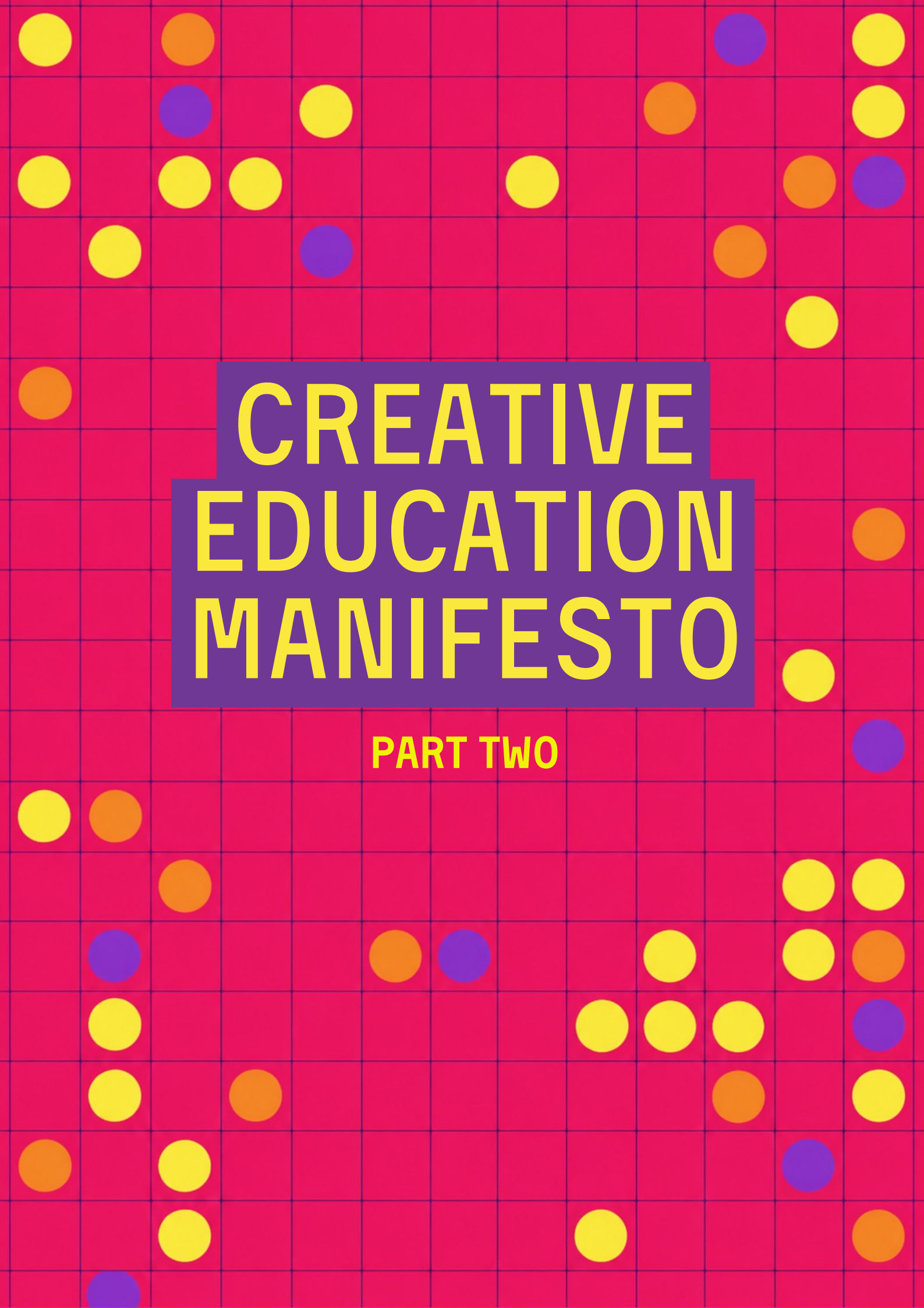




CREATIVE EDUCATION MANIFESTO

PART TWO

Building Britain's creative future

Growing Talent. Strengthening Places. Powering Creativity.

Foreword

In 2023, organisations from across higher education, education and the creative arts found themselves repeatedly having the same conversations: about creative subjects being squeezed from the education system by government cuts; about a curriculum which over-prioritised STEM subjects; and about the slowly eroding talent pipeline into the creative industries.

Whilst the UK's creative industries thrived and continued to be one of the country's greatest economic and cultural strengths, the educational pathways that nurtured future creative talent were failing.

