approaches are based on core subjects. They use pedagogical or assessment approaches that are incompatible (or less compatible) with the forms of progress in art and design. Leaders can avoid this issue by ensuring that their curriculum, pedagogy and assessment policies, procedures and practices can be adapted to specific subjects. This allows subject leaders to apply their subject knowledge to the school context. School leaders can also avoid this issue by making sure they understand how pupils make progress in art and design. This will help to inform subject-specific discussions with subject leaders.’ ⁵

Teachers feel strongly that their learners are disadvantaged when teaching and learning is skewed in this way:

‘Whole school target setting and performance measures are generally unrelated and irrelevant to Art, being taken from Maths, English and Science information from KS2. There is a lack of understanding / accurate information regarding Art progress prior to KS3, so the targets set for Art are not fit for purpose. Assessment in Art does not fit easily fit the prescriptions placed on it by termly expectations for assessment reporting. Leadership set target setting and prediction of outcomes from Year 7 is a

⁴ NSEAD member survey October 2024

⁵ Art and Design Research Review, Ofsted 2023 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-art-and-design>

nonsense, based on irrelevant data and placing undue pressure on students and teachers.’ NSEAD member⁶

In the *Art Now Inquiry* report, the biggest concern reported by art and design teachers was lack of time for the subject. A third (33%) who said that there had been a change from pre-pandemic to pandemic, reported that time was an issue; most of the respondents surveyed reported a decrease in time spent teaching art and design (87.6%). Many schools gave priority to other subject areas deemed more important.⁷

At Key Stage 3 in art and design, the number of taught hours fell by 9% between 2011-12 and 2018-19, before increasing year-on-year until 2022/23. The consequence is that the total fall in taught hours between 2011/12 and 2022/23 for art and design at key stage 3 (KS3) is 3%.⁸

NSEAD members report that the teaching of art and design in primary and KS3 is merged with D&T with reduced time for both. Carousel timetable arrangements limit the frequency and quality of learning. Where schools operate a condensed KS3, pupils lose their entitlement to study art and design at the end of year 8 as part of a full programme of study. Lessons of less than 60 minutes make practical learning more challenging, with reduced time to set up and clear away materials and equipment.

Recommendations:

- Collect robust evidence to identify the state of art, craft and design education across all regions, sectors and phases including how timetables are organised, and the impact on learning of whole school approaches to assessment and target setting.
- Invest in training and resources to support better understanding of how assessment works in our subject.

⁶ NSEAD member survey, October 2024

⁷ Art, craft and design All Party Parliamentary Group Art Now Inquiry Report <https://www.nsead.org/community-activism/policy-and-research/all-party-parliamentary-group/artnow-inquiry-2023/>

⁸ CLA Report Card, 2024 <https://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CLA-2024-Annual-Report-Card.pdf>

Section 3: Social justice and inclusion

Q12. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, are there any barriers to improving attainment, progress, access or participation (class ceilings) for learners experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage?

The steady decline of art and design in state schools risks entrenching socio-economic inequalities in industry and undermining social mobility. We highlight a number of barriers.

Sector differences: The more socio-economic advantage learners have, the more likely they are to succeed in GCSE and A level examinations.

There is an increasing inequity gap between the independent and maintained sectors. This year 57.5% of independent school GCSE art and design candidates and 56% of selective schools in England achieved at least a 7/A+ compared to an average of 16.4% in non-selective maintained settings. Pupils in independent schools are more likely to study art and design at A level than those in state funded schools (11.7% of entries in 2024) and progress into creative careers.⁹

The industry-led Creative Industries Alliance notes an “ever-increasing proportion of applicants from fee-paying school backgrounds where it is possible to study and gain qualifications in subjects like art, craft and design, and fewer from state school backgrounds where these subjects are increasingly rare. This restricts not only the potential talent pool but also the diversity of design teams. An industry like ours depends on diversity of background, perspective, and ideas.”¹⁰

This attainment gap widened significantly during the pandemic, Pupils living in poverty do not have access to art and craft materials or spaces for making at home. Schools reported that lost learning during that period was significant for pupils from less advantaged backgrounds.¹¹

Employability and income potential: False ‘value narratives’ around careers opportunities deter learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds following an art, craft and design pathway.

The Sutton Trust reported on the equity gap reported ‘For creative subjects, those from the most affluent backgrounds constitute very high proportions of students at the most prestigious institutions, and in key creative subjects like Music and Art’¹²

London Economic demonstrated the limitations of using LEO (Longitudinal Educational Outcomes) data to proxy the ‘quality’ of higher education provision or to provide an assessment of value for money. LEO metrics provide a misleading picture of graduate earnings potential in the creative arts industries, which may act as a deterrent to learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds.¹³

⁹ <https://analytics.ofqual.gov.uk/>

¹⁰ CLA Report Card, 2024) www.creativeindustryalliance.co.uk

¹¹ Art, craft and design All Party Parliamentary Group Art Now Inquiry Report <https://www.nsead.org/community-activism/policy-and-research/all-party-parliamentary-group/artnow-inquiry-2023/>

¹² <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/a-class-act/>

¹³ Understanding the limitations of graduate outcome measures in higher education A report to GuildHE and the HEAD Trust London Economics 2018 <https://www.guildhe.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Understanding-the-limitations-of-graduate-outcome-metrics-in-higher-education-18-09-2018-V2.3.pdf>

The Creative PEC (Policy and Evidence Centre) found that students from the most deprived areas were underrepresented on creative subjects relative to all areas of learning (34% compared to 38%).¹⁴

Though beyond the scope of the review, it must be noted that resources and funding are an issue: learners in maintained schools and from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to be impacted by poorly resourced classrooms and studios.

A report in the Cambridge Journal of Education finds that there is a clear advantage gap that is specific to learning in arts subjects: ‘Private school pupils do almost a quarter of a grade better in GCSE English than their state school peers, but there are only very small differences in Maths and Science qualifications (slightly worse in Maths; slightly better in Science). By contrast, among those who study for an Arts subject, they perform more than a grade better, on average, in these qualifications than those who study for one in a state school.’

‘differences in favour of private school pupils’ performance in Arts subjects are more pronounced and remain in the same direction even when adjusting for background characteristics.’ The report authors conclude:

‘The fact that, by contrast, private school pupils do much better in non-core subjects arguably reflects a wider curriculum and greater available resourcing for these subjects’¹⁵

This gap is concerning for the ability of young people who attend state schools to have a level playing field with those who attend private schools in subsequent access to opportunities necessary to pursue a career in the creative sector. The gap has the potential to perpetuate, or worsen, the domination of creative sectors by those from high socioeconomic status

Teachers are telling us that art and design facilities in maintained schools are under-resourced, poorly maintained, and in some cases non-existent. They are clear that this is having a negative impact on learning, and that the situation will only get worse unless there is adequate investment.

The Art, craft and design APPG *Art Now Inquiry* survey report revealed that since the pandemic, teachers in maintained schools had serious concerns about resourcing for art and design. There were 156 mentions of resources, and 117 of materials; 34.9% reported that resourcing was an issue and 93.2% said that since the pandemic there had been a decrease in resources.¹⁶

The lack of access to resources and materials was seen to have a direct impact on the development of subject-specific skills and knowledge related to materials and making. ‘Some pupils have not been able to access practical materials such as paint, clay, or collage.’ ‘Behaviour has massively been affected and basic skills such as holding pencils, paintbrushes or using scissors has been hugely affected.’

