

# ‘Building a world-class curriculum for all’

## Unpacking the Curriculum and Assessment review (CAAR) final report for art and design: NSEAD response and takeaways.

*Our response focuses on the overarching principles and recommendations that are relevant to art and design, as well as the subject specific conclusions and recommendations.*

### Introduction

This Review is a positive and welcome reminder that high quality education through an aspirational curriculum is an entitlement for all. The focus on closing **equity gaps and removing barriers to access** is essential – we have seen a growing inequity of choice, access, attainment and experience, that was only exacerbated by Covid. The need to address this is clearly stated throughout this final report.

We are pleased that the review recognises the need for every learner to see themselves in the curriculum, and the call for all subjects to address **diversity and representation**. The content of the curriculum should be future facing, equipping learners for the world they live in. **Sustainability, digital and green skills, creativity, critical and contextual thinking and communication** are all recognised as being essential elements of the wider curriculum that must be strengthened. The acknowledgement that the curriculum does not reflect the needs, lives and aspirations of all learners is particularly important, and the specific reference to Art and Design and the inclusion of evidence from the Runnymede Trust ‘Visualise’ research is significant and highly welcome.

The need to ensure that teachers have the space and are **trusted to design and deliver locally relevant curricula**, supported by **high quality resources and exemplification**, is also emphasised, and specifically referenced Art and Design as a subject that does not have a singular pedagogical approach. The lack of confidence and specialist knowledge amongst primary educators is noted, but the underlying and systemic failure to support teachers to develop subject specific expertise is not.

Encouragingly also, The Review states on several occasions that **subjects are of equal value**, citing the contribution of the arts as ‘pivotal’ and ‘essential’ to securing a world class curriculum for all. The **removal of the Ebacc** is of course long overdue and sends a powerful message about pupil choice and equity between subjects that we hope is the first step in reversing the steep decline of the arts in schools.

**This Review does not take an in-depth or nuanced look at the current state of Art and Design.** It does not mention craft, or make any connection between the design subjects, or the destabilising effect on secondary education of the decline of Design & Technology on both subjects. A ‘face value’ analysis of GCSE entries, and a selective use of curriculum time data has resulted in (we believe) a complacent conclusion that Art and Design is thriving. NSEAD members are clear that this is not the case in too many schools. At both secondary and primary phases, the amount of art and design in our schools has reduced, and concerns about the *quality* of provision at KS1-3 have not been considered.



And, whilst there is real recognition that our national curriculum needs to prepare young people for the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead, we believe that this review is **a missed opportunity to recognise the complexity of our subject**, and the unique contribution that it can make to the overarching principles identified by the review. Whilst the narrowing of the curriculum has been recognised, **the threat posed to creativity and critical thinking by increasing curriculum orthodoxies has not been understood.**

Whilst there is much in this Review that can strengthen education in Art and Design, it is important that we recognise that much more work is needed to ensure that every learner can access a high-quality art, craft and design education, and indeed the actions required lie beyond the scope of this review.

Read the full [Curriculum and Assessment Review](#) and the [Government response](#).

Visit the Curriculum section of NSEAD's website for further information, links and downloads to:

- [NSEAD's response to the call for evidence](#)
- [NSEAD's response to the interim report](#)
- [NSEAD's parallel curriculum, 2013](#)
- [NSEAD's Better Practice site The Big Landscape](#)
- [NSEAD's response to the Ofsted Research Review, 2023](#)
- [NSEAD's Art and Design curriculum for the Oak National Academy](#)

Curriculum and Assessment Review highlights and NSEAD teacher takeaways	
<div></div> <div>CAAR section and key quotes</div>	<div></div> <div>NSEAD response and takeaways</div>
Foreword and Introduction:	
<div>Evolution not revolution</div> <div><p><i>'Our approach has allowed us to navigate the diverse and often conflicting views that stakeholders have expressed. Many of the matters are extremely complex.</i></p><p><i>Furthermore, some elements of the education system and other factors outside the scope of this Review undoubtedly contribute to the outcomes we have observed.</i></p><p><i>We also have sought to remain cognisant of the impact that substantial changes to the curriculum and assessment would have on the stability of the wider education system and on the workload of education staff. Our recommended changes are intended to lead to meaningful improvements in outcomes for learners without destabilising the system.'</i></p><p><i>Several important areas that relate to</i></p></div>	<div>NSEAD say:</div> <div><p>The curriculum and the architecture that support it is only part of the picture. NSEAD maintain that the hierarchy of subjects that has been heavily promoted (and incentivised by the EBacc and Progress 8 and Attainment 8) since the last review took place has been extremely damaging to Art and Design.</p><p>The narrative that Art and Design is a low value subject, combined with structural disincentives have reduced curriculum time, resource allocation and the recruitment and retention of specialist teachers. All of these issues, whilst the consequence of Government policy, are beyond the scope of the current review. However, we believe that meaningful improvement cannot be made unless they are addressed.</p><p>The review seeks to make improvements without de-stabilising the system. The changes recommended for Art and Design are minimal but made without any recognition of the</p></div>

curriculum and assessment sit outside the scope of this Review, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, pedagogical approaches, careers advice and guidance, work experience and enrichment activities. Education funding, teacher training and development and workforce supply issues are also outside our [Terms of Reference](#).

destabilizing forces that are already pressing on the subject.

Our recommendations:

1. the value of every subject needs to be reinforced in strong, consistent government messaging.
2. Teacher recruitment and retention must be addressed through:
  - i) restoring bursaries
  - ii) support for subject specialist CPDL
  - lii) Review the impact of ITAPs, the 2022 ITE market review and the expansion of initial teacher training via SCITT and other programmes on subject expertise
3. Resources must match the ambition of the curriculum:
  - i) increase budgets for materials, equipment and technical support
  - ii) ensure that adequate time is given within the curriculum and beyond.