After recognising these patterns, those frustrated conversations emerged into a coalition of like-minded organisations, with a mission to champion creative education as a fundamental part of every young person's learning, and indeed the growth and development of wider society.

This collaborative spirit shaped our first manifesto, launched in 2023. Built on evidence and expertise from across the sector, it articulated a shared vision for restoring the value of creative education.

Since then, we have been lobbying for reforms at a national level, working collaboratively on shared issues and developing a policy agenda for 2026 and beyond.

Since the publication of our first manifesto, a new government has taken office – one which brought new hope of revaluing creative education. However, many of the structural challenges remain. In this changed environment, a new manifesto is needed.

The seven principles set out in this document reflect both continuity and renewal. They build upon the foundations established by our first manifesto whilst responding to the realities of today's policy landscape. They represent a shared vision for how creative education can once again become the central pillar of a confident, ambitious and inclusive Creative Britain.

This manifesto has been co-created by the **Creative Education Coalition**, a coalition of specialists from across early years, SEND, further and higher education, craft, creative industries, research, entrepreneurship and beyond.

This manifesto focuses on:

Seven principles and asks for decision makers which we believe will contribute to a better creative future for Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

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**PRINCIPLE 1.
CREATIVITY AS A RIGHT,
NOT A PRIVILEGE**

Every child and young person should have the right to high-quality creative education and cultural participation, regardless of where they live or their family background.

Creative learning is not an optional enrichment activity and should be embedded as an essential part of the curriculum as well as being available as an extra-curricular activity. It develops imagination, confidence, communication, problem solving and adaptability: the very capabilities and skills needed to thrive in an AI-enabled world and democratic society.

The Ask:

Guarantee every child and young person access to a high-quality creative education, specialist teaching, cultural participation and enrichment opportunities throughout their school life, regardless of background or postcode.

The Ask Unpacked:

- A universal entitlement to access and engage with high-quality creative education within school settings, not only as part of extra-curricular activities.
- Access to specialist teachers across the full spectrum of creative education (music, art, design, craft, etc).
- Remove financial barriers and ensure access to the equipment, facilities, spaces, technology and materials required for creative learning.
- A wealth of consistent creative opportunities available beyond school.
- Access to high-quality creative pathways throughout education including in existing, new and emerging qualifications such as V-levels and T-levels.
- Recognition of advanced creative education, doctoral study and research-led practice explicitly as part of the national creative talent infrastructure.

Delivering the Ask:

- Create a **National Creative Entitlement** guaranteeing access to high-quality creative experiences, cultural participation and creative learning throughout life, regardless of geography, income, disability or educational pathway.
- Encourage the OECD to fully integrate creative study into the PISA Framework to recognise the importance of creative skills alongside reading, mathematical and scientific literacy in developing real-world skills.
- Ensure creative subjects are eligible for **university maintenance grants** when introduced.
- Commit to maintaining and expanding **specialist teacher bursaries** for the full breadth of creative education subjects, to build and retain specialist teacher supply across schools and colleges.
- Deliver on the commitments in the **Enrichment Framework** and the **National Youth Strategy**.
- Increase support for **enrichment and after-school** provision across creative subjects.
- Improve access to postgraduate creative study with embedded financial support for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

**PRINCIPLE 2.
CREATIVITY RECOGNISED
AS CRITICAL TO EVERY
INDUSTRY**

Creativity should be recognised as a foundational capability for the whole economy, not simply a 'nice-to-have' pipeline into the creative industries.

As artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing and new technologies transform work, creative thinking, design capability and human imagination become even more valuable. Creative education develops the skills that employers across all sectors increasingly need.

The Ask:

Place creativity at the heart of curriculum, skills and industrial strategy reform, recognising it as a core capability for growth, innovation and success in an AI-enabled economy.

The Ask Unpacked:

- Recognise that creativity and creative skills are fundamental to the success of all industries, not just the creative arts.
- Recognise the value creative skills create in everyday life, products and services.
- Stop marginalising creative education within schools.
- Reflect the essential nature of creative skills to the economy in education funding structures from school to university level.

Delivering the Ask:

- Deliver the **Curriculum and Assessment Review** recommendations relating to creative education in full.
- Reform accountability measures such as **Progress 8** to recognise creative education subject study, skills and attainment.
- Align the **Post 16 Education and Skills White Paper Reforms** with the ambitions set out in the Curriculum and Assessment Review.
- Ensure creative industry **V-Levels** and **T-Levels** are fit for purpose by involving creative and industry professionals in their design and delivery, to ensure they enrich students with career-ready skills in demand within the creative industries.
- Ensure government policy and specifically education policy aligns and supports delivery of the **Industrial Strategy** ambitions for the creative industries rather than disrupt progress and work against it.
- Recognise **creative skills** as essential for securing the future workforce and the growth and success of our economy.