¹⁴ <https://pec.ac.uk/state-of-the-nations/>

¹⁵ Anders, J., Green, F., Henderson, M., & Henseke, G. (2024). Private school pupils’ performance in GCSEs (and IGCSEs). *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2024.2420611>

¹⁶ Art, craft and design All Party Parliamentary Group Art Now Inquiry Report <https://www.nsead.org/community-activism/policy-and-research/all-party-parliamentary-group/artnow-inquiry-2023/>

A study by the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (Carey, O'Brien & Gable, 2021) looked at a sample of 20 independent schools. All the studied schools have fine arts studios. Partly because of these facilities, all the schools are also able to offer specialist provision, including photography, sculpture, ceramics, textiles, digital media and more.

Research into the cost of learning during the pandemic found that parents with 'extreme money concerns' were 20% more likely to have to spend money on arts and crafts materials for remote learning during lockdown than families without such concerns.¹⁷ Interviews from the same study also highlighted how the need to provide materials for arts enrichment was especially challenging for poorer families. These findings from the lockdown period highlight that families in poverty are more dependent on support from schools for accessing the arts than those living outside of poverty.¹⁸

A BESA Insights report in 2023 highlighted lack of investment in facilities and workspaces, with 40% of art and design teachers agreeing that the current state of specialist facilities in their schools is negatively affecting outcomes for students.¹⁹

Also, out of the scope of this review, reduced opportunities for enriched learning should be noted: School visits and extra-curricular provision have reduced significantly since the pandemic.

Primary schools reported having to cancel after-school art clubs, and trips and secondary schools were not able to run trips to museums and galleries. Enrichment activities such as trips to museums and galleries, visits from artists and extra-curricular clubs are an important aspect of the overall curriculum. In the time since the Inquiry launched, the cost-of-living crisis has exacerbated this.

The Sutton Trust's survey carried out by NFER, April 2023 – and reported in *The Cost-of-Living Crisis hits school spending* – looks at the financial pressures schools are facing. 'The proportion of senior leaders reporting specific items or activities have been cut in their school for financial reasons has increased since 2022. The largest increase is in those cutting trips and outings, at 50%, compared to 21% last year.' The proportion is even higher in schools with disadvantaged intakes, at 68% compared to 44% in the least deprived schools.²⁰

Costs associated with resources and equipment can be a factor in pupils' subject choices in secondary school, with learners living in poverty most likely to be deterred.

Recommendations:

- To raise standards, uptake and aspirations in maintained sector schools, ensure funding that is aimed at increasing quality resources and enriched learning experiences.
- To ensure equity between sectors, ensure that opportunities to use art and craft materials are included within the curriculum in all schools, through all phases of education, as a learner entitlement.

¹⁷ Child Poverty Action Group, 2020 <https://cpag.org.uk/news/cost-child-2020>

¹⁸ CLA Report Card, 2024) www.creativeindustryalliance.co.uk

¹⁹ BESA Insights, State of the Estate BESA Insights report besa.org.uk/news/the-state-of-the-estate/

²⁰ Art, craft and design All Party Parliamentary Group Art Now Inquiry Report <https://www.nsead.org/community-activism/policy-and-research/all-party-parliamentary-group/artnow-inquiry-2023/>

- Address unhelpful subject hierarchies and false value narratives that deter students from pursuing arts pathways into creative industries careers, reviewing the use of LEO metrics as a way of determining value for money.
- Collect robust evidence to identify the state of art, craft and design education across all regions, sectors and phases.
- Invest in the school estate with specialist learning spaces to support high-quality learning.

13. In the current curriculum and assessment system and qualification pathways (16-19), are there any barriers to improving attainment, progress, access or participation which may disproportionately impact pupils based on other protected characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity).

Lack of representation is a key barrier. We know that art and design can be a highly inclusive subject when learning is organised to meet the needs of learners, however, The art and design curriculum does not currently represent all learners growing up in the UK today.

‘(Inclusion) is thoroughly embedded for many years especially in areas of the country like mine (northwest) where it’s a huge part of the students everyday lives therefore we ensure the courses content reflects their realities’ NSEAD member ²¹

Curriculum content that lacks relevance and meaning for learners acts as a barrier to participation. When pupils cannot see themselves or their lived experience in what they are learning, they turn away from those curriculum subjects. Design and creative industry leaders report finding it ‘harder and harder to recruit the diversity of talent we need’. The creative sector workforce does not represent the consumers they are designing and creating for, which risks damaging social impacts. The UK’s creative industries remain unrepresentative of the population as a whole and a major barrier to sector growth and a limiter of excellence is the growing lack of diversity in the sector. ²²

Children from an ethnic minority background had 48% lower odds of visiting an archive, a museum or heritage site, compared to those from a white majority background. ²³

The Visualise report, published by Runnymede Trust and Freelands Foundation²⁴, found significant under-representation of minority ethnic artists in school curricula. ‘This new research found a strong desire amongst teachers and students to diversify teaching content and improve experiences of art

²¹ NSEAD member survey, October 2024

²² The APPG for Creative Diversity report *Creative majority*, published in September 2021

²³ Mak, H.W., & Fancourt, D. (2021), Do socio-demographic factors predict children’s engagement in arts and culture? Comparisons of in-school and out-of-school participation in the Taking Part Survey.

²⁴Visualise: Race and Inclusion in Secondary Education, Runnymede Trust and Freelands Foundation, 5 March 2024
<https://www.runnymedetrust.org/visualise>

education for all. But teachers are under pressure, overworked and under-resourced, and art education in schools remains overwhelmingly narrow in terms of curriculum content and exam assessment.’

The report found that just 2.3% of artists named in GCSE art and design exam papers are from Black (1.54%) or South Asian (0.74%) backgrounds. Students expressed a strong desire to study a broader art and design curriculum, with nearly two thirds (66%) of secondary school students wanting to study artists from a wider range of ethnic backgrounds, rising to 80% among Black students.

‘Teachers lack confidence and resources, with a third of teachers having never encountered the work of any minority ethnic artists in their own education, and 90% of teachers surveyed saying that supplementary teaching resources dedicated to the work of minority ethnic artists would aid their teaching.

‘Echoing a broader theme emerging from educators across subjects, teachers feel unsupported in how to discuss race in their classrooms. Fewer than 4 in 10 teachers surveyed felt sure of the correct language to use when teaching the work of minority ethnic artists, with 82% asking for additional standardised content on race and diversity.

‘The recommendations for a broad, balanced and challenging curriculum are vague and not supportive of Art teachers to diversify and decolonize the curriculum effectively. The default for Art teachers is to teach content that they know and feel confident to teach. However, I do not feel that canon we are supposed to teach reflects a modern global point of view. This must change to support our diverse communities and empower students that cannot relate to the content taught.’ NSEAD Member²⁵

There is a gender imbalance in GCSE take up of art and design (just over double the number of female candidates compared to male candidates). However, today’s design workforce is disproportionately male (77%) and from more privileged backgrounds; designers who are female, from an ethnic minority (excluding white minorities) or have a disability are also under-represented at senior and managerial levels.²⁶

Recommendations:

- Establish a professional development entitlement for teachers to design curriculum and develop pedagogical approaches to support representative and relevant learning experiences.
- Work with stakeholders and examination boards to review candidate resources and standardisation materials.

14. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, are there any barriers in continuing to improve attainment, progress, access or participation for learners with SEND?

School art and design orthodoxy (i.e. a curriculum based on a narrow frame of reference that lacks flexibility and relevance) reinforces pedagogical approaches and curriculum choices that exclude learners with disabilities and SEND.

²⁵ NSEAD member survey, October 2024

²⁶ Design Council, Design Economy 2021

Lack of subject-specific adapted resources and the lack of TA support are a barrier to participation for learners who need support to access the curriculum and to engage in practical activities.

