



National Society for Education in Art & Design

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Mr Gavin Williamson MP
Secretary of State for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

26 July 2021

Dear Gavin Williamson MP,

I am writing on behalf of members of The National Society of Education in Art and Design (NSEAD). We represent art, craft and design educators from all nations, sectors and phases. Our members are united in the belief and knowledge that the recently confirmed cuts to higher education arts courses are unsustainable and will have immediate and damaging impact on art, craft and design higher education provision, on standards and the creative industries talent pipeline.

Despite the recent large-scale campaign and opposition to the funding cuts to higher education arts courses, the Office for Students (OfS) have confirmed that the cuts are to go ahead. The cuts, which equate to a 50 percent reduction in subsidies per student, are deeply disappointing. The potential impact of the cuts on courses has been described as dangerous and even catastrophic.

Confirming the decrease, the OfS wrote: 'For subjects where reductions are to be applied, this subsidy will be reduced from £243 per full-time student per year (in 2020-21) to £121.50.' Whilst the OfS have sought to justify the cuts by saying the reduction is one percent of course fees and OfS funding combined, it is a shortfall no less, and what is more, it is a cut targeted only at arts courses. Our members have explained what the cuts in real terms will mean: When a university has on average 8500 arts students they will immediately receive 1 million less in funding. We ask how will this short fall be paid for? If students are not asked to carry the financial hole you are creating, the cuts will immediately impact on art, craft and design provision and long-term on standards.

We also want to draw your attention to another section of our community who will be impacted by the arts funding cuts – that is the creative industries. If we needed any further evidence of this, the day after the OfS's announcement, the Creative UK Group published a key new report: *The UK Creative Industries: unleashing the power and potential of creativity*. In this impressive report, the Creative UK Group called for post-pandemic investment into 'Creative skills'. Furthermore, it is bewildering, that two Secretaries of State might write the foreword for this timely report and describe in detail the key economic successes of

creative industries. The Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP CBE, Secretary of State for Department for Culture Media and Sport and The Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, wrote:

‘Our world-class Creative Industries are one of the UK’s greatest success stories. Dynamic, groundbreaking and with a truly global reach, they increasingly drive our economy – with employment having grown at roughly three times the national average over the past decade.’

The Creative UK Group leave us in no doubt that the creative industries have been hit hard by the pandemic, and also in no doubt that investment in skills and education that feeds and support the creative industries is needed, especially now.

So, when in your letter to the OfS confirming the cuts, you wrote that the savings would be used to increase grant funding for ‘key courses’ and, for ‘priorities that have emerged in the light of the Coronavirus pandemic’ we were deeply disappointed. Both higher education arts courses and the creative industries are two jewels in the UK’s economic crown. If the government wishes to support economic growth, as set out in *Build Back Better: our plan for growth* then now is time to support the talent and skills pipeline. The arts-only cuts, rolled out and to support so-called ‘key courses’ are not only divisive but long-term we will be economically and culturally poorer.

Finally, in May 2021 we were one of 300 signatories to the letter and campaign organised by CVAN (supported by CHEAD and NSEAD) that opposed the cuts and asked you to reconsider your funding proposals. Once again, we ask: How can you justify the funding cuts of the UK’s world-renowned higher education arts courses? We ask you again to please reconsider the 50 percent reduction. We believe that the cuts will impact on standards and students, and that it will only be a matter of time before the cracks in the talent pipeline are laid bare. Our subject, our professional community and the creative industries need your support. On behalf of all students studying arts courses and all arts educators and professionals, please do not cut the arts – instead, please help us now to rebuild them.

Yours sincerely,



Liz Macfarlane
President, NSEAD

cc. The Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP CBE, Secretary of State for Department for Culture Media and Sport

The Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy