

# Curriculum Review Call for Evidence

## Submission from the Creative Education Coalition

**Which 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?**

**Which aspects should be targeted for improvement?**

- Creative subjects are not mandatory beyond Key Stage 3, leading to blocked pathways and limited progression opportunities.
- Lack of investment and resources in creative education, even within mandatory education, is a significant issue
- There's no progression in creative subjects if a child doesn't benefit from the funding to provide optional creative subjects.
  1. Students are also limited geographically – particularly with creative T levels, placement opportunities are limited or even non-existent depending on where a student is in the country.
- Teacher recruitment and supply are also problematic, affecting the quality and breadth of creative education.

### **Proposed improvements:**

- Making creative education a core subject up to the end of mandatory schooling.
- The Industrial Strategy and the development of Skills England has recognised creative skills and the creative industries as vitally important to the economy and workforce. This emphasis needs to be reflected in the valuing and funding of creative subjects at school and should be represented in the **core** curriculum from primary school onwards.
- The importance of visual literacy should be emphasised alongside oracy and numeracy.
- Creative education develops valuable creative skills which are relevant to various careers. Creative skills should therefore be formally assessed alongside things like numeracy and literacy.
- Increasing investment in creative education and providing more opportunities for enrichment activities and industry collaborations.
- Addressing the skills gaps among teachers to better assess creativity and imagination.

- Ensuring clear progression pathways in creative education to support continuous learning and development.
  1. Progression pathways between levels of creative education don't have a clear connection. Improve career advice and guidance.
- Understanding where extra-curricular creative opportunities fit in the system. Only small numbers of children are able to access them, but they could be targeted in areas of greater disadvantage to plug gaps in opportunity.
  1. Consider creating opportunities for young people to be formally **assessed** in creative subjects outside of school.

**In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, are there any barriers to improving attainment, progress, access or participation:**

- **For learners experiencing socio-economic disadvantage**
- **Which may be disproportionately impacting pupils based on other protected characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity)**
- **For learners with SEND?**

- **Socioeconomic Disadvantage:** Placement requirements for T levels in craft and design can be challenging for students facing geographic or support barriers.
- **Funding Cuts:** Reduced budgets in the arts and cultural sector limit their funding for access initiatives for children with additional needs, affecting their engagement and participation.
- **Resource Inequity:** Schools often lack the resources to support creative subjects, leading to disparities in access and participation, especially for students from less privileged backgrounds.
- **Portfolio Development:** Addressing the advantage that privileged backgrounds can have in developing portfolios for art and music, ensuring state schools have the resources to support all students equally.

**Impact on Specific Groups:**

- **Funding Cuts:** Reduced budgets in the arts and cultural sector limit their funding for access initiatives for children with additional needs, affecting their engagement and participation.
- **Protected Characteristics:** Disadvantaged groups face multiple barriers, including limited access to extracurricular activities and creative opportunities.

## Are there any enablers?

- Extracurricular and Alternative Pathways:
  - **Extracurricular Opportunities:** Increasing access to creative clubs and venues to improve skills outside the standard curriculum, to plug gaps.
    1. There also needs to be a connection between the work done in clubs and industry outreach projects, and with the skills being taught in the curriculum. Ideally, there should be equity for all students, regardless of the availability of cultural and creative opportunities outside of school.
    2. There's a risk that clubs/extra-curricular opportunities will miss out the students who don't know how or can't access them i.e. due to regional disparities in the provision of cultural centres and resources.
      1. In order to plug gaps in the short-term, extra-curricular teaching and skills development could be offered online to bypass regional differences in provision and opportunity.
        1. Similar to how the Craft Council delivers their teaching.
      2. There are further difficulties in communicating that these offers exist and have Arts Council funding to deliver training and resources.
        1. There needs to be greater join-up between the Department for Education and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, to ensure all opportunities and resources are clearly communicated across the country.
  - **National Saturday Clubs:** These clubs are expanding and reaching more disadvantaged students, providing valuable creative opportunities outside of school.

## Proposed Solutions:

- **Balanced Curriculum:** Ensuring creative subjects are valued equally alongside academic ones.
- **Promoting Creative Careers:** Highlighting the value and opportunities in creative industries to encourage student engagement.
- **Teacher Training and Resources:** Investing in teacher training for specialist arts teachers, and resources to enhance the quality of creative education.
- **Assessment Flexibility:** Adapting assessment methods to support diverse learning styles and needs, particularly for students with dyslexia or other learning differences.
- **More join-up** between DCMS and DfE, so that opportunities within the cultural sector can be communicated to schools and education providers.

- Increase knowledge of extracurricular and government-run arts initiatives for gaining creative skills within schools – so schools and students are aware of all the opportunities available to them.

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

**In which ways do the current primary and secondary curriculums, and qualification pathways at 16-19, support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for life, further/future study and work, and what could we change to better support this?**

- **Breadth of Curriculum:** Emphasizing the importance of allowing students to study creative education throughout their schooling all the way up to Key Stage 4 to develop a wide range of skills.
- **Skill Identification and Articulation:** Ensuring students can identify and articulate the skills they gain from creative education for applications in the job market.
- **Hands-On Experience:** Advocating for more practical, hands-on learning experiences to complement theoretical knowledge – ensuring the learning styles are suited to different learning needs.
- **Real-World Scenarios:** Incorporating real-world projects and experiences to make learning more relevant and engaging.