Where the focus is product driven outcomes that are heavily prescribed, learners with SEND can be disadvantaged. They may need to engage with activities differently, place more value on process and produce outcomes that do not conform to the exemplars provided in awarding body standardisation materials.

NSEAD members frequently report that learners are required taken from art and design lessons in order to take part in core subject interventions. This disproportionately affects learners with SEND.

Recommendations:

- Well resourced, fully supported practical learning experiences to be an expectation for all learners.

15. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, are there any enablers that support attainment, progress, access or participation for the groups listed above?

Art, craft and design education provides unique space and scope for self-expression. Additionally, the curriculum is flexible enough to support the inclusion of diverse artists and arts practice, but does not currently actively promote it. According to Paul Morrow, art teacher and lead practitioner at Westminster Special Schools:

‘Some of the characteristics of contemporary art practice align with inclusive and anti-ableist arts education, and offer an alternative way to access, make and experience art. This approach moves away from the orthodoxy of typical art and design production in schools, sometimes described as ‘school art’. Contemporary art practice offers new and legitimate entry points, and approaches, to making art. The National Curriculum in England states that students should produce creative work and that they should also learn about great artists. Using contemporary artists that also identify as D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent would offer further opportunities to increase visibility and share and promote positive identities.’²⁷

Skilful, informed teaching, championing diverse practice makes a difference to the experience of learners. Resources developed by teachers, for teachers with expert review can support this. For example, the Anti-racist Art Education (ARAE) resources, published by NSEAD.²⁸

Harold Offeh, visual artist, describes the impact of his teacher Carla Mindel, NSEAD, who decolonised the curriculum and encouraged Harold to question art history's otherwise European focussed canon: ‘Looking back, what my art teacher, Carla Mindel, facilitated was curiosity. She created an environment where I could identify questions and cultural interests and pursue them through art and culture. At school, art and culture never felt superfluous or secondary, it was relevant and vital, equipping me with

²⁷ AD #35 <https://www.nsead.org/publications/ad-magazine/issue-35/>

²⁸ <https://www.nsead.org/resources/anti-racist-art-education/>

the tools to reflect on my place in the world, communicate and contribute to the world. I was empowered to make, think, play and do.’²⁹

²⁹AD #36 <https://www.nsead.org/publications/ad-magazine/ad-36-arae-issue/>

Section 5: Curriculum and qualification content

22. Are there particular curriculum or qualifications subjects where: a. there is too much content; not enough content, or content is missing; b. the content is out-of-date; c. the content is unhelpfully sequenced (for example to support good curriculum design or pedagogy); d. there is a need for greater flexibility (for example to provide the space for teachers to develop and adapt content)?

The secondary curriculum as a whole is overloaded with content, which creates a squeeze on all subjects and creates an unreasonable burden for learners.

The House of Lords Education for 11-16 Year Olds Committee report from December 2023 found ‘an overloaded curriculum, a disproportionate exam burden and declining opportunities to study creative and technical subjects.’ (Jo Johnson, Chair)³⁰

The art and design curriculum needs to focus on learner needs, aspirations and interests: a future-facing contemporary curriculum.

There is a need to clarify and set an expectation for design competencies, and the place of craft within the curriculum and GCSE specifications. The importance of design thinking and behaviours are not well articulated within the current national curriculum. The curriculum aims to offer a narrow range of practice, confined to drawing, painting and sculpture. Creativity, contextual and critical thinking, ‘materials intelligence and design behaviours need to be embedded in the aims and content of the curriculum at all key stages.

The curriculum should reflect the scope and range of contemporary and historical practice, as well as the interdisciplinary nature of art, craft and design. The emphasis on ‘great’ artists, crafts people and designers. is unhelpful and perpetuates an outdated view of the scope of the subject and the diversity of contemporary practice.

There is a degree of flexibility for teachers to develop and adapt content, but little to guide the non-specialist, particularly in primary settings. Equally, the openness of exam specifications can be an enabler, but is dependent on confident specialist teachers.

‘At A level as the specification is quite open you rely on your teachers to have the knowledge to keep the course content up to date to reflect new technologies reflect the student lived experiences of the teacher is not willing to maintain an active pedagogy then the course is poorer for this- the teacher s lack of engagement with those technologies and social/cultural/political events.’ NSEAD member³¹

The current national curriculum does not explicitly address the importance of immersion within the discipline and methodologies of design, which are in fact intrinsic to teaching and learning in the subject.³² It places much greater emphasis on fine art than craft and design, and the intersection

³⁰ House of Lords, Education for 11–16 Year Olds Committee (2023), Requires Improvement: Urgent Change for 11–16 Education ([parliament.uk](https://www.parliament.uk))

³¹ NSEAD member survey, October 2024

³² Granville, G. Creighton, E, Byrne, F (2024) ‘Creativity, Designerly Thinking and the Wicked Problems of Life’ in Ash, A, Carr, P.A *Practical Guide to Teaching Art and Design in the Secondary School*, Abingdon, Routledge, pp 115-127

between the subject components. The KS1-KS3 curriculum privileges the past over contemporary practice and undermines craft and design as vital and equal components.

The Design Council sets out the ambition to upskill one million designers by 2030. There is a need for an approach to design learning that is centred around purposeful design – designing solutions that work for the planet and people, reflecting how the climate crisis is fundamentally transforming the design industry. Less than 50% of young designers (aged 16-24) that PDR and YouGov surveyed for the Design Council, believed their formal education had enabled them to design for the environment.³³ At all key stages and in art and design qualification specifications, there is a need to address sustainability and climate awareness within the art and design curriculum, both in terms of sustainability in practice and the development of green skills.

At GCSE teacher assessment of the NEA (non-examination assessment) components works well and allows pupils to demonstrate their development in the context of practical portfolio development and response to an externally set brief.

‘Curriculum documents are broad, have sufficient latitude for individual interpretation and self-expression and are well understood at KS5.’ NSEAD member

This should be preserved. However, the requirements of the portfolio component should be reviewed to identify where there may be scope to reduce content and create space for a deeper engagement with a consolidated body of knowledge. The current system unintentionally encourages quantity over quality.

‘Students appear to have to work harder than many other students to achieve an equivalent grade At KS5 students again work extremely hard and long hours to reach the highest grades.’ NSEAD member³⁴

The national curriculum for Art and Design needs to shift focus from ‘knowing about’ the work of others to the development of critical and creative thinking. This would equip pupils to understand complex ideas through the work of others, informing their own design solutions and creative expression.

Recommendations:

- Research into the impact of best curriculum practice, drawing on The Big Landscape research.
- Consult with the NSEAD’s Big Landscape expert community, to co-create and shape curricula that is relevant and engaging, twenty-first century and future facing.³⁵
- Support the Cultural Learning Alliance’s call for a minimum four-hour Arts entitlement within the school week to the end of Key Stage 3 that enables high-quality, progressive learning experiences, and provision at Key Stages 4 and 5 outside of exam syllabuses.

³³ Design Council, 2021

³⁴ NSEAD member survey, October 2024

³⁵ NSEAD Parallel Curriculum, <https://www.nsead.org/resources/curriculum/planning-the-curriculum/the-national-curriculum-in-england/national-curriculum-in-englanddfensead-version/>

23. Are there particular changes that could be made to ensure the curriculum (including qualification content) is more diverse and representative of society?

We need a more representative workforce, and curriculum content review to support a more equitable curriculum.

The Visualise Report makes several recommendations that can equally apply to inequity in gender and learners with SEND.