**PRINCIPLE 3.
A CONNECTED CREATIVE
TALENT SYSTEM**

The UK needs clear, coherent and well-funded pathways from school through to further education, higher education, apprenticeships, freelance careers and employment.

Too many talented people encounter barriers and resistance at key transition points. Creative careers are often non-linear and entrepreneurial. The system must be redesigned to support progression, re-entry and lifelong participation.

The Ask:

Create a coherent national talent pipeline connecting schools, colleges, universities, apprenticeships, freelancers and employers.

The Ask Unpacked:

- Ensure creative subjects are supported across the full breadth of the pipeline, not just at school.
- Implement measures like creative industry-accredited learning and skills development, that allow for creative skills to continue to be developed throughout careers, reflecting how essential they are to the economy.
- Embed support for freelancers and self-employed workers in the creative industries.
- Improve the recruitment and retention of specialist creative education teachers.
- Enable high-quality creative careers information, advice and guidance for all.
- Strengthen employer-facing storytelling about the value creative graduates and creative capabilities bring to organisations across all sectors.

Delivering the Ask:

- Restore and secure high-cost funding for creative subjects, whether through the **Strategic Priorities Grant**, currently administered via the Department for Education, or through alternative mechanisms.
- Secure dedicated and sustainable **specialist provider funding** that supports creative education provision across all UK regions and subject areas, including in emerging and fast-growing fields, and preserves the UK's unique concentration of expertise, specialist facilities, technical capability, research, industry connections and high-level talent.
- Ensure the full potential of creative subjects is realised in the **Lifelong Learning Entitlement** offer through modular funding and extension to include Level 7.
- Reform the **Growth and Skills Levy** to properly support the needs of the creative industry sector, including relevant and appropriate tax breaks for creative industry SMEs.
- Support **continuous professional development** and **workforce reskilling** in the creative education and training pipeline as well as the creative industries.
- Incentivise, strengthen and demystify pathways into **freelance and portfolio** careers in the creative industries.
- Build on **skills audits** and **jobs plans** with accompanying strategic investment to address high level skills gaps within the creative industries.
- Upskill and empower **Careers Development Practitioners** across schools, further education, higher education and communities with current knowledge of the creative industries and freelance/portfolio careers.
- Recognise university careers services as partners in strengthening creative careers.

PRINCIPLE 4. INVESTMENT IN CREATIVE PLACES

Every community should have access to a connected creative ecosystem that links education, culture, employers and civic leadership.

Creative education drives inclusive growth, regeneration, community wellbeing and cultural participation. Investment should support long-term infrastructure and partnerships rather than short-term projects alone.

The Ask:

Establish long-term investment in place-based creative ecosystems and infrastructure which will restore the connections between education, culture, communities and employers.

The Ask Unpacked:

- Rebuild and restore essential creative and cultural infrastructure in every region throughout the UK – with a particular focus on those that have suffered from poor investment previously.
- Embed structures to ensure sustainable and consistent cultural regeneration and the restoration of regional high streets is being funded alongside purely creative institutions and programmes.
- Use income generated from the highly lucrative creative industries to contribute to place-based growth funds.
- Establish sustainable partnerships between local schools, cultural institutions and industry as part of regional and economic strategies.
- Ensure the cultivation of creative skills is included in local skills planning.

Delivering the Ask:

- Rebuild and sustain creative and cultural infrastructure as a core element of national social infrastructure including but not limited to maintaining and expanding library services, community arts provision, cultural spaces (inc. museums and galleries) and creative learning networks.
- Expand **Creative Places Growth** funding beyond the six Mayoral Combined Authorities.
- Build on and expand the success of creative clusters and priority places programmes.
- Implement funded support structures and clear education and career pathways for local creative talent pipelines.
- Better integrate creative education and creative industries planning into Local Skills Improvement Plans.
- Dedicate regional funding to identify, showcase and promote creative activity within communities, including appropriate visibility, signage and marketing.

PRINCIPLE 5. MEASURE WHAT MATTERS MOST

The Government should recognise and measure the full contribution of creative education and skills to individuals, communities, industry, culture, growth and the economy.

Current funding, regulatory and skills systems often fail to capture the real value of creative careers and creative education to the wider economy. Better evidence should support better policy and decision-making; currently the metrics fall very short of telling the real success story.

