CHEAD

The Council for
Higher Education in Art & Design
Arts, design, creative media
and related disciplines

CHEAD Subjects Association Alliance

Creative Subjects Matter: Our Collective Mission and Manifesto June 2026

Why do Creative Subjects Matter?

History of Art, Architecture and Design courses (HAAD) address a wide range of artefacts from visual and material culture. In terms of their medium, artefacts can encompass painting, sculpture, architecture and applied arts, and as well as lens- or screen-based media and performance art. HAAD courses engage with critical, historical and theoretical writing and other discursive forms, combining description with critical contextual study to map the ways artefacts are products of their time and can fundamentally shape the world as well. Students use written sources ranging from historical and literary texts to archival records and scientific evidence from multispectral imaging to chemical analysis, thereby providing interdisciplinary training that crosses traditional boundaries in the arts, humanities and sciences. The study of visual and material culture also identifies inequalities of power in global and local contexts that are centred on class, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, health and the environment.

The subject of Art and Design is at the forefront of transformational change, where evolving paradigms and emerging technologies are reshaping how we create, communicate and engage with visual, material and digital culture. These shifts are offering opportunities for new modes of Art and Design practice, expanding creative possibilities, and introducing innovative forms of exploration and expression across different disciplines. The practice of Art and Design shapes contemporary cultural and societal values through creative research, making, empathy, storytelling, critical and speculative thinking, engagement with complexity, and the building of meaningful connections.

Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies are distinguished by their focus on cultural and communicative activities as central forces in shaping economic, political, psychological and social life. Courses may focus on the social, the contemporary, the aesthetic, the historical, the technological or the practical production aspects of these forms, or a combination of them.

Whilst these are the published statements outlining the value of several of our subject areas, the CHEAD Subject Associations Alliance has an even more expansive view of the value of creative subjects. The point of an arts education isn’t just to produce more artists. It builds a set of attributes and thinking skills that transfers to any field. Creative thinking is a core outcome. Arts-based learning builds confidence, adaptability, divergent and critical thinking.

Creative Education delivers both economic and societal value.

Who we are



The Council for Higher Education Art and Design (CHEAD) Subject Associations Alliance is a non-competitive, coordinating, collaborative network speaking with one voice on the collective behalf of thirteen subject associations reaching across a diversity of creative arts disciplines. Independent of government, the alliance provides a constant resource and continuity of subject knowledge to creative educators and policy makers.

Together we provide regular forums for the collective to discuss and develop specialist and technical expertise, pedagogy, and opinion based on deep and shared cross-subject knowledge.

Together we convene and enable a shared intellectual and creative framework through which individuals' specialist arts and design knowledge and expertise can be articulated, imagined and amplified.

Mission

North Star Statement

Strength through Unity

Disciplinarity matters: ‘’You can’t have interdisciplinarity without strong disciplines’’.

We advocate for the legitimacy, relevance, value and continued development of creative disciplines

We believe research and development of **subjects** remains at the cutting edge of growth and innovation in the creative **disciplines.**

We are the creators, curators and custodians of current and emergent disciplinary **specialisms** and are core to the successful and sustainable development of arts, design and creative education.

Vision

Creative Education is a human right for all.

Achieving universal access to diverse, specialist, embodied creative and cultural learning and practice through the design, delivery, and protection of subject ecologies for social and economic value.

We achieve this by -

- Forging equitable futures for access and inclusion to creative and cultural learning through the constantly evolving disciplines across arts and performance, materiality, making, and expression.
- Advancing sustainable solutions to provision of creative and cultural skills that support local, trans local and global inclusive growth, citizenship and stewardship.

- Committing to creative education that delivers access to opportunity, social, environmental and economic justice.
- Preparing and growing the skills and behaviour’s that embed, embody and provide experiential creative and cultural learning
- Raising an awareness of skills, behaviours and values of an inclusive and socially driven creative and cultural learning agenda, sustainably and equitably, for public good.

Values

Our values of trust and care are co-created and owned collectively by holding safe creative space for intersectional and intercultural conversations.

We commit to enabling access to meaningful experiences of creative and cultural subject education through our improved collective awareness, reciprocity, mutuality, care and development of our collective community of practice.

We commit to the CHEAD Subject Association Alliance as a space for inclusion, personal belonging, expression, well-being and authenticity.

CHEAD Subject Association Alliance offers

- A recognised, informed collective voice and a mechanism for output and activism.
- A vibrant and active coalition of subject associations offering strength in numbers, engagement and reach, with the added value of working together.
- Critical engagement with contemporary challenges.
- Rapid responses to skills gaps and technology innovations.
- Significant industry engagement.
- Representation of the student voice.
- Voluntary activism.

This leads to - Accessible education, non-competitive stewardship of disciplines, policy shaping, supplying expertise and knowledge that is tacit, future focused, critical and transformational, and embodied through experience.

Our policy asks

Government

1. Ensure seamless alignment between disciplines and pathways within school-age education, post-16 provision and lifelong learning.
2. Align DFE, Office for Students and Skills England funding frameworks with the Creative Industries Sector Plan’s identified priorities for creative skills.
3. Immediately add Creative Disciplines to the Lifelong Learning Loan Entitlement.
4. Empower devolved and combined authorities to tailor discipline specific education and skills responses to regional creative economies.

Government

5 Protect equitable access to creative education through maintenance grants, strategic priorities grant and other appropriate funding bands.

6 Strengthen discipline specific careers guidance and sub sector labour market intelligence through a cross-departmental Creative Careers Service and amplified major public facing campaign across influencer platforms.

7 Enhance specialist teacher recruitment and retention with targeted interventions.

8 Engage with the Subject Association Alliance on all relevant consultations and policy interventions. We have considerable expertise that can be leveraged.

Institutions

1. Protect vulnerable discipline areas, to maintain interdisciplinarity and widespread geographic availability and access, when restructuring.

2. Provide and enhance resources and support for individuals to engage in Subject Associations as a recognised route to networks. leadership and continuous professional development.

3. Proactively seek out subject expertise within strategic planning frameworks and future curriculum development and course programming.

4. Amplify the visibility of subjects and discipline ecologies, and champion their significance internally and externally

Institutions

5 Consult Subject Associations on all course design. We have expertise in the creative pedagogies that provide transferable skills in problem solving, critical thinking, reflective practice and creativity generally that apply across all subject areas.

This Mission and Manifesto has been co- developed by:

- Association of Fashion and Textile Courses (FTC)
- Association for Photographic Education (APHE)
- National Association for Higher Education in the Moving Image (NAHEMI)
- National Association of Fine Art Educators (NAFAE)
- The Association of Illustrators (AoI)
- Illustration Educators
- Association for Art History (AAH).
- The Performance Design Educators' Collective (PDEC)
- Interior Educators (IE)
- The Design History Society (DHS) th
- National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD)
- National Association of Ceramic Education (NACA)
- Council for Higher Education in Art and Design (CHEAD)

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ASSOCIATION FOR ART HISTORY

the association for photographic education
APHE

DESIGN HISTORY SOCIETY

Engage
Bringing people and art together

ftc | association of fashion and textiles courses

THE HEAD TRUST

Interior Educators

nsead

nahemi national association for higher education in the moving image

PDEC
PERFORMANCE DESIGN EDUCATORS COLLECTIVE

istd

National Association
NAFAE for Fine Art Education

AOI ASSOCIATION of ILLUSTRATORS

As a supportive community of practices, collaborating towards collective action new subject associations are welcome to join. Access is guaranteed to groups with our shared mission.

For further information contact info@chead.ac.uk