)

**Towards a world-class curriculum and assessment system**

*The importance of our national curriculum cannot be overstated. It is entitlement to the most important knowledge that we expect children and young people to learn, both for their benefit and for the benefit of the nation.*

*We have sought to ensure the curriculum is fit for the future, addresses the rich knowledge and skills young people need to thrive in our fast-changing world, and encourages a love of learning.*

*Education is inherently valuable and important for its own sake, but it also plays a crucial role in supporting individual success, in providing young people with the necessary knowledge and skills to build a prosperous economy and flourishing civil society, and in promoting social cohesion and democracy*

NSEAD say:

The emphasis on entitlement is important, as is the clear statement that the dual purpose of education is to benefit individuals and civil society.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Education (2025) produced a sobering report highlighting the loss of love of learning amongst UK pupils. The pressures on our teacher workforce and a loss of love of teaching highlighted in the APPG for Art, craft and design education report Art Now must be addressed urgently if we are to ignite a love of learning in our pupils.

The need to be future facing has been a key ask in NSEAD's vision for the art and design curriculum since the last review, detailed in our parallel curriculum of 2011, our 2024 manifesto, and our response to the CAAR call for evidence.

<p><i>It is essential that more children and young people build strong foundations and a love of learning in the primary years, embarking on their secondary education with their literacy and numeracy secure, and with knowledge, confidence and enthusiasm sparked for other subjects.</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>The review makes few recommendations for change in the Primary curriculum, which is deemed to be working well. Recommendations to reduce content may create space for sparking enthusiasm for subjects other than literacy and numeracy, but this will require knowledgeable, confident teachers.</p> <p>The development of confidence and expertise in subjects like art and design is in crisis in primary initial teacher education. NSEAD members report that art and design has been reduced to just a few hours within undergraduate and PGCE teacher training courses.</p> <p>NSEAD recommends:</p> <p>1) A review of subject specialist teaching time across Primary ITE providers</p>
<p><i>We have also been mindful of the importance of the school curriculum beyond the national curriculum.</i></p> <p><i>The statutory guidance for the current national curriculum says that it is 'just one element in the education of every child; it was not intended to take up an entire school day. It is important that the national curriculum maintains its position as an ambitious entitlement for all. However, schools must have space to go beyond it to provide innovative practice, locally tailored content, and enriching activities that help to ensure young people thrive in education and later life.</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>Creating space for learning that is locally tailored and meets individual learner needs is essential, and it is in these spaces that pupils are often able to extend their learning and engage at a much deeper level.</p> <p>The balance between curriculum and extra curricula time as an entitlement is important.</p> <p>Setting an ambitious national curriculum as a minimum requirement, that schools can and should go beyond is also an important statement.</p>
<p><i>All the subjects in the national curriculum are valuable and play an important role in preparing young children for life and work.</i></p>	<p>NSEAD believes that all subjects in the national curriculum are <b>equally</b> valuable.</p>
<p><i>We must also facilitate more successful transitions into secondary education. Too many young people fall behind at this stage and so we must ensure that more of them maintain their momentum and enthusiasm across a rich and broad array of subjects.</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>Inequity of experience contributes to the difficulties seen at transition, and this is particularly true of those subjects that are not a priority within the primary curriculum and not subject to national tests at the end of KS2.</p>

	<p>We know that children start secondary school with very different experiences in art and design, and that the impact of Covid school closures has made this worse for many children. Many children have been left behind and are beginning secondary education <a href="#"><u>lacking creative confidence and fine motor skills.</u></a></p>
<p><b>The current system is not working well for all</b></p> <p><i>Over the last two decades, some subjects have thrived and seen increased take-up; in others, take-up has declined. The reasons for this are complicated. However, it is clear that the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) performance measures have to some degree unnecessarily constrained students' choices. This has affected their engagement and achievement, and limited their access to, and the time available for, arts and vocational subjects. We endorse the need for a broad and balanced academic curriculum up to 16 for all, but we also recognise the need for a better balance between that entitlement and wider choice. As such, we recommend the removal of the EBacc measures but the retention of the EBacc 'bucket' in Progress 8 under the new title of 'Academic Breadth'.</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>Whilst the decline of arts GCSE entries is acknowledged, Art and Design has been singled out as thriving.</p> <p>NSEAD maintains that student choices, engagement and access to Art and Design have been severely impacted, and we discuss this in detail elsewhere.</p> <p>The removal of the Ebacc will support all arts subjects, by dismantling a damaging hierarchy in which some subjects are prioritised.</p> <p>However, the inclusion of EBacc subjects within Progress 8 in the interests of providing 'Academic Breadth' continues this harmful narrative that some subjects are more important than others.</p>
<p><b>The curriculum needs to respond to social and technological changes</b></p> <p><i>In a world of rapid technological, environmental and social change, subject-specific knowledge remains the best investment. Being secure in core subjects such as Maths and Science will remain pivotal for young people, now and in the future, as will their understanding of human culture through the humanities, languages, and arts.</i></p> <p><i>However, additional knowledge and skills will be needed if we are to maximise young people's opportunities and equip them to meet challenges presented by our fast-changing world. The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and trends in digital information demand heightened media literacy and critical thinking, as well as digital skills. Likewise, global challenges,</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>It is good to see the importance of humanities, languages and arts recognized as pivotal – with the implication here being that these subjects are equally essential for study alongside the core subjects.</p> <p>The recognition that subject specific knowledge is essential is welcome.</p> <p>The study and practice of Art and Design support learners to meet the challenges of a fast-changing world. Critical thinking, visual literacy and contextual studies are at the heart of our subject, equipping learners to question, analyse, articulate and imagine solutions to global challenges.</p> <p>NSEAD recommends:</p> <p>1) That the re-drafted curriculum for art</p>