The Ask:

Reform the way government measures creative education, skills and employment so that policy reflects the true value of what the sector delivers for the UK.

The Ask Unpacked:

- Review standard employment and education classifications to more accurately capture creative careers.
- Implement better measurement of freelance, portfolio and “squiggle” careers.
- Begin a reform process to graduate outcomes measurements and cultural, social and wellbeing measures.
- Ensure that place-making, health and environmental outcomes and benefits of creative and cultural participation are effectively captured and showcased.
- Build a long-term evidence infrastructure that displays the impact of creative and cultural education, skills and employment over time.
- Government and regulatory frameworks should recognise freelance work, entrepreneurship, artistic practice, company formation and portfolio careers as legitimate and valuable graduate outcomes.

Delivering the Ask:

- Routinely review Standard Occupational Classifications, Standard Industrial Classifications and Higher Education Classification of Subjects to more accurately represent the nuance and rapidly evolving and expanding nature of the creative industries.
- Reform graduate outcome metrics to include those working in the creative industries in less ‘linear’ careers i.e. self-employed, freelancers, portfolio careers.
- Include nano businesses ([Creative United, 2026](#)) in the framing of company formation.
- Review salary thresholds and eligible occupations for international graduate sponsorship, recognising the distinctive salary structures of creative careers. Benchmarking should account for regional salary differences and employed, freelance and portfolio models of work, rather than relying solely on conventional employment outcomes.
- Expand the evidence on cultural, social, environmental and wellbeing impact to better recognise the role and impact of access to creative education and the creative industries on the UK.
 - Ways to do this include supporting the Centre for Cultural Value, establishing a Visual Arts Data Observatory, and sustaining investment into the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) beyond 2028.

**PRINCIPLE 6.
CREATIVITY AS A SOLUTION
TO SOCIETY'S BIGGEST
CHALLENGES**

Creative education should equip people to address the defining challenges of the twenty-first century.

From climate action and sustainability to public health, community cohesion, AI adoption and economic transformation, creativity is not simply an outcome of policy. It is part of the solution.

The Ask:

Recognise and position creative education as a strategic contributor to national priorities including AI adoption, sustainability, health, innovation and community resilience.

The Ask Unpacked:

- Embrace the role of creativity in building individual and community resilience.
- Recognise the role creative and cultural education, employment and participation play in health and social wellbeing.
- Create structures and systems to embed the use of technology and AI in creative teaching and learning.
- Build specific activity around engaging sectors and organisations that currently have the weakest connection to the creative industries.

Delivering the Ask:

- Support responsible, discipline-specific use of AI and emerging technologies within creative learning, alongside the human creative skills that computers can't replace.
- Recognise creative practice as resistant to AI-led redundancy.
- Support sustainability and regenerative skills within the creative landscape.
- Explore the benefits of creative and cultural participation as part of social prescribing.
- Expand the contribution of creativity to health and wellbeing.
- Strengthen cross-government collaboration between the education, culture, health, sustainability, economic and growth agendas to ensure intersectional benefits can be realised.
- Scale up the Design Council Skills for Planet platform to include creative skills.

**PRINCIPLE 7.
KEEPING THE UK OPEN TO
TALENT, IDEAS AND
EXCHANGE**

The UK's creative excellence depends on the international flow of talent, knowledge and culture.

The UK should actively welcome international students, academics and creative practitioners whilst enabling UK learners and educators to engage internationally.

The Ask:

Develop a globally competitive framework for international talent, students, academics and creative mobility.

The Ask Unpacked:

- Protect international student recruitment for creative education.
- Reform creative talent visa pathways.
- Support international academics and specialist educators to be able to contribute positively to creative education and creative industries.
- Rejoin and expand international exchange programmes including Creative Europe, Horizon Europe and Erasmus+.
- Promote the mobility of creative talent beyond Europe.
- Strengthen the UK's cultural soft power on the global stage.

Delivering the Ask:

- The UK should rejoin Creative Europe and make the UK an eligible country for Culture Moves Europe.
- The UK should remain in Horizon Europe post 2027.
- Develop specific Global Creative and Talent Visas to encourage global talent to contribute to the development of our creative education ecosystem and growth of our creative industries. Under this, ensure undergraduates from outside the UK can more easily attend university here.
- Extend Graduate Visas for post-study work periods and freelance pathways for creatives.
- Remove barriers to high-quality placements, paid internships, freelance or entrepreneurial experience and post-study creative careers.

