



**NSEAD Response to The Draft Statutory Guidance: A Guide to Curriculum for Wales 2022, and The Draft Statutory Guidance for the Expressive Arts Area of Learning Experience: Assessment Proposals to inform the development of statutory guidance.**

NSEAD welcome the thorough process of inclusive consultation of all stakeholders with which the Welsh Government have approached the development of the curriculum.

In relation to the **Draft Statutory Guidance A guide to Curriculum for Wales 2022**, we broadly support the intention, ambition and aspiration and of the curriculum, specifically the four purposes which are admirable in their content and purpose. There is strong parallel with the KS3 National Curriculum for England and the Rose Review introduced under the 2007-08 Balls reforms. The underpinning aims to develop successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens have been amplified in the Curriculum for Wales. A fourth purpose, 'enterprising and creative contributors' is a highly relevant development.

The inclusion of Expressive Arts as one of the six areas of learning and experience is a positive move that gives much needed recognition to Art, Design and other creative subjects. This reflects the key role creative industries have to play in the future prosperity of nation and country, and is both timely and future facing.

The adoption of a "holistic curriculum" that integrates elements of all subjects in interdisciplinary curricula is a radical move that builds on best practice in the sector, but is being radically different from what preceded it. Given this there is concern about proposals for implementation in institutions at locally lead level, with what currently seems to be few guidelines, exemplars or frameworks for development.

In particular we have concern placing "Decisions as to how these should translate into day-to-day activities should take place in settings and schools" may lead to the marginalising of AoLEs such as Expressive Arts. As stated "It is proposed that a duty is placed on schools to provide a curriculum".

Without further guidance as to the proportion of time or effort to be allocated this may lead to an imbalance in coverage of progression steps straying from the deep learning that is so obviously the aim here. Likewise the intention to "assist teacher agency..... to enjoy autonomy to make school-level decisions within a common framework" will need more explicit guidance. In reality primary schools in particular, may feel ill equipped to develop their own curricula. This was also the aspiration set out in the 2012 Gove reforms to the English curriculum. In practice, many schools resorted to 'off the shelf' commercial

curriculum packages. The amount of work involved here for schools should not be underestimated, and should be supported and scaffolded centrally to enable success.

We would suggest that further work spreading the excellent best practice of Pioneer Schools, the provision of more detailed frameworks and guidelines that set baseline standard of level and depth in practice, would provide a more robust and secure basis for quality provision. Such guidance could stress the need for schools to establish themes and subjects suited to their needs allowing for local flavour and innovation, and monitored through the proposed consortia or inspection if needed.

We find the **Draft Statutory Guidance for the Expressive Arts Area of Learning Experience** including “What Matters” statements for “Learning”, and “Experience Knowledge and Skills,” and associated progression steps to be well considered, comprehensive and wide-ranging.

In relation to the subject of art and design the scope, the breadth and depth of the Progression Steps and attendant, “need to know”, “need to able to” “need to experience” and “achievement outcomes” statements provide a solid basis to enable the progressive gaining of intellectual, cognitive and practical skill required at each stage.

Taken in the context three cross curricula responsibilities and six AoLEs however, there is concern that the sheer number of statements and their associated demands in their totality may be too many to be reasonably covered, even within a holistic integrated curriculum delivery.

While stressing the need to maintain parity for Expressive Arts in the curriculum we suggest that some might reasonably mapped and integrated against cross curricula responsibilities and other AoLEs to create a more achievable whole.

NSEAD notes the core aim of delivery through and interdisciplinary and integrated approaches. From a standing start, with the current guidance and support, the burden on schools to design curricula, develop sufficiently robust resources and deliver to the standard required should not be underestimated. As previously stated central guidance and support can and should be provided to ensure required standards.

Likewise the assertion that “All the disciplines can be taught within one lesson by one person” given the breadth of the expressive arts AoLE is ambitious particularly as the demands of progression steps increase. This would require a recalibrating of ITE provision, and we would suggest CPD for current staff. This will present a major challenge for both teaching staff and senior management responsible for staffing and timetabling.

In relation to the **Assessment Proposals to inform the development of statutory guidance**, while we are again broadly supportive, we would highlight a number of areas of clarification. This may be due to the lack of the statutory guidance to be published in January 2020, so please take these comments in the supportive manner in which they are intended.

The shift to include a greater emphasis on formative assessment is welcomed, as it mirrors current best practice in art and design education, and captures the process and experimentation elements so key to our discipline.

The intention for “schools to plan assessment appropriately to support their curricula at local level.” seems to suggest that they will need to establish their own assessment criteria, grading and marking systems independently at each progression step.

While we applaud the intention to give agency to staff and encourage creative and responsive curricula and teaching, as with the AoLEs, if this is the case the amount of work this creates for school should not be underestimated. The default for some schools may well be to modify GCSE criteria and apply them to KS3 programmes of study, effectively creating a five year KS4 programme – as seen in many English schools following the 2012 Gove reforms.

Additionally, in its’ current form there is concern that the intention for assessment methods and structures to be locally defined will still need to support common understandings of level and achievement which lead to shared qualifications at 16. Even within current arrangements and frameworks for examination and inspection standards are difficult to establish and maintain, so any guidance issued should take account of this.

Support through exemplars, focused CPD and standard setting and monitoring consortia could all be methods of facilitating creative, diverse solutions to these, but with a shared understanding and application of standards at their core. We look forward to the “Assessment arrangements ... set out in subordinate legislation” to define these.

### **Conclusions:**

The Welsh Government should be applauded for an ambitious, visionary and far reaching review of the 3 – 16 curriculum. The resulting documentation and open consultation of a wide range of stakeholders is welcomed.

The interests of children, and their entitlement to ‘lead fulfilling personal, civic and professional lives’ – not just in the future, but in their experience of education – are central to this curriculum. It is heartening to see acknowledgement of our nation state responsibilities under the UN Convention on the Rights of the child...

However, the ambition of this curriculum needs to be matched with the resources to ensure that ambition is achieved. We have concerns over the burden that each school faces in implementing the curriculum within the guidelines given, but in a bespoke manner for each school of setting. Likewise a consistent standard needs to be established and maintained.

We would suggest that to be effective this will require more widespread support in the form of CPD, exemplars and co-creation of resources, building on the excellent work of Pioneer Schools.

We have similar concerns over the proposals regarding assessment, specifically the work involved for schools in the local origination of assessment processes, methods and

standards. Subject associations are well placed to support this work and the NSEAD would seek to do so.

We would again suggest that the establishing, creation and dissemination of co-created exemplars building on current work be and would ask that the forthcoming legislation recognise this.

The NSEAD looks forward to considering future documentation and offers any support it can give to the Welsh Government in taking forward and implementing this innovative and challenging programme.

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