- Establish standards for inclusion and diversity in GCSE assessment materials.
- Improve access to teacher and curriculum resources that support a broad and diverse curriculum.
- Improve racial literacy and curriculum development skills for teachers.
- Investigate low levels of engagement in art and design lessons and extracurricular enrichment activities offered by schools by specific pupil demographics.
- Improve partnerships between galleries and schools, with specific attention to diversity and representation.
- Improve the understanding and promotion of the skills gained in art, design and creative subjects amongst students and families.
- Improve the data landscape around art and design education across all levels of education ³⁶

In addition, NSEAD recommends that the DfE:

- collect robust evidence to identify the state of art, craft and design education across all regions, sectors and phases
- Invest in data collection that will inform a national strategy to recruit and retain a diverse art educator workforce

24. To what extent does the current curriculum (including qualification content) support students to positively engage with, be knowledgeable about and respect others? Are there elements that could be improved?

The study and practice of art and design enables pupils to understand, appreciate and contribute to a dimension of life that taps into and expresses human innovation, imagination and thought. Teachers need support and resources.

³⁶ Visualise: Race and Inclusion in Secondary Education, Runnymede Trust and Freelands Foundation, 5 March 2024
<https://www.runnymedetrust.org/visualise>

Art, craft, and design create a space where students develop their sense of agency and well-being, and sense of self. Through creative and critical thinking, they explore their relationships with the world they live in, and their place within civic society.

The Arts in Schools, Foundations for the Future report, 2023, describes the arts as being ‘full spectrum’ subjects, supporting the development of critical thinking, oracy, self-expression, self-belief, independence, initiative, focus, flexibility, collaboration, compassion, responsibility, resilience, achievement, and creative freedom.³⁷

The Rapid Evidence Review of the benefits of Art, Craft and Design Education undertaken by Thomson, P., and Maloy, L., (2021) demonstrates a wide range of positive outcomes for children and young people studying art and design. These include disciplinary learning through encouraging diverse ways of knowing, interpreting, evaluating, and feeling; supporting the development of a sense of individual and collective identity; increased social awareness and engagement and enhanced opportunities for vocational learning and access into subject-related careers.³⁸

Thomson and Maloy note, ‘As well as documenting learning and enhancing understanding in subjects such as science and the natural sciences, drawing is seen as a route to visualising thoughts and ideas in order to imagine new possibilities for the world and for the self’.³⁹

The Council of Skills Advisers say ‘Culture, arts and design subjects have taken a hit in recent years, particularly in secondary schools, but there is a wide body of evidence which suggests that engagement with these creative subjects can build confidence, creativity and self-discipline as well as collaboration and team working Learning and skills for economic recovery, social cohesion and a more equal Britain’⁴⁰

The Visualise report tells us that teachers lack confidence and resources, with a third of teachers having never encountered the work of any minority ethnic artists in their own education, and 90% of teachers surveyed saying that supplementary teaching resources dedicated to the work of minority ethnic artists would aid their teaching.

Recommendations:

- Work with key agencies to develop a common framework to communicate and support the development of key capabilities across the creative arts.

25. In which ways does the current primary curriculum support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for life and further study and what could we change to better support this?

The primary curriculum has scope for rich cross curricular learning, and the study and practice of art, craft and design fosters a range of vital transferable skills and knowledge. Lack of allocated time and teacher confidence limit the transformative potential of art, craft and design.

The study of art, craft and design enables pupils to understand, appreciate and contribute to a dimension of life that taps into and expresses human innovation, imagination and thought as well as

³⁷ <https://www.anewdirection.org.uk/the-arts-in-schools>

³⁸ Art, craft and design All Party Parliamentary Group Art Now Inquiry Report <https://www.nsead.org/community-activism/policy-and-research/all-party-parliamentary-group/artnow-inquiry-2023/>

³⁹ : *The Rapid Evidence Review (RER) of the benefits of Art, Craft and Design*, 2022, Thomson, P., Maloy, L.

⁴⁰ The Council of Skills Advisors, 2022

developing confidence to work with ambiguity and risk⁴¹. When studying the subject, pupils can specialise in different areas of practical making including painting, sculpture, 3D design, photography, textiles and graphic design. The subject has a significant craft element which intersects with design and art.

The report *Primary colours: the decline of arts education in primary schools and how it can be reversed*⁴² detailed Ofsted's surveys which evidenced 'a decline in both the quality and quantity of art education in primary schools. There may be a range of reasons for this, including those identified by Ofsted in their Research Review.⁴³

- a decline in real-terms funding, so pupils have less access to specialist resources and support schools focus more on core subjects and less on foundation subjects.
- primary teachers lack the skills, training and experience to teach a high-quality art curriculum.

Teachers giving evidence to the Art, Craft and Design APPG *Art Now Inquiry* reported a widespread lack of teacher confidence and expertise. Jacqui Spinks, Head of School, St Alphege CE Infant School & Sunbeams Nursery, Whitstable said: "I've seen first-hand through my outreach work; schools often lack the professional expertise to ensure that there is a rich arts curriculum on offer. Primary schools in particular don't always have the staff skills or the knowledge to embed a high-quality art and craft curriculum."

Johanne Clifton, Curriculum Director for The Elliott Foundation, described working with a group of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) to support their teaching of the subject: "It was very much... that sense of almost terror, "What are you asking me to do?" ... they simply hadn't had any training in art, craft and design, and they really lacked confidence, feeling that it was a specialist subject that they just weren't equipped to do."⁴⁴

The Inquiry was told that some school leadership teams do not value art and design or think of it as important. Subject leader positions can be given to recently qualified teachers (RQTs) with little experience. Speakers at the Art Now evidence reviews, also reflected on the confidence level of trainee teachers. Few trainees come from undergraduate backgrounds in arts or creative subjects, as the chair of the Russell Group of ITE providers describes: 'One provider had only recruited three students with an art degree out of a total of 320 in the past four years. Clearly, this impacts confidence levels to teach the subject.'⁴⁵

⁴¹ Granville, G. Creighton, E. Byrne, F. (2024) 'Creativity, Designerly Thinking and the Wicked Problems of Life' in Ash, A, Carr, P.A. *Practical Guide to Teaching Art and Design in the Secondary School*, Abingdon, Routledge, pp 115-127

⁴² *Primary colours: the decline of arts education in primary schools and how it can be reversed*, Fabian Society 2019 <https://fabians.org.uk/publication/primary-colours/#:~:text=Primary%20colours%3A%20The%20decline%20of,there%20is%20has%20got%20worse>

⁴³ Art and Design Research Review, Ofsted 2023 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-art-and-design>

⁴⁴ *Art Now Inquiry*, 2023, Evidence Session, 12.05.21

⁴⁵ *Art Now Inquiry*, 2023, Evidence Session, 11.1.22

Recommendations:

- Create opportunities for all art, craft and design teachers to continue to train, research and practice.
- Support making skills and a ‘make first’ pedagogy that values process over product.
- Invest in art, craft and design teacher recruitment: Increase the time given to the study of art, craft and design in primary initial teacher education.

26. In which ways do the current *secondary* curriculum and qualification pathways support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for future study, life and work and what could we change to better support this?

And

27. In which ways do the current qualification pathways and content at 16-19 support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for future study, life and work and what could we change to better support this?

All learners should be supported to access the best art, craft and design education, that will equip them to navigate and address the challenges of the world they live in. The curriculum must reflect contemporary creative practice and equip students to address complex global challenges and drive the green transition.

Less than 50% of young designers (aged 16-24) surveyed by PDR and YouGov for the Design Council, believed their formal education had enabled them to ‘design for the environment’.⁴⁶ An important outcome from the curriculum review should be ensuring design subjects equip young people to develop green skills for future study, life, and work.