<p><i>both social and environmental, require attention to scientific and cultural knowledge and skills.</i></p>	<p>and design makes cultural knowledge and skills explicit, including digital and visual literacy.</p>
<p><b>Assessment</b></p> <p><i>The amount of time that young people spend on exams at Key Stage 4 has become excessive. We reject calls from campaigners to scrap exams at 16. However, time spent on them at GCSE level should be reduced, through a subject-by-subject approach where this can be done without materially affecting reliability and efficacy. We have also made recommendations for improvements to assessment in specific subject areas.</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>Our education system is led by high stakes assessment which dominates and skews curriculum content and approaches to learning. Too much precious learning time is spent preparing students to be good at sitting written exams. This has an impact on our subject, with pupils withdrawn from Art and Design lessons focusing on preparation for written exams.</p> <p>We call for not just a reduction in the time spent examining students, but also an end to the prioritization for exam preparation over learning.</p> <p>NSEAD recommend:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A major review of the present GCSE system and the impact of high stakes assessment on teaching, learning and outcomes.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Towards a world-leading curriculum</b></p>	
<p><b>What is going well and must be maintained</b></p> <p><i>We strongly affirm the value of all the subjects in the national curriculum and basic curriculum. Each plays a vital role in equipping children and young people with the knowledge and skills they need to navigate the world, while engaging and contributing to our society and culture, and pursuing their individual aspirations.</i></p> <p><i>We also value the holistic ethos of Key Stage 1 and broader primary education.</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>This affirmation of value of all subjects must translate to adequate curriculum time, specialist provision (subject specialist training) and fully resourced specialist studios, workshops and classrooms.</p>
<p><b>'High standards' must mean high standards for all</b></p> <p><i>At Key Stage 4, rates of uptake differ across most non-core subjects, depending on factors such as protected characteristics, special educational needs and socio-economic status.</i></p> <p><i>Evidence also shows that disadvantaged young people tend to have less access to</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>We know that both uptake and levels of achievement in art and design vary widely across the country. The regional gap is increasing, as is the gap between those educated in the state versus the independent sector.</p> <p>The gender gap in our subject remains persistent with three times as many girls as boys</p>

<p><i>a broad curriculum, in both primary and secondary.</i></p>	<p>opting for GCSE, a trend that continues at A level and VTQ.</p> <p>We do not have data about uptake amongst SEND learners, or segmentation around ethnic heritage. We do know from the Visualise report that black children growing up in the UK are experiencing a curriculum that is alienating and excluding. Workforce data for the creative industries shows that global majority and disabled creatives are under-represented in the workforce, as are those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.</p> <p>NSEAD recommends:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) That the curriculum is designed to address lack of representation, using the OAK curriculum as exemplification.</li> <li>2) That data is collected to capture the uptake of subjects against a wider range of special characteristics.</li> </ol>
<p><i>Many explanations for the relative lack of progress for socio-economically disadvantaged children and young people and those with SEND lie beyond the curriculum.</i></p> <p><i>However, a well-structured and refreshed curriculum can still make a difference. When the curriculum is designed thoughtfully, it can reduce unnecessary inequities and barriers to learning, provide clarity and coherence for teachers, and better support young people with diverse needs</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>This is a strong statement that recognises that curriculum design is a powerful tool for ensuring that what pupils learn is relevant to their needs, lived experience and aspirations.</p>
<p><b>A commitment to social justice</b></p> <p><i>Although a well-designed curriculum is important for all young people, it is particularly beneficial for those with SEND and those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. They suffer disproportionately when the curriculum is poorly articulated, overloaded, badly organised or depends on experiences outside the classroom.</i></p> <p><i>By ensuring that the volume of content in the national curriculum is appropriate for the teaching time that is available, we aim to give schools sufficient time to consolidate learning, as well as the space</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>It is right for this review to call out some of the factors that exclude too many children from the curriculum. For our subject this is an opportunity to remediate and compensate for the cultural deficit many children experience, when their opportunities to visit museums, galleries and cultural sites are not equitable.</p> <p>The consequence is that those who already have, get better; those that have not, get left behind.</p> <p>A well-designed curriculum should include structured learning beyond the classroom, and engagement with the wealth of digital</p>

<p>to provide the enrichment activities and life skills that prepare young people for life and work</p>	<p>resources that support and augment off-site visits.</p> <p>A lighter curriculum that makes time for enrichment activities, including (vital) off-site visits is welcomed.</p>
<p>Of course, curriculum design is just one step in an inclusive learning experience. Adaptive teaching practices, teachers' expertise, the engagement of parents and carers, the role of support staff and the classroom environment are examples of factors that also contribute to truly inclusive education.</p>	<p>For art and design this means inclusive strategies, with adaptive approaches to use of equipment and materials, as well as tailored resources and content to meet the individual needs and goals of learners.</p> <p>To achieve this teachers, need time, (subject-specific) training and resources, including technician and teaching assistant support.</p>
<p>It is therefore important that specialist, alternative and other education settings retain their freedom to adapt to the national curriculum as appropriate, and that they are supported to be appropriately ambitious for pupils in how they use these freedoms.</p> <p>Therefore, as well as providing principles to support the refreshed drafting of the national curriculum, we make recommendations to foreground the role of wider guidance and exemplification to support practitioners, across all settings, to adapt the national curriculum where required</p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>We agree that the national curriculum should be flexible and adaptable. Art and Design is a concept not content driven subject, and learning goals are divergent – determined by the intentions of the learner – as much as they are convergent.</p> <p>The materials developed by NSEAD members, in partnership with the Oak National Academy, aim to exemplify this principle and have been designed to provide a sound basis for teachers to adapt and tailor to local context and learner needs. The full suite of lessons and resources for Art and Design was completed in October 2025. By mid October, <b>10018 lessons had been downloaded and 46,533 videos watched. These are high quality, popular materials that are meeting the needs of thousands of teachers and learners.</b></p>
<p><b>A curriculum that reflects our society</b></p> <p>The national curriculum is for all our young people. Our diversity and commitment to equality of opportunity and fairness are some of this country's greatest strengths.</p> <p>Throughout the Review we are seeking to deliver a curriculum that reflects the issues and diversities of our society, ensuring all children and young people are represented, whilst also exposing them to a wide range of perspectives that broaden their horizons.</p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>Equity of opportunity for all learners is a central theme in the <a href="#">NSEAD manifesto</a>, we believe that the curriculum is a powerful tool to enable this.</p> <p>In our work to promote anti-racist education and equity through all diversity lenses, NSEAD has worked in partnership with teachers, cultural organisations and researchers to provide evidence of inequity in our subject, and the impact on learners.</p>
<p>The national curriculum already offers teachers scope to create inclusive</p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p>



