



**National Society for Education in Art & Design**  
3 Mason's Wharf, Corsham, SN13 9FY United Kingdom  
Tel: 01225 810134 [www.nsead.org](http://www.nsead.org)

General Secretary: Michele Gregson  
Patrons: Keith Brymer Jones; Professor Sir Christopher Frayling MA PhD.  
Dame Magdalene Odundo; Cornelia Parker CBE RA; Dr Janina Ramirez.  
Sir Nicholas Serota; Lady Frances Sorrell; Sir John Sorrell; Bob and Roberta Smith OBE RA

Email to [Sec-OF-STATE.PS@education.gov.uk](mailto:Sec-OF-STATE.PS@education.gov.uk)

The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP  
Secretary of State for Education  
Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT

2 February 2024

Dear Gillian,

I am writing to you at the request of a large group of NSEAD members who are amongst the 2023 cohort of Art and Design PGCE trainee teachers. They have asked me to raise with you some of the issues they face, personally and collectively, as they undertake their teacher training. They have asked me to share the following statement with you:

*Dear Secretary of State,*

*You will be aware that the entire secondary teaching sector faces huge issues of staff recruitment and retention, and we want to draw your attention to how we, as a group of teachers in training, already feel undervalued. We feel this is the right time to write this letter to you after the announcement of the £10,000 bursary for Art and Design for the PGCE cohort 2024. We are of course pleased that the bursary is in place and the DfE (Department for Education) is supporting*

*the next generation of Art and Design teachers, but we genuinely feel overlooked and undervalued as a cohort.*

*We are asking for immediate action to support us during these tough economic times. We are asking that you recognise the difficulty of our situation and take action to support us. We understand that bursaries cannot be assigned to us retrospectively, and so instead ask that the DfE pay for the cost of our course and any interest accumulated so far. We believe this would be a correct and fair decision and one that would put us on a par with those training to teach in different curriculum areas. This will make us feel valued and allow us to approach teaching without being in a deficit position.*

*As trainees of the September 2023 cohort, we face not just a cost-of-living crisis and fees of £9,250, but also significant changes to our student debt repayments as we are the first cohort on the new Plan 5. This new student loan plan is currently tied an interest rate of 7.3% a number that is significantly higher than previous years due to wider economic issues and which is also subject to an additional 10 years of repayments compared to previous loan plans. We are asking that you to act today to support us during our PGCE and the start of our early teaching careers.*

*Your own department's data shows that the number of teacher vacancies for art and design rose this academic year to the highest level recorded since 2011, and the reported 'Rate of vacancies' in art and design rose from 0.4 in 2021/22 to 0.7 in 2022/23. The latest data published by your department from the initial teacher training census, reveals that the largest decreases in reported performance against PGITT targets between the 2022/23 and 2023/24 training years, have been seen for Art and Design (44% of target recruited in 2023/24 compared to 88% in 2022/23).*

*We believe that you should be concerned that recruitment for our cohort had plummeted to such levels, and we urge you to consider the low morale of those who are training this year. We are facing a massive shortfall of subject specialist teachers entering the profession, with a cohort who are highly disillusioned before they begin.*

*On the 13th of November 2023, TeacherTapp reported to the Education Select Committee some worrying statistics from their most recent surveys. They found:*

*'When asked if they would leave teaching if they could find another job on the same salary, 61% agreed and 25% strongly. In 2019 it was only 50% and 15% strongly.*

*'When asked if they could go back to the start of their careers, would they still train in their chosen jobs, back in 2018 the proportion of teachers saying "certainly, yes" was already low at 42% but has now dropped in 2023 to just 23%.'*

*TeacherTapp reports that there appears to have been a distinct change in attitude since before the pandemic which is likely to affect retention and may also affect recruitment. Only 59% said they expect to be a teacher in three years' time. This percentage is down from a stable figure of around 75% before the pandemic.*

*These numbers paint a bleak picture and one we are all too aware of as we continue with our PGCE training. We all have a real love and enthusiasm for our subject and strongly believe in the important work that teachers do for individuals and communities. It is for these reasons that despite the daunting numbers repeatedly highlighted to us, we have decided to undertake the huge task and responsibility of training to be the next generation of teachers.*

*We are sure that these stark figures are the driving factor behind your department's decision to provide a 10k bursary for trainee teachers in Art and Design for 2024/2025. We are of course pleased by and welcome this decision; however, we are left to question – what about us? If the crisis is so deep surely, we should also be supported by the government in our decision to become teachers.*

*We understand that what we are asking would be an unprecedented action, but we strongly believe that the current crisis in our specialised subject and more broadly across the sector, plus the cost-of-living crisis and change to the student loan, give us no option. Some of us are with regret already looking at options outside the teaching profession before we have really started our careers.*

*We thank you for reading our statement and hope that our request will be granted in order to restore our faith in the choices we have made as we continue our PGCE journey.*

I am sure that you will agree that this is a heartfelt, well-informed statement of the very acute situation that these aspiring teachers find themselves in. We all should be alarmed to hear of such levels of disillusion and low morale from teachers who are still in training. This poses a very real threat to the future development of our creative industries workforce. I would draw your attention to the recent National Statistics Economic Estimates: Employment in the DCMS sectors, January 2022 to December 2022 which reported a drop of 37% in the Cultural Education workforce to 33,000 workers in 2022. Data published in December 2023 (National statistics Economic Estimates: Employment in DCMS sectors and digital sector, July 2022 to June 2023) shows a slight recovery to 37,000, but nowhere near the 53,000 Cultural Education workers we had in 2019. We can grow our creative sector workforce unless we invest in education from the earliest stages. If we do not invest in our subject-specialist teachers, we will continue to lose them, and the education pipeline will not meet the needs of the sector.

The Sector Vision unveiled by the Government last year certainly recognises the need to nurture creative talent, and nods to it with the proposed Cultural Education Plan. However, I urge you to listen to the voice of this cohort of trainee teachers and take steps to address the deep hardship and systemic issues that they identify.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michele Gregson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michele Gregson,

General Secretary National Society of Education in Art and Design Education