The newly introduced T Level for Craft and Design requires learners to consider environment and sustainability in their responses to project briefs, and associated technical knowledge is included in the written assessments. A more explicit focus on developing green skills would align the qualification with the emerging skills gap.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen and clarify design and craft competencies within the art and design curriculum.
- Support teachers to deliver the best design education with relevant and continuing CPD.
- Embed design thinking and design skills across the broader curriculum.
- Complement a core of design skills with specialist art and design and technology routes.
- Review the content of the new Craft and Design T Level and existing VTQs to ensure that the qualifications incorporate green skills and a sustainability focus.

⁴⁶ Design Council, 2021

Section 6: A broad and balanced curriculum

28. To what extent does the current primary curriculum support pupils to study a broad and balanced curriculum? Should anything change to better support this?

Where teachers lack confidence to design and implement high-quality art and design learning, the offer is frequently narrow and highly prescriptive. Art and design need to be given higher status by school leaders and within the national curriculum, with appropriate investment in continuing professional development.

Learning in art, craft and design is not static but continues to evolve, through broadly defined curriculum principles at a national level, and in the, in curricula followed in individual schools. Learning in art craft and design is primarily, although not exclusively, through practical work and experience. This can be overwhelming for the non-specialist.

In the Ofsted art and design research review, curriculum content is described as: 'vast, and subject leaders and curriculum designers need to be selective in what they include in their art curriculums'.⁴⁷

Many primary teachers and subject leads do not feel equipped to navigate the scope and possibility of the subject and rely on generic curriculum models or 'off the peg' resources that may not be appropriate for their learners.

Lack of support from school leaders has been identified as a barrier to providing a broad and balanced offer:

In the *Art Now Inquiry* sessions, Jacqui Spinks, Head of School said 'I've also worked with many art and design subject leaders who are really passionate but lack the backing or the support of their senior leaders. The National Curriculum for art and design is very sparse, especially at infant level, and leaves a great deal open to interpretation, meaning that provision can vary greatly between schools. If we want all children to flourish, we must ensure that equal weighting is given to all subjects and this needs to come directly from the DfE and from Ofsted.'⁴⁸

Recommendations:

- Address teacher confidence with subject specialist training and resources for continuing professional development.
- Increase time spent on art and design during initial teacher training.

⁴⁷ Art and Design Research Review, Ofsted 2023 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-art-and-design>

⁴⁸ Jacqui Spinks, Head of School, St Alphege CE Infant School & Sunbeams Nursery, Whitstable. Evidence Session 11.1.22 *Art Now Inquiry*, 2023

29. To what extent do the current secondary curriculum and qualifications pathways support pupils to study a broad and balanced curriculum? Should anything change to better support this?

A number of issues limit a broad and balanced offer within art and design curriculum at secondary:

- Lack of investment in facilities and workspaces is leading to an increasingly narrow curriculum offer in many schools
- pressure of high stakes assessment and lack of teacher confidence to design engaging future facing curricula
- Unhelpful subject hierarchies and overloaded curriculum across all subjects reduces the space and support within institutions for art and design options.

NSEAD members have commented:

‘Whilst there may be a broad curriculum, it is certainly not balanced. The non-core are marginalised and treated as such. Too much focus is placed on the core curriculum and the non-core suffers as a result. The non-core are made to fit practice and processes that are exemplary in the Core into their curriculum or working methodology that just do not work - this is incredibly frustrating and demoralising. A two-tier curriculum exists, with the core subjects given greater status and importance than the non-core’

‘I’m sad to say that I feel that more support for art educators and CPD opportunities need to be given to art subjects. Students can then lean into developing their emotional intelligence and not just be able to draw a pepper!! Visual language and emotional intelligence drive creativity. This is missing from the curriculum I believe at secondary level, and if students were given more opportunity in the arts we would see a more developed pupil.’⁴⁹

Learning in art and design is through practical experience, working with materials and specialist equipment to develop skills and understanding of a range of processes and disciplines. Pupils need access to well-equipped studios and classrooms. Pupils need the resources to support learning through making, but also access to digital devices, which are an essential part of learning in the subject.

Art and design teachers are known for being creative and resourceful, but there are limits to what can be done safely and to a high standard if the resources are not there. Across the UK darkrooms, kilns, printing presses are being de-commissioned because there is no budget to maintain them. Pupils are not working in film, animation and graphics because of insufficient devices and IT support and infrastructure in their schools. This is already leading many centres to offer an unacceptably narrow curriculum. Without action and investment now, we will feel the loss of learning in our creative industries for decades to come. A BESA Insights report in 2023 highlighted lack of investment in facilities and workspaces, with 40% of art and design teachers agreeing that the current state of specialist facilities in their schools is negatively affecting outcomes for students.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ NSEAD member survey, October 2024

⁵⁰ BESA, *Insights, State of the Estate* BESA Insights Report <https://www.besa.org.uk/news/the-state-of-the-estate/>

Recommendations:

- Create opportunities for all art, craft and design teachers to continue to train, research and practice, working with subject associations and specialist providers.
- Invest in resources and improvement to our learning spaces.

30. To what extent do the current qualifications pathways at 16-19 support learners to study a broad curriculum which gives them the right knowledge and skills to progress? Should anything change to better support this?

Current qualifications pathways have the flexibility to be tailored to learner needs and local context, however some members have expressed concern about the consistency across specifications.

‘A level is a good qualification but the diversity of approach from each board is now very wide. Modes and content emphasis for assessment are quite different, e.g. standards of critical engagement and writing or drawing. Not sure these qualifications are equal and offering the same’

‘The GCSE and A-Level still offer a positive creative experience, although the demands of putting work together and unrealistic target setting can kill the subject for some students. The government and school's focus on the core also makes further education in the Arts seem less desirable. Although our student numbers have remained steady, the number of students moving into creative courses at higher education has severely dropped over recent years.’⁵¹

31. To what extent does the current curriculum (at primary and secondary phases) and in qualifications pathways (at secondary and 16-19) ensure that pupils and learners are able to develop creative skills and have access to creative subjects?

Art and design fosters creative skills. A lack of teacher confidence, particularly in the primary phase, followed by a focus on final outcomes and high-stakes assessment in secondary, can frequently lead to an orthodoxy of practice that limits learner creativity and originality of response.

Endorsement options for GCSE and A level offer a breadth of areas of study: Fine art, 3D studies, graphic design, textiles, photography, and critical and contextual studies. The national curriculum sets out the expectation at primary and secondary of a breadth of study.