<p><i>learning experiences by weaving together topics and themes and drawing on case studies and exemplars. Often what is needed is greater exemplification and access to high-quality resources that support this work - including local exemplification that brings the curriculum to life.</i></p>	<p>Our work designing and producing a full Art and Design curriculum for KS1-KS4 has been driven by a commitment to representation. NSEAD created an equities rubric, drawing on the recommendations of the Visualise report, and our own equity checklists to inform and guide this work.</p> <p>NSEAD recommends:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) That the Government continue to support and foreground the good practice developed through the OAK curriculum</li> <li>2) That funding is made available to support teachers to engage with exemplification resources as part of their continuing professional development</li> </ol>
<p><i>Young people have told us that not seeing themselves in the curriculum, or encountering negative portrayals, can be disempowering and demotivating, a point supported by wider evidence. To foster engagement and support positive outcomes, it's important that the curriculum covers a wide range of experiences and representation, as well as promoting our shared values, to build empathy and understanding of others.</i></p> <p><i>Representation must go hand in hand with broadening horizons; it should not mean limiting children and young people to narrow frames of reference based on their background.</i></p> <p><i>Inclusion is also fostered through shared experiences, creating connections and opportunities to explore a wide range of viewpoints. As such, mutual access to core knowledge, and curriculum coherence, efficacy and breadth for all children should remain central as we work to ensure the curriculum is more broadly representative.</i></p> <p><i>With this in mind, we make an overarching recommendation that curriculum reforms should be guided by the principle that they reflect the diversity of our society and the contributions that have shaped it</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>In our subject, learners see themselves in the kind of work that is being made as much as who is making it. Inclusive practice is as important as the range of artist references.</p> <p>We must be mindful of the diversity of discipline within our subject and rebalance what has become a very narrow range of experiences for many learners.</p> <p>NSEAD recommend:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) That the re-drafted curriculum should ensure a balance of practice as well as cultural and artist references.</li> <li>2) The balance and intersection between art, craft and design and the full spectrum of potential practice are clearly articulated.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Preparing learners for a changing world</b></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p>

<p>Global geo-politics and means of communication are also shifting. New media channels are enabling greater connectivity than ever before, whilst amplifying the risks posed by online harms or misinformation.</p> <p>Subject-specific knowledge remains the best investment in preparing young people for these challenges and opportunities: Science and Maths will remain crucial, as will an understanding of communication and culture, through the humanities, languages, and the arts. But the curriculum also needs to adapt to ensure that young people have the requisite knowledge and skills to shape our changing social and physical environment.</p> <p>Five areas have received the most attention from young people, parents and carers, and other stakeholders. These are the applied knowledge areas (frequently referred to as 'life skills')</p> <p>Young people also raised political knowledge frequently</p>	<p>Art and Design develops many of the skills, aptitudes (values) and behaviours that prepare learners for a changing world. The subject equips learners to work with uncertainty. A well-designed curriculum, taught well fosters autonomy, agency and voice.</p>
<p><b>Financial literacy</b></p> <p>At 16-19, we heard positive examples of developing financial literacy as part of the non-qualification activity element of learners' study programmes, including initiatives delivered in collaboration with employers</p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>Live briefs add value to art and design programmes of study, an understanding of costs and revenue can be built in to project-based learning. Vocational courses have industry-based concepts embedded.</p>
<p><b>Digital literacy</b></p> <p>While other subjects should be enriched through the thoughtful use of digital technologies, such as using 3-D modelling in Design and Technology (D&amp;T) and use of geographical information systems in Geography, the foundations must be developed through Computing</p> <p>However, safeguarding young people in a digital world demands clear, consistent, and compulsory coverage across the curriculum.</p> <p>The DFE have recognized the importance</p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>Contemporary Art and Design practice requires learners to engage with digital media. This should be strengthened within the curriculum and should be combined with developing visual literacy and critical thinking.</p> <p>Artificial intelligence (AI) is having a transformative, dual impact on the visual arts, acting as both a powerful creative tool that boosts productivity and an economic disruptor that challenges traditional notions of authorship, compensation, and artistic value.</p> <p>NSEAD recommends:</p>

