

Key Messages from the Arts Qualification Research Project



WE MUST IMPROVE THE DIVERSITY OF THE TALENT POOL BY PROVIDING MORE ARTS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

UCAS data shows that those most advantaged in society are more likely to hold Arts qualifications at Level 3 and are also more likely to apply to undertake a degree level arts course. If we want to meet our commitments to diversifying the creative industries we must do more to address the gap in participation for disadvantaged students right from the start.

Without access to the foundations of creative knowledge and practice taught in schools it is impossible to grow talent and inspire a new cohort of young people into the profession.

We also cannot simply defer creative expression into extra-curricular activities as these are also less accessible to our most disadvantaged pupils.

Changes in school curriculums have led to a 13% decline in the least advantaged students applying to university arts courses between 2014-18 and they are far less likely to hold more than one L3 arts qualification if they do apply, which further disadvantages their chances of acceptance. HE providers can plug some skills gaps of applicants, but we cannot inspire young people to creative in the first place.

UNIVERSITY QUALIFICATIONS ARE VITAL FOR THE INDUSTRY PIPELINE AS OTHER TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS CANNOT BE DELIVERED

The Creative Industries are one of the UK's most vital parts of our economy. It accounted for just over one in eight of all UK businesses in 2016; and between 2011 and 2018, employment in the creative sectors has grown by 30.6 per cent, compared to the UK average growth of 10.1 per cent; and is now bigger than the automotive, aerospace, life sciences and oil and gas sectors combined. Not only that, but all employers say they value creative skills in their workplace and the current global pandemic has shone a light on the importance of creativity to both our economy and to the wellbeing of our nation at such a time of uncertainty.

The Technical Education reforms which centre around occupational standards do not work for the creative industries as the majority of the industry workforce have portfolio careers. Around a third of the creative workforce are self-employed and the industry is dominated by micro and SME businesses who cannot engage in these reforms. Therefore the approach to Apprenticeships and employer-led standards is not fit for purpose, making HE qualifications vital for the talent pipeline and the continued growth in the industry.

WE HAVE SEEN A REDUCTION IN APPLICANTS WITH MORE THAN ONE ARTS QUALIFICATION

Applicants from Academy's, State Schools, 6th Forms and HE providers holding more than one L3 arts qualification has significantly declined by between 21-30% between 2014-18.

Whilst in some school settings the number of applicants holding one creative L3 qualification has increased this clearly shows the affect the eBacc and Progress 8 is having on young people's choices.

The creative disciplines have a disproportionate number of disabled persons working within them, especially those with learning disabilities such as Dyslexia and ADHD.

Restricting students qualification choices stops talented students from developing a diverse range of creative skills which are vital to their success in the creative industries.

FOUNDATION YEARS ARE AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF ARTS EDUCATION

Even in the most well resourced schools many students will not have had access to equipment such as kilns, press's and technical machinery, nor the industry standard digital technologies required for a successful career in the creative sector. A foundation year/Diploma in Art and Design, allows students to learn these technologies to enhance their creative practice.

We are concerned therefore that the political narrative around the use of foundation years in the HE system discounts the importance of the successful and historic use of foundation programmes in the arts, which are a vital part in ensuring we maintain the diversity of applicants and skills within our industry. They also support the progression onto the most technical and specialist disciplines which aid our declining craft trade.

Not only do foundation routes enable students to build their talents and expertise which will support their portfolio careers, but it helps HE providers plug those gaps in the loss of creative education in the school system.

Our research found that students who undertake these pathways are also far more likely to apply and be accepted onto a degree level course and improves our diversity.