The McKinsey Institute found that the demand for skills such as creativity and critical thinking will increase rapidly, predicting that the demand for creativity will rise by 30% in Western Europe by 2030.⁵²

Ofsted have noted that creative work leads to improvements in self-confidence in learners. This can be expressed in different and sometimes quite subject-specific ways: more willingness to ‘take risks in

⁵¹ NSEAD member survey, October 2024

⁵² OECD, *Fostering Students' Creativity and Critical Thinking*, 2019

art’, use a modern foreign language more frequently, increased receptiveness to peer review, or more ‘flexibility’.⁵³

The NSEAD Better Practice group considered previous iterations of curriculum models, schemes and guidance published across the regions (particularly in England), touching on examination specifications where ‘the outcomes were considered to have led to a ‘commonality of practice.’ This can sometimes devalue curiosity and perpetuate an over-formulaic approach to project planning and curriculum priorities. We recognise this is often for the best of intentions, or in response to budget cuts and examination grade pressures. However, this has been seen as harmful to learning and grades over recent decades, precisely because it lessens the expectation for learner creativity and originality of response’⁵⁴

Creativity can be inhibited by embedded and conservative school-wide values. ‘Some find the emphasis on marketing and consumption problematic. STEAM and Design Thinking methodologies are often business – or problem-oriented ... students also need to learn how to critically question the motivations behind marketing, designer capitalism, and 21st-century skills. We need to question what constitutes good design in a time of grave environmental and social concerns.’⁵⁵

Whilst art and design remains a popular choice at secondary and 16-19, awareness of careers pathways is low, with careers educators reported to lack information on the sector, and students reporting that they have received unhelpful advice and guidance and have been actively steered towards alternative paths.⁵⁶

Research this year shows that college-based creative FE enrolments have fallen by 63% in creative arts, crafts and design. Apprenticeship take-up remains very low in the creative industries there are significant concerns about the impact of the de-prioritisation of creative education in England on the awareness and appetite of young people to pursue creative careers

Creative FE is highly concentrated in urban cities and regions – Glasgow, Edinburgh, Belfast, Cardiff, Swansea, London, the Southeast and the West Midlands – with much more limited provision in rural areas.⁵⁷

The OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) framework informs education policy. It evaluates each country’s educational systems by measuring 15-year-old students’ performance on mathematics, science, and reading. In practice, it incentivises policymakers to target high performance in these three areas (maths, science and reading) as it does not consistently value high performance in other ability areas. However, every year PISA tests an ‘innovative’ assessment area such as ‘Collaborative Problem Solving’ (2015) or ‘Creative Thinking’ (2022). Disappointingly, in 2022 England chose to opt-out of the Creative Thinking.

⁵³ *Expecting the unexpected: Developing creativity in primary and secondary schools*, Ofsted 2003

⁵⁴ AD #37 <https://www.nsead.org/publications/ad-magazine/issue-37/>

⁵⁵ Rapid Evidence Review, Thomson and Malloy 2022 <https://www.nsead.org/community-activism/policy-and-research/all-party-parliamentary-group/appg-evidence-2022/appg-rapid-evidence-review-2022/>

⁵⁶ <https://pec.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Creative-Further-Education-in-the-Four-Nations-Creative-PEC-State-of-the-Nations-report-1.pdf>

⁵⁷ <https://pec.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Improving-young-peoples-access-progression-in-work-in-Film-TV-and-games-PEC-Mission-44.pdf>

Recommendations:

- Government and industry must work together to engage more young people and their careers with the number of highly rewarding careers that study of art, craft and design can lead to. This builds on the ‘careers promise’ set out in the policy paper (2023), *Creative Industries Sector Vision*.
- Create opportunities for all art, craft, and design teachers to continue to access subject-specific training, research, and practice.
- The UK should commit to entering students into all creative PISA assessments, correcting the error of opting-out of the 2022 Creative Thinking test.

32. Do you have any explanations for the trends outlined in the analysis and/or suggestions to address any that might be of concern?

Art and design has been described as ‘thriving’. Art and design can only be said to ‘be thriving’ in comparison to the greater decline of other arts subjects. The apparently stable GCSE entries disguise an accelerating decline and the loss of specialist teachers. Recruitment and retention of art and design specialist teachers is an increasing concern.

There are several interacting factors behind these trends, and is tied into the decline of D&T and the pragmatic responses that schools have made in order to manage curriculum priorities and challenges to recruit and retain specialist teachers.

Examination entries for Art and Design *are* falling.

When compared to other arts subjects, art and design qualifications appear to be relatively stable. The proportion of learners opting for art and design at GCSE in 2024 was 26%, the same as 2010. The proportion of learners opting for D&T fell from 40% in 2010 to 19% in 2024. The reverse is true for Ebacc subjects over the same period, they have risen significantly. Art and design has not remained stable, it has in fact been propped up by students migrating from D&T. This trend appears to have stalled; in 2023, D&T GCSE numbers were stable for the first time, and there was a reduction in the numbers taking art and design.⁵⁸

When the new specification for D&T was introduced in 2019, GCSE entries fell sharply – from 20% of all entries in 2018 to 15% in 2019. At the same time, entries for art and design GCSE endorsement titles, saw a sharp increase in entries – Textiles up by 46.49%, Art graphics up by 25% and 3D studies up by at least 100% (numbers were too low to record in 2018). These endorsed titles provided an attractive alternative to the new D&T specification, which introduced a heavier written requirement and assessment by exam. The Textiles Skills Centre’s research shows that 32% of schools that offer a textiles GCSE had recently switched from D&T to art and design.⁵⁹ NSEAD members report that art and

⁵⁸ NSEAD in CLA’s Annual Report Card, 2024

⁵⁹ [Textiles Skills Centre](https://www.textilesskillscentre.com) (2024), Unravelling the Fabric Of Textiles Education ([textilesskillscentre.com](https://www.textilesskillscentre.com))

design endorsements are indeed being offered as a qualification as part of a D&T pathway, with attempts to overlay a D&T epistemology onto art-based design specifications.

We should be concerned that art and design A-Level entries show a decline from 46,054 in 2010 to 43,464 in 2023 (-6%). A-Level entries had remained stable until 2022, with only an incremental reduction, but this decline has sharply accelerated. One explanation for why A-Level trends have not followed the rise in GCSE between 2019 and 2023 is that those learners taking GCSE Art and design endorsements as part of a D&T pathway have not progressed to A level art and design. There is a correlation between the 9% fall in entries for art, craft and design (unendorsed) between 2018 and 2024.⁶⁰

Ofsted have noted that the data can be misleading, and that GCSE entries had returned to previous historic levels rather than making substantial increases. 'Data from the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) suggests there were more entries for GCSE art and design in 2022 than in 2010. However, compared with 2002, the number of entries for GCSE art and design in 2022 were at a similar level.'⁶¹

Teaching hours for art and design are falling.

In 2022/23 the number hours spent teaching art and design in state funded secondary schools in England, for years 7 to 13 was 138,074. There were 12,680 specialist teachers. In 2014/15 150,156 hours were taught by 12,654 teachers. During that time, teaching hours for Key stage 4 remained stable, indicating that the greatest loss of art and design teaching hours is at KS3.

Schools struggle to recruit and retain specialist teachers.

Workforce data shows a dramatic fall in the number of ITT recruits across art and design and music subjects between the 2010/11 and 2011/12 academic year. Numbers then increased before a further notable fall between the 2016/17 and 2017/18 academic years. Overall figures of recruits in 2023 remain well below where they were in 2010 – the number of ITT recruits for Art & Design has fallen by 19%. Between 2010/11 and 2022/23, the vacancy rate for art and design has more than tripled.

There are slightly more art and design specialist teachers in the workforce in 2023 (12,680) than in 2014 (12,654). However, teachers and headteachers report that art and design teachers are frequently being deployed to teach D&T, which has lost half of its workforce since 2009 – down from 15,000 teachers to just 6,500.⁶²

Recruitment and retention of art and design specialist teachers is an increasing concern. This year recruitment was at just 44% of the TSM target. In the year 2011/12 when the government was exceeding its recruitment targets in art and design and music, by 9% and 3% respectively, the government had substantially reduced its own recruitment targets from the previous year by 41% in art and design and 31% in music. This reduction likely reflects the introduction of the EBacc at GCSE, which excludes arts subjects, and the consequent anticipated fall in need for arts teachers in English schools.⁶³

⁶⁰ Ofqual

⁶¹ Art and Design Research Review, Ofsted 2023 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-art-and-design>

⁶² <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/school-workforce-in-england/2023?subjectId=21dcfee2-b996-4ec5-ebbd-08dc7f2e78d6>

⁶³ <https://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CLA-2024-Annual-Report-Card.pdf>

The Ebacc established an unhelpful hierarchy of subjects, which have become structurally entrenched because of Progress 8. This reduces opportunities to study arts subjects in combination and reduces confidence in learners to choose these subjects at 16-19 and beyond.