<p>of Art and Design in developing Digital Literacy:</p> <p><b>We will also support the teaching of a broader range of media, including digital media in line with our broader approach to digital literacy,</b></p>	<p>1) That the re-drafted curriculum has specific requirements to engage with digital media, and for digital and media literacy to be specified as transferable, cross-curricular skills.</p>
<p><b>Media literacy</b></p> <p><i>Building media literacy is crucial to equip children and young people with the necessary tools to critically appraise and engage with media in all its forms.</i></p> <p><i>Some subjects, such as History and Science, already support the development of the critical analysis which underpins media literacy.</i></p> <p><i>To empower young people to engage critically with the messages they encounter through different media channels, the Review recommends that the Government strengthens the role of media literacy in English and Citizenship. We recommend that the nature and expression of emotive language be explored so that students can understand the various ways in which language can be used to persuade, and that GCSE English Language includes analysis of multi-modal and ephemeral text types.</i></p>	<p>It is disappointing that the review has not recognised the importance of critical analysis in Art and Design and the contribution it can make to developing media literacy.</p> <p>Visual literacy is central to our subject, and there are many examples of good practice to draw on as exemplification including <a href="#">ArtUK's Super Power of Looking</a></p>
<p><b>Climate education and sustainability</b></p> <p><i>The climate crisis is already impacting our physical landscape and many connected aspects of our lives. Given the significance of climate change for our society and the planet, it is crucial that young people benefit from an understanding of the climate crisis's causes, consequences and possible solutions and that they are empowered with the necessary knowledge and skills to thrive in tomorrow's industries and tackle the serious challenges facing our planet.</i></p> <p><i>D&amp;T has no focus on sustainability, despite the importance of material choice and renewable supply chains in this subject. Young people have been clear about their desire for a greater focus on this area</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>The review has identified the lack of focus on sustainability in Design &amp; Technology but not Art and Design, where the issue is equally relevant.</p> <p>A <a href="#">UCL survey of teachers</a> about the importance of climate education emphasized the role of all subjects, including Art and Design:</p> <p>'Art and Design is naturally attuned to emphasising learner autonomy and innovation and solving problems through the application of learners' own imagination and agency. Not just problem solvers, but problem identifiers. In addition, the freedom of a curriculum that is concept rather than content-driven provides the opportunity to explore socially engaged</p>

<p>in their education.</p> <p><i>As well as being a common theme in our engagement with young people, polling emphasises their level of concern and significant appetite for further information on climate change and climate science, including their desire to support solutions).</i></p> <p><i>It is important to note that curriculum content is only one part of the issue: pedagogy has an important role in applying an engaging climate lens to existing curriculum content.</i></p>	<p>practice, the meaning of citizenship, and empathy as a design skill. These are all things that create a sound base for the green skills framework.'</p> <p>NSEAD recommends:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) That the re-drafted curriculum specifies green skills and how they are applied in art, craft and design contexts.</li> <li>2) That teachers and learners are supported, through training and tools such as <a href="#">NSEAD's Big Landscape</a> as well as the research and ideas generated by our <a href="#">Special Interest Group</a>, to develop climate informed pedagogies.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Oracy</b></p> <p><i>Evidence suggests that oracy can support active learning, critical thinking, and enhance students' engagement and understanding.</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>Art and Design is a natural vehicle for the development of oracy, with critique, dialogic talk and verbal presentation contributing to learning.</p> <p>There is a wealth of evidence, exemplification and resources to support oracy in Art and Design, including <a href="#">research and programmes</a> developed by the National Gallery, Voice21 and Oracy Cambridge.</p>
<p><b>Curriculum principles</b></p>	
<p><b>An entitlement for children and young people</b></p> <p><i>...statutory schooling is, therefore, an investment, for their benefit and for that of the nation. It should promote their intellectual, social, cultural, spiritual and moral, emotional and physical development. It should be appropriately aspirational, engaging and demanding to reflect the high expectations and excellence our young people deserve.</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>Art and Design embodies the development of intellectual, social, cultural, spiritual and moral, emotional and physical development.</p> <p>NSEAD has called for an aspirational curriculum for our subject that empowers learners.</p>
<p><b>Knowledge-rich</b></p> <p><i>. A knowledge-rich curriculum need not omit or be in opposition to the development of skills. The skills and capabilities that are an inherent and desirable aspect of a rich, broad and balanced curriculum arise from, and are situated within, a knowledge-rich curriculum.</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>This statement provides helpful clarity about the relationship between skills and knowledge.</p> <p>NSEAD defines <a href="#">four knowledge domains</a> for informing learning in our subject:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EXPLICIT – Know What</b> (facts &amp; <a href="#">theory</a>)</li> <li>• <b>TACIT – Know How</b> (<a href="#">experiential learning</a>)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>CONCEPTUAL – Know About</b> (critical &amp; contextual, <a href="#">aesthetics</a>, other cultures)</li><li>• <b>AFFECTIVE – Know Self</b> (self-perception, reflection, metacognition, motivation, feelings &amp; emotions, making meaning)</li></ul>
<p><b>Curriculum depth and mastery of core concepts</b></p> <p><i>Mastery of core concepts is necessary for children and young people to develop a deep understanding of subject disciplines.</i></p> <p><i>A broad and balanced curriculum remains important, and breadth, particularly across subjects, is essential. Within subjects, however, there must be depth, with a volume of content that permits this.</i></p> <p><i>Building deep understanding in a curriculum area requires vertical coherence through all phases, meaning the curriculum is carefully sequenced to build on the content and essential concepts in each phase. The construction of such sequences of learning will vary between subject disciplines: for example, it would look different in subjects that are largely hierarchical in nature to those that are largely cumulative. Crucially, curriculum coherence should be evident in all cases, because a coherent curriculum supports effective progression between key stages, with students building clear connections between what they have previously learned and what they are learning today.</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>It is important to note that in Art and Design mastery is achieved through constantly building upon and developing existing skills and prior experiences. New ideas and techniques are added to a growing repertoire rather than being entirely dependent on mastering a single "threshold concept" before moving on.</p> <p>Learning in art and design is primarily cumulative, though it incorporates some hierarchical elements. It is not strictly one or the other, but rather a blend of both approaches, with cumulative knowledge being the dominant structure</p>
<p><i>It is also important to ensure horizontal coherence in the curriculum. We are committed to the existing subject architecture of the national curriculum. However, better horizontal links could be made across subjects to highlight where content in one area relies on content in another</i></p> <p><i>This is particularly important in areas such as literacy, oracy, numeracy or digital literacy, which have coverage and application across numerous curriculum areas. It is especially relevant in the primary phase, where teachers typically teach the full breadth of the curriculum and where well-aligned, cross-disciplinary content can support effective teaching</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>This nod to cross-curricular working and previous 'big picture' models of curricula structure is welcome. Art and design is frequently seen as an auxiliary to be added on for decorative and presentation purposes when linked to other curriculum areas, particularly where there is a lack of confidence and understanding of the distinct epistemology of the subject.</p> <p>Horizontal coherence is a powerful concept to support meaningful cross-curricular links.</p>