**How can we improve learners' understanding of how the different programmes and qualifications on offer will prepare them for university, employment and/or further technical study?**

- **Are there additional skills, subjects, or experiences that all learners should develop or study during 16-19 education, to support them to be prepared for life and work?**

**Proposed Changes for Better Support:**

- **Wider Breadth of Study:** Encouraging students to take a broader range of subjects, including creative education, alongside their main qualifications (e.g., A levels, BTECs, T levels).
  - **For example, students can be adept at engineering or robotics without having a high maths grade.** These skills can be assessed in creative subjects

- **Functional Skills:** Integrating functional skills, such as maths, into the curriculum to ensure students are well-rounded and prepared for various career paths.
  - Integrate learning how to use essential design software (like Canva/photoshop etc) into the curriculum if you're studying creative subjects, in the same way that students learn how to use Microsoft suite (Powerpoint, Excel etc) – developing future skills by teaching students about emerging technologies from the outset.
  - Integrate the link-up with employers and industry into this approach – as these are the experts in using these pieces of software.
- **Inclusive Content and Representation:** Ensuring that learning materials and content are diverse and representative of different backgrounds and disciplines.
- **Teacher Training:** Investing in teacher training to better support the teaching of creative subjects and emerging disciplines, such as digital creativity.
- **Careers Guidance:** Providing better guidance on how creative education links to careers, including business and entrepreneurship skills.
- **Assessment Flexibility:** Developing assessment methods that recognize a broader range of skills and learning styles, particularly for creative subjects.

### Connecting Creative education to industry:

- **Portfolio Development:** Highlighting the importance of portfolios in creative education and ensuring all students have the opportunity to develop them.
- **Industry Links:** Strengthening connections between education and industry to provide students with relevant skills and experiences.

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

#### Current state of Creative Education:

- **Limited Support:** The current curriculum does not adequately ensure the development of creative skills. Creative education has been squeezed out and under-resourced.
- **Specialized Teaching:** There is a lack of specialized teachers for creative subjects, leading to disengagement among students.

- **Integration with Other Subjects:** Creative subjects like music and dance are often used to teach other subjects (particularly in primary education), rather than being taught as disciplines in their own right.
- **Devaluation of Creative Education:** Successive governments have devalued creative education and shared very negative rhetoric around it, leading to a decline in its uptake, especially among socioeconomically disadvantaged students.
  1. Part of this concern comes from feeling a good living can't be made from a creative career, particularly if a student doesn't have a financial safety net to fall back on.
- **Focus on STEM:** There is a strong emphasis on STEM subjects, driven by the belief that they offer better job prospects and higher earnings.
  1. Partly because of the culture that the E-Baccalaureate and Progress 8 have engendered in schools – and simply changing the EBacc will not magically mean creative subjects are valued equally. A new system needs to be considered for this to happen.
- **Funding cuts:** Budget cuts have disproportionately affected creative subjects, reducing their availability and quality in schools.

### **Proposed solutions:**

- **Revaluing Creative Education:** Efforts are needed to revalue arts education among school leaders and within the broader educational culture.
- **Policy Changes:** Suggestions include adding creativity as a **core pillar** in the curriculum, similar to subjects in the EBacc framework.
  1. **Sense that the government ought to re-evaluate** the structure of the EBacc: are the five pillars in the EBacc the right basis for future growth and what we want to deliver for young people?
- **Teacher Training:** Enhancing teacher training to ensure educators are well-equipped to teach creative subjects effectively. Recruitment and training of specialist arts teachers will be essential within this.
- **Investment in resources:** Increasing funding and resources for creative subjects to ensure they are adequately supported and accessible to all students.
- Re-framing of the vital importance of funding of creative education – if the government wish to focus on the expansion of the creative industries over the next 5 years, where will the workforce and talent pipeline come from to make this happen?

## **Are there particular GCSE subjects where changes could be made to the qualification content and/or assessment that would be beneficial for pupils' learning?**

- **Incorporating creativity:** There is a need to integrate more creativity and creative skills into various GCSE subjects to enhance learning and engagement.
- **Assessment flexibility:** Considering alternative assessment methods that cater to different learning styles, rather than relying solely on traditional exams.

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

- **Binary Outcomes:** The current system often results in a binary outcome where students either excel or fail, with little middle ground. This can be particularly detrimental to students who do not perform well in traditional exams.
- **Impact on Learning Styles:** The system does not adequately accommodate different learning styles, leading to some students being unfairly disadvantaged.
- **Socioeconomic Factors:** Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may struggle more within the current system, exacerbating existing inequalities.

## **How well does the current accountability system support and recognise progress for all pupils and learners?**

### **What works well and what could be improved?**

- **Alternative Qualifications:** Introducing other qualifications or pathways to ensure all students can demonstrate their abilities and progress, even if they do not excel in traditional exams.
- **Support for Diverse Learners:** Developing assessment methods that recognize and support diverse learning styles and needs.
- **Reducing High-Stakes Pressure:** Creating a more balanced system that does not solely rely on high-stakes exams to determine a student's future opportunities.

## Final thoughts

### DfE data and framing:

- The Department for Education (DfE) published data suggesting that art GCSEs are still popular, with only small drops in music and drama, and a significant drop in Design and Technology (D&T).
- There is a need to frame the argument to highlight ongoing issues despite the data, emphasizing the importance of creative subjects and the challenges they face.

### Assessment and Accountability:

- Concerns were raised about the binary nature of the current assessment system, which can unfairly disadvantage students who do not perform well in traditional exams.
- There is a need for alternative qualifications and assessment methods to ensure all students can demonstrate their abilities and progress.
- Also a concern that the way certain GCSEs are assessed is influencing the decision of students on which options to take – depending on how long it's going to take them to get their coursework and homework done.

### Reports:

#### [Creative Education Manifesto](#)

##### On diversity and inclusion

['Visualise: race and inclusion in secondary school art education', Freelands Foundation and Runnymede, 2024](#)

##### On Future Skills

[Future Skills The Kingson Approach, Kingston University, 2023.](#)