NSEAD members say:

‘The GCSE and A-Level still offer a positive creative experience, although the demands of putting work together and unrealistic target setting can kill the subject for some students. The government and school's focus on the core also makes further education in the Arts seem less desirable. Although our student numbers have remained steady, the number of students moving into creative courses at higher education has severely dropped over recent years.’

‘The GCSE and A-Level still offer a positive creative experience, although the demands of putting work together and unrealistic target setting can kill the subject for some students. The government and school's focus on the core also makes further education in the Arts seem less desirable. Although our student numbers have remained steady, the number of students moving into creative courses at higher education has severely dropped over recent years’.⁶⁴

Recommendations:

- Investigate student pathways and the extent to which learners following D&T pathways are being diverted to art and design, and the extent to which art and design and D&T teachers are teaching out of their specialism.
- Invest in data collection that will inform a national strategy to recruit and retain a diverse art educator workforce.
- Improve teachers’ terms and conditions to address wellbeing and workload: Restore pay; Reduce excessive class sizes for art, craft and design; Build opportunities for teachers to achieve flexible working.
- Invest in art, craft and design teacher recruitment: Fair bursaries for every subject and every trainee teacher.
- Address the consequences of the Initial Teacher Training Market Review.
- Recognise and remedy the impact of austerity, the cost-of-living crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic on a generation of trainee teachers.

33. To what extent and how do pupils benefit from being able to take vocational or applied qualifications in secondary schools alongside more academically focused GCSEs?

⁶⁴ NSEAD member survey October 2024

Vocational and Technical qualifications in Art and design have lost ground in recent years, with numbers falling sharply. These qualifications offer valuable sector-specific knowledge and at Level 3, learners can apply their GCSE learning to work contexts. At level 1 & 2 they offer an alternative to GCSE for some learners. However, they are being offered by fewer centres.

Section 7: Assessment and accountability

40. What more can we do to ensure that: a) the assessment requirements for GCSEs capture and support the development of knowledge and skills of every young person; and b) young people’s wellbeing is effectively considered when assessments are developed, giving pupils the best chance to show what they can do to support their progression?

Accountability measures create a ‘top heavy’ target driven approach to assessment, often based on benchmark targets that do not relate to progress of learning in art and design.

NSEAD members say:

‘External target setting is not derived from data that is relevant to Art. At KS4 and 5 ‘Challenge’ targets are set that are above a child’s actual potential (based on data from the core), meaning some student’s targets are wildly above their actual artistic potential. The expectations for grade percentages (9-7, 9-5 etc) are also wildly above what is normally achieved in a given year, either at school level or nationally. This creates a demoralising system of assessment and accountability where failure appears baked in. We are prevented from using our own baseline, taken from a judgement of Art skill. Targets are set from Year 7, predicting ahead to potential GCSE success and KS3 progress is scrutinised against this. This is nonsensical as there is no national standard to compare against and the data used is irrelevant. Providing progress data of suggested final grades throughout the GCSE or A-Level course when work is unfinished and coursework portfolios are incomplete (and the exam hasn’t been taken) is incredibly challenging and invariably leads to inaccuracies’

‘having to share coursework marks with students prior to the end of the course adds its own level of stress for both Teachers and students.’⁶⁵

The timing of art and design assessment and the process for sharing raw marks with students can create stress for both teachers and students. NSEAD’s Raw Marks NSEAD’s Raw Marks showed that the current system of giving raw marks to students is causing both workload and wellbeing issues for teachers. Students are also given their raw marks sometimes moments before they sit their other public exams. 92% of respondents felt that students suffered undue stress.⁶⁶

Recommendations

- JCQ and Ofqual undertake an urgent independent consultation and impact study of the requirement that teachers give raw marks to art and design candidates. Given the evidence and findings in this report, NSEAD recommends that the process ends as soon as possible.
- The proposed impact study would consult with art and design teachers from across the sector. It would examine relevant subject-specific data to identify if the process is meeting the needs of all young people regardless of school or background. It would also identify how the process, guidance, training and the procedure itself impacts on teachers and learners.

⁶⁵ NSEAD member survey, October 2024

⁶⁶ NSEAD Raw Marks Report, September 2024 <https://www.nsead.org/news/newsroom/the-raw-marks-nsead-survey-report/>

44. To what extent, and in what ways, does the accountability system influence curriculum and assessment decisions in schools and colleges?

The secondary school accountability system should be targeted for urgent reform because it has caused such widespread damage to arts subjects in English state schools. There is a strong coalition of voices across arts education making a collective case for learners to have access to high-quality arts education across multiple artforms. We believe that the current accountability system has seriously inhibited this. Our comments here are drawn from the joint response made by the Save our Subjects Campaign, which is led by the ISM, OneDance UK and NSEAD.⁶⁷

Arts subjects are excluded from the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and the Progress 8 buckets are heavily skewed towards EBacc subjects. This has created a subject hierarchy, where EBacc subjects are prioritised over non-EBacc subjects in the curriculum.

The EBacc is based on the belief that all students should be encouraged to take a so-called ‘academic’ pathway, with an emphasis on a knowledge-rich curriculum. This narrow approach does not prepare students adequately for the digital age and the rapid advance in Artificial Intelligence.

The EBacc subjects are almost identical to those of the 1904 Secondary Regulations.

The EBacc subjects are based on the Russell Group’s list of facilitating subjects, which does not include any arts subject and was abandoned in May 2019 due to its negative impact on arts education.

The total number of taught hours for core and EBacc subjects has increased: the number of taught hours for Maths at Key Stage 3 has increased by 14% between 2011/12 and 2022/23 and by 15% at Key Stage 4. The pattern in History is even more striking, with the number of taught hours at KS3 increasing by 35% between 2011/12 and 2022/23, while the number of taught hours has increased by 44% over that period for Key Stage 4. Over the same period, in art and design, the number of taught hours at KS3 similarly fell by 9% between 2011/12 and 2018/19, before increasing year-on-year until 2022/23. The consequence is that the total fall in taught hours between 2011/12 and 2022/23 for Art & Design at KS3 is 3%. The data for art and design indicates a 27% fall in taught hours at Key Stage 5.⁶⁸

Accountability measures are widely held to have damaged arts education. *The Arts in Schools* report⁶⁹ says: ‘At every stage in the schooling system the arts are disadvantaged: at initial teacher recruitment and training through to a lack of support for arts teaching in primary schools. We have an assessment regime that does not work for arts subjects, which require different kinds of measurement, and the investment required to develop these has not been made because of their perceived low status. This downgrading of the arts is damaging for young people’s lives and aspirations, for the arts education workforce, for the workforce more widely, and for the health and diversity of the creative industries. And access to the arts is not equitable: we have a two-tier system, with the arts more highly valued in independent schools’

A *Class Act*, the Sutton Trust’s recent report notes: ‘State schools should be incentivised to offer creative subjects and extra-curricular activities. In recent years, the exclusion of creative subjects in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is likely to have disincentivised schools from offering these subjects. The government should examine accountability measures and look to remove this

⁶⁷ <https://www.saveoursubjects.org/>

⁶⁸ <https://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CLA-2024-Annual-Report-Card.pdf>

⁶⁹ <https://www.anewdirection.org.uk/the-arts-in-schools>

disincentive for creative subjects, as well as reviewing teacher incentives (e.g. bursaries) for creative subjects. Ensuring all students can access creative subjects and wider activities in schools should be a significant part of the government's ongoing curriculum review.'⁷⁰

Accountability measures have created false narrative values and hierarchies of subjects. This affects learner choices within the curriculum, with the arts not seen as relevant to employability. The low value placed on the arts undermines creative careers choices. The inequitable distribution of bursaries for ITE adds to these notional hierarchies, reinforcing the idea that some subjects – and teachers – are less valuable than others.