<p>and learning.</p> <p><i>Horizontal coherence in the curriculum provides children and young people with a coordinated and logical arrangement of topics across subjects, as well as within them.</i></p>	
<p><b>Specificity</b></p> <p><i>Specificity and precise language are essential to securing curriculum continuity, curriculum coherence and aiding mastery of concepts The Programmes of Study for some foundation subjects currently lack specificity, which can result in teachers feeling pressured to ‘cover all bases’ or repeat content across years and key stages. We are clear that greater specificity should not mean greater volume of content and should not unnecessarily impede schools’ or teachers’ autonomy. Foundation subjects’ Programmes of Study should be drafted with a minimalist approach to added detail,</i></p> <p><i>Foundation subject content should specify the essential substantive knowledge and skills which should be taught to enable children and young people to meet expectations at the end of each key stage</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>In our response to the call for evidence, NSEAD asked for greater specificity around the breadth of content and competencies relating to craft and design. We agree that greater volume of content is not desirable within the teaching time available, and do not advocate for an ‘inch deep mile wide’ approach.</p> <p>However, it is clear that the curriculum has narrowed as a result of limited time, resources and teacher confidence. The re-drafted curriculum needs to define the scope and potential of the subject whilst retaining sufficient flexibility for teachers to make choices about what is relevant for their learners and local context.</p>
<p><b>Professional autonomy</b></p> <p><i>A rich and well-specified national curriculum supports and empowers teachers’ professional practice. Teachers act as ‘curriculum makers’, interpreting and transforming the content in the national curriculum to ‘author’ instructional events with students in the classroom. At the core of curriculum-making is the process of unpacking and interpreting content to unlock its educational potential.</i></p> <p><i>The refreshed national curriculum should ensure the professional autonomy of teachers is maintained, making sure that greater specificity does not substantially</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>In too many schools teachers have become curriculum operatives, not curriculum makers, delivering centrally determined schemes of work from a prescribed bank of resources.</p> <p>NSEAD welcome the review’s recognition of the crucial importance of protecting and supporting teachers’ professional practice. We are clear that the curriculum sets (some of) the content, but it is the conditions created by the teacher that set the ecology for learning.</p>

<p>restrict teachers' flexibility to choose lesson content and how to teach it.</p>	
<p><b>A curriculum for all</b></p> <p><i>Responses to our Call for Evidence identified opportunities to broaden representation in relation to protected characteristics and socio-economic background across many subjects. In Art and Design, research shows that works by minority ethnic artists are rarely used, despite the subject's potential to reflect Britain's cultural diversity and contributions to the discipline.</i></p> <p><i>Core knowledge and key works that shape a subject must remain central. However, we are clear that diverse contributions to subject disciplines enable a complete, broad and balanced curriculum. This is sometimes more appropriately achieved through teacher selection of content than centralised prescription in the national curriculum and should be supported by high-quality exemplification resources (for example, from Oak National Academy and other providers) and a wider selection of inclusive materials from publishers and exam boards.</i></p> <p><i>We recommend that the Government: Reviews and updates all Programmes of Study - and, where appropriate, the corresponding GCSE Subject Content - to include stronger representation of the diversity that makes up our modern society, allowing more children to see themselves in the curriculum</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>Equity must be at the heart of a national curriculum. The review's strong commitment to Diversity is to be celebrated.</p> <p>The NSEAD-OAK curriculum is a balanced curriculum, drawing on practice from artists, makers and designers across the world, and throughout art historical periods. It aims to redress the balance to ensure that there is an equal balance of representation across human culture and those with protected characteristics.</p> <p>As a resource based on the English national curriculum there is an emphasis on including UK-based contemporary artists working in a wide range of disciplines, with an equal balance between art, craft and design.</p> <p>NSEAD recommend:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) That the Oak curriculum for Art and Design and NSEAD's <a href="#">Curriculum in Action case studies</a> be used as exemplification of how to design a balanced curriculum that champions representation.</li> </ol>
<p><b>The national curriculum as a tool for teachers</b></p>	
<p>We recommend that the Government: Develops the national curriculum as a digital product that can support teachers to navigate content easily and to see and make connections across key stages and disciplines.</p> <p>if teachers can see the horizontal links across subjects as well as the vertical links within them, the benefits are clear. The national curriculum should therefore be an active, navigable, online product that is easy to use for teachers and school</p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>Content navigation, visible links across subjects, concepts, aspects, themes and dimensions enable teachers to design curriculum that is appropriate for their learners and local context.</p> <p>The <a href="#">NSEAD Big Landscape</a> used in conjunction with curriculum planning tools and AI prompts can support teachers to navigate Art and Design and horizontal links to other subjects.</p>

leaders.	
Curriculum recommendations by subject	
<p><b>Art and Design</b></p> <p>At Key Stage 4, the entitlement to study a subject in the arts includes Art and Design. GCSE Art and Design take-up was 26% in 2009/10 and 27% in 2024/25. Technical Award take-up has been 1% since 2015/16. In 2024/25, 93% of state-funded schools had entries in the GCSE qualification and 5% into the Technical Award. Overall, 94% of schools offer Art and Design qualifications.</p> <p>A Level Art and Design entries made up 6% of A Level entries in 2009/10 and 5% in 2023/24.</p> <p>Art and Design remains a popular subject in the national curriculum. We have heard from many art teachers through our Call for Evidence and public engagement that they enjoy teaching art and that they relish the flexibility of the present curriculum across all key stages. In particular, Art and Design continues to thrive at Key Stage 4. The number of students choosing to take GCSE Art and Design remains strong, demonstrating the subject's continued appeal to young people</p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>Whilst the review paints a very positive picture based on the topline entry data, NSEAD has made the case that the data is in fact distorted by the increase in candidates entered for Art and Design endorsed titles in Textiles, 3D Design and Graphic Design. Many of these students are following a Design &amp; Technology curriculum. The upturn in entries for these endorsements coincides with the downturn in entries for GCSE D&amp;T, difficulties in recruiting D&amp;T teachers, and the continuing decline at KS3 of the subject.</p> <p>The decline of D&amp;T has destabilised both subject areas, and any revision of the curriculum that does not strengthen both craft and design education will weaken design education, and we may see a sudden and sharp decline in GCSE entries for Art and Design.</p> <p>NSEAD remain concerned that subject specificity is being lost, and learner choice diminished.</p> <p>NSEAD recommend:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A review of GCSE specifications to ensure that endorsed titles are fulfilling the aims of Art and Design</li> </ol>
<p>To note, whilst GCSE uptake has remained strong, trends for teaching time for Art and Design indicate a slight decline, from 3.5% in 2011/12 to 2.9% in 2024/25. DfE (2025)</p> <p>Art and Design remains a popular subject in the national curriculum.</p>	<p>NSEAD says:</p> <p>The reporting of teaching time is misleading. <a href="#">The same government data</a> shows that teacher numbers and teacher hours for art and design have dropped dramatically compared to other subjects: At KS4 the rate of decline for art and design is more than all other subjects combined: an 11% v 3% decline at KS4 since 2011.</p> <p>Art and Design is a popular subject, but teachers and learners are increasingly concerned about the limited teaching time available. Teachers are asked to do more with less.</p>

<p>However, sector research and responses to our Call for Evidence highlight certain areas where the national curriculum and the GCSE qualification should be strengthened. We therefore recommend some limited revisions are made to the Art and Design curriculum so that this popular subject continues to deliver the knowledge and skills young people require to thrive creatively.</p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>Whilst some of the feedback from NSEAD and other bodies has been taken on board, the analysis of the health of the subject does not address many of the deep-rooted issues that have been raised. The richness and complexity of the subject and our place in the curriculum are not well represented here.</p> <p>We believe that meaningful changes can be made to strengthen the national curriculum within the minimal recommendations of the review. However, the application and articulation of the overarching curriculum principles and applied knowledge areas and how they apply to Art and Design will be critical.</p>
<p>The current Key Stage 1 to 3 Programmes of Study offer flexibility and autonomy, which are valued by many art teachers. However, feedback from our Call for Evidence highlighted challenges with curriculum content. Sector stakeholders asserted that non-specialist teachers, particularly at primary can lack the confidence and training to teach the curriculum effectively, citing the lack of detail in the Programmes of Study as a barrier.</p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>A major barrier for the non-specialist teaching art and design is the fact that it is concept not content driven, and so teachers should have a secure understanding of the essential epistemology of art and design – i.e. how art and design create knowledge, and how that knowledge is acquired, validated, and limited.</p> <p>The Programme of Study should be improved and structures so that this is clearly and accessibly presented, without descending into a tick list of experiences that narrow and overly prescribe learning, as seen in some commercially available lessons/projects.</p>
<p>Ofsted notes the value of building sequential disciplinary, theoretical and practical knowledge in Art and Design through practice, reflection and engagement. However, respondents to the Call for Evidence told us that the current curriculum could do more to articulate how students' practical knowledge and skills should progress throughout their study.</p> <p>The DFE have agreed with the recommendations of the Review.</p> <p><b>...we agree with the Review's proposals to add further clarity to the programmes of study. In doing this, we will exemplify the knowledge and skills that pupils should</b></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>It is important that the balance between hierarchical and cumulative acquisition of knowledge in Art and Design is understood, given the commitment in the Review, and the DFE's response, to deep subject mastery.</p>

<p><b>develop, including through their own creative practice. We will consider how a new programme of study can set clear expectations about the teaching of a broader range of artists and designers.</b></p>	
<p>We also heard calls to include more detail on using alternative media to meet concerns about a narrow focus on drawing and painting in many settings.</p> <p>We therefore recommend that the Key Stage 1 to 3 Programmes of Study are revised to clarify the knowledge and skills that pupils are expected to develop.</p> <p>The DFE has responded:</p> <p><b>We will also support the teaching of a broader range of media, including digital media in line with our broader approach to digital literacy, while maintaining the importance of drawing and painting.</b></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>This was a key point in our submission to the Call for Evidence and representations to the DFE. Clarity without prescription is possible, but the focus needs to be on key concepts and principles rather than a list of prescribed experiences.</p> <p>NSEAD has set definitions of four Knowledge domains in Art and Design. The role of perception, emotion, and experience in knowing and how they relate to Art and Design practice and experience should be at the heart of the revised Programme of Study.</p> <p>NSEAD recommend:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) That the revised Programme of Study draws upon the '<a href="#">What</a>' questions set out in NSEAD's Big Landscape.</li> <li>2) That the opportunities to address broader curriculum principles such as climate and sustainability education are explicitly referenced in Art and Design.</li> <li>3) That exemplification such as the Oak curriculum resources signpost the way that broader curriculum aspects can be woven into local curriculum design,</li> </ol>
<p><i>Any revisions should be relatively minimal, retaining the aims of the current Art and Design curriculum and maintaining its focus on creativity. The overall volume of content should not increase, and revisions should add specificity about how to develop knowledge and skills in a sequenced and meaningful way.</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>Minimal revisions should nonetheless be profound, addressing the fundamental weaknesses that are undermining the quality and quantity of learning in many schools.</p>
<p><i>GCSE Art and Design is wholly practically assessed, with 60% of the grade based on coursework, and 40% on the production of one or more 'artefacts' during a 10-hour timed period in exam conditions. However, concerns were raised about a lack of clarity around the expected volume of work in a high-stakes context. This has created a perception that, to achieve higher grades, students are</i></p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>Whilst firmer direction and clarity about the volume of work that should be submitted as part of the final assessment portfolio will be helpful for some centres, it is also important to recognise that many teachers feel that the amount of teaching time available is a key issue. Where pupils are being asked to produce work to 'bulk out' portfolios, and does</p>