The Art, craft and design in Education APPG Art Now Inquiry was told that some school leadership teams do not value art and design or think of it as important. Subject leader positions can be given to recently qualified teachers (RQTs) with little art and design experience. Speakers at the Art Now evidence reviews also reflected on the confidence level of trainee teachers. Few trainees come from undergraduate backgrounds in arts or creative subjects, as the chair of the Russell Group of ITE providers describes: 'One provider had only recruited three students with an art degree out of a total of 320 in the past four years. Clearly, this impacts confidence levels to teach the subject.'⁷¹

Recommendations:

- Place sufficient value on arts and design subjects in school performance frameworks.
- Counter the negative value narratives that create a damaging hierarchy of curriculum subjects.
- Award equal training bursaries for all teachers.

45. How well does the current accountability system support and recognise progress for all pupils and learners? What works well and what could be improved?

The current system is based on high stakes assessment (success/failure) in an outdated list of subjects. It does not work to support learner choice, or reflect the changing and future opportunities for work and life.

⁷⁰ *A Class Act*, The Sutton Trust, Nov 2024

⁷¹ Art, craft and design All Party Parliamentary Group Art Now Inquiry Report <https://www.nsead.org/community-activism/policy-and-research/all-party-parliamentary-group/artnow-inquiry-2023/>

Section 8: Qualification pathways 16-19

47. To what extent does the range of programmes and qualifications on offer at each level meet the needs and aspirations of learners?

- a. Level 3**
- b. Level 2**
- c. Level 1 and entry level**

Art & Design GCSE and A-Level is offered as a broad-based Art, Craft and Design specification, and as five specialist options (known as endorsements): Fine Art; Graphic Communication; Textile Design; Three-dimensional design; and Photography. These endorsed titles provide a broad range of study with the opportunity for learners to specialise.

‘We deliver 4 different art and design pathways so broad and balanced has a head start within those courses it’s important that each one reflects their subjects innovations embraces new technologies gives the students opportunities to explore subject matter that resonates with them balanced with embedding each subject’s fundamentals myself as head of department checks my teachers are doing this I have to be active and involved in their courses development and as a team we support one another to do this and we ensure we max out cross college collaborations such as STEAM, set design for performing art etc’ NSEAD Member ⁷²

However, we are concerned that the merger of many art & design and D & T departments, following the decline of D&T means that in some cases these Art & Design endorsements being offered as an alternative to Design & Technology. ⁷³

This raises concerns about student choice – these subjects are very different in both pedagogy and progression pathways.

48. Are there particular changes that could be made to the following programmes and qualifications and/or their assessment that would be beneficial to learners:

- a. AS/A level qualifications**
- b. T Level and T Level Foundation Year programmes**
- c. Other applied or vocational qualifications at level 3**
- d. Other applied or vocational qualifications at level 2 and below**

The new T level in Craft and Design widens the qualification offer at 16-19, with a skills-led framework broadening opportunities and learner choice. Some aspects of the specification limit participation however, with local capacity to support work placements, and a significant written element creating barriers for some learners.

⁷² NSEAD member survey, October 2024

⁷³ NSEAD in CLA’s Annual Report Card, 2024

51. Are there additional skills, subjects, or experiences that all learners should develop or study during 16-19 education, regardless of their chosen programmes and qualifications, to support them to be prepared for life and work?

Design is an essential but neglected area of the curriculum. People who use design skills are 49% more productive than the average UK worker. 1 in 7 people use design skills in their work, and designers are 29% more productive than the average UK worker. Design is a foundational skill, as much a part of the grammar of life and work as numeracy and oracy are. Design – applying user, customer, citizen or community-centred approaches to creativity and invention to ensure more successful outcomes– is fundamental to people in all walks of life and a skill for life all schools must cover. D&T and Art and Design provide vital opportunities for young people to develop rich design skills such as haptic intelligence, practicality, ingenuity, and empathy. The decline of design within the curriculum-risks exacerbating UK skills and productivity gaps and depriving the next generation from practicing design as a core ‘skill for life’.⁷⁴

All children should be able to benefit from a world-class design education, developing valuable material intelligence, applied creativity, problem-solving, and systems thinking abilities. However currently design suffers from exclusive delivery as a subject when many of the concepts and skills it develops are cross-curricular and cross-disciplinary in nature. Designing brings other subjects alive through applying a creative, hands-on, problem-solving approach to real-world challenges

⁷⁴ Art, craft and design All Party Parliamentary Group Art Now Inquiry Report <https://www.nsead.org/community-activism/policy-and-research/all-party-parliamentary-group/artnow-inquiry-2023/>

Section 9: Other issues on which we would welcome views

52. Do you have any further views on anything else associated with the Curriculum and Assessment Review not covered in the questions throughout the call for evidence?

Teacher well being

Improve teachers' terms and conditions to address wellbeing and workload.

The Art, Craft and Design in Education APPG *Art Now Inquiry* survey report, revealed that since the pandemic, teachers had serious concerns about resourcing for art and design. There were 156 mentions of resources, and 117 of materials; 34.9% reported that resourcing was an issue and 93.2% said that there had been a decrease in resources.

The lack of access to resources and materials was seen to have a direct impact on the development of subject-specific skills and knowledge related to materials and making. 'Some pupils have not been able to access practical materials such as paint, clay, or collage.' 'Behaviour has massively been affected and basic skills such as holding pencils, paintbrushes or using scissors has been hugely affected.'⁷⁵

Partnerships with galleries

There are subject benefits from being able to link to national collections. Free entry encourages independent visits and cultural capital. In the last school year of 2021-2022, the Pitt Rivers Museum saw 5,537 secondary students (aged 11–18) pass through its doors, many taking part in self-guided visits. Almost all these visits were art and design related. The museum, which opened in 1887, remains a hub for art, design and textiles students and their teachers.⁷⁶

Literacy

When children are given opportunities to draw as part of the writing process, this helps them to formulate, develop and extend ideas for writing, making their independent, self-initiated writing richer.⁷⁷

Purpose of education

We believe that this review is taking place at a critical moment, we urgently need to re-imagine the purpose of education, for the sake of our learners, and all those who support them – but also for our civic society.

'Since the National Curriculum was introduced, there have been multiple changes of direction and little focus on the purposes of education. There is no systemic rationale for what is taught, and no coherent and ambitious vision for education in relation to the economy, society, community or the individual: as a result, we have a schooling system that prioritises school performance based on exam grades in

⁷⁵ Art, craft and design All Party Parliamentary Group Art Now Inquiry Report <https://www.nsead.org/community-activism/policy-and-research/all-party-parliamentary-group/artnow-inquiry-2023/>

⁷⁶ Melanie Rowntree, Pitt Rivers Museum Oxford, AD #36

⁷⁷ Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE), 2019; Summary of findings from the research on the CLPE Power of Pictures Project 2013-19

defined subject areas, and in which success measures do not value the whole child. In the absence of consensus around purpose, in the context of increased accountability focused on a narrow range of subject areas, and acute funding pressures, there has been a systematic downgrading or exclusion of arts subjects and experiences.’⁷⁸

⁷⁸ *Arts in Schools, 2023*