*expected to generate types or volumes of coursework that are not strictly required by awarding organisations, resulting in significant workload for them, much of it undertaken outside classroom time. In particular, it was felt that expectations around products such as sketchbooks were unclear, especially regarding how much time students should spend creating them and what quantity of work should be represented. We therefore recommend that the volume and range of work required at GCSE are clarified to support teachers to use teaching time more effectively and to ensure that students' workload is proportionate*

The DfE has agreed:

*We also agree with the Review's conclusion that the art and design GCSE is generally working well but that improvements need to be made to the volume of assessment. **We will consider, working with Ofqual, how we can clarify and streamline the range and volume of work pupils need to produce for their non-examined and final assessment, while maintaining high expectations on standards of work.***

We recommend that the Government:  
Makes limited revisions to the Key Stage 1 to 3 Art and Design Programmes of Study to clarify and exemplify the knowledge and skills pupils should develop, including through their own creative practice, reflection and critical engagement.

Works with Ofqual and awarding organisations to clarify the volume and range of coursework students are expected to produce for GCSE Art and Design

not enhance their skills, knowledge and understanding greater clarity about assessment requirements will help.

Teachers are being asked to do more, and achieve more, with less time in the classroom. In other words, GCSE candidate numbers have remained static, but according to DfE data, at key stage 4, in the same period, the number of teaching hours has reduced, and reduced more than other subjects combined.

However, pupils are not feeling overwhelmed merely by the volume of work that needs to be submitted for final assessment, but by the hours of practice required to achieve ever higher standards, and this not being available within the confines of the taught curriculum.

The volume of content is related to practice and cumulative knowledge and is related to the standards that pupils achieve.

NSEAD recommend:

- 1) Clarification and streamlining should include revisiting what should be required from a general qualification.
- 2) The Assessment objectives and endorsed titles should be reviewed to ensure that they are not going beyond the parameters of a general qualification.

NSEAD say:

This basic (minimal) recommendation provides the scope for those drafting the curriculum to make meaningful changes, guided by broader curriculum principles and aspects considered elsewhere in the report.

## Key Stage 4 Technical Awards

To ensure that all learners at level 3 have high-quality opportunities, the Review recommends that a third, vocational, 16-

NSEAD say:

The division between academic, technical

19 pathway is introduced alongside technical (T Levels) and academic (A Levels) pathways.	and vocational study in art and design is not clear cut. Whilst existing qualifications may focus more on applied practice and specific disciplinary knowledge, pupils in fact move between all three modes. Vocational and technical learning is informed by theoretical knowledge, critical thinking, and general skills.
---	---

Accountability, performance measures and assessment.

<p>Evidence suggests that studying a portfolio of academic subjects aids access to A Levels and to university and that achieving the EBacc correlates with a student applying to and attending university</p> <p>Responses to the Call for Evidence argued that the EBacc measures have served to unnecessarily constrain subject choice for some students (and, consequently, have affected students' engagement, their achievement or both). For those that take the EBacc combination, it has resulted in little choice about what subjects they study at Key Stage 4.</p> <p>–We think that this represents a desirable balance between breadth and choice, securing both the academic core that is so important for young people's life chances but also the flexibility they need to support and reflect their diverse interests and desired pathways.</p> <p>We recommend that the Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Removes the EBacc performance measure and the associated EBacc entry and attainment headline accountability measures.</li> <li>Retains Progress 8 (and Attainment 8) with no changes to its structure or subject composition but renames the current EBacc bucket to 'Academic Breadth' bucket.</li> </ul>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>It is a pity that the Review persists in this narrow and unhelpful definition of academic. In the 2023 Research Review Ofsted describe Art and design as follows:</p> <p>'a subject studied in school, art includes a range of practices, as well as theoretical and philosophical ideas and interests. The building blocks of the subject enable pupils to see, to know and to experience art. Pupils learn how to view, discuss and make art in its multifaceted, complex and contested forms.'</p> <p>We are concerned that the language used in the Review, in this section, reinforces the existing hierarchy of subject. By fixating on a narrowly defined academic core and so called 'academic breadth' there is only the illusion of choice, and the hierarchy of subjects entrenched by the EBacc remains.</p>
---	---

Method of assessment

<p>Generative artificial intelligence (AI) has further heightened concerns around the authenticity of some forms of non-exam assessment, making it increasingly difficult to ensure that submitted work is the student's own. It is right, therefore, that</p>	<p>NSEAD say:</p> <p>One of the strengths of GCSE Art and Design assessment is that the work produced for both Non-Examined Assessment components is authentic to the subject discipline and allows teachers to determine whether the submitted</p>
--	---

<p>exams remain the principal form of assessment.</p> <p>GCSEs include content which is authentic to subject disciplines, such as performance or creation of outputs, and which is vital for progression. Decisions on assessment methods for each qualification are based on the nature and structure of its subject content, some of which cannot be validly assessed through written exams alone.</p>	<p>work is the student's own.</p> <p>Whilst AI may present challenges, authenticity of work submitted should not be one where 100% teacher assessment is in place. The production of portfolio and responses to externally set assignments take place in real time, in the classroom and beyond, with a level of supervision that enables the teacher to verify the authenticity of work submitted.</p> <p>We believe that the current (and long established) method of assessment for Art and Design serves pupils and standards of learning and attainment in our subject well.</p>
--	---

End