



Rt Hon Michelle Donelan MP  
Minister of State for Universities

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15 February 2021

Dear Minister of State for Universities,

On behalf of the Council for Higher Education in Art and Design (CHEAD), and its 66 institutional members from across the four nations of the UK, we write to call on the Government to take account of the educational needs of our students and subjects, and the impacts that this extended period of public health restrictions and the recently proposed policy changes will have on the Art and Design subjects.

In common with other sector bodies such as UKADIA, we believe it is essential to include the art and design subjects within those prioritised for return to campus once it is safe to do so. Our students are severely affected by the current lack of access to the industry-standard and specialist making and production facilities they require to meet their learning outcomes and to become proficient in the skills and technologies necessary for employment in the creative industries. It is also increasingly clear that the impact on their learning is significantly affecting mental health and wellbeing, and that the next generation of talented graduates will need additional support to remediate this impact on their learning, future livelihoods, and contribution to society, culture and the economy.

We also believe that our subjects should be classified as strategically important, given the significance of our programmes in supporting a range of social and economic drivers. Degree programmes in Art and Design, and the creative subjects more widely, generate the graduate talent pipeline that is vital to the global success of the UK creative and cultural industries. The creative industries are one of the UK's major success stories, growing at five times the rate of the wider UK economy prior to the pandemic, and contributing £111.7bn to the UK economy in 2018, an increase of 43.2% in real terms since 2010. The Cultural Sector contributed a further £32.3bn to the UK economy in 2018, an increase of 21.9% in real terms since 2010. From this position of great strength, the creative and cultural sectors provide a key strategic pillar to drive the economic recovery of the UK, and to transform our lives as we build back better. The creative disciplines and the organisations they serve will be critical to restoring and rebuilding the civic and social fabric of the UK's towns, cities and high streets.

Our programmes also generate the skilled graduates needed for the emerging VFX, immersive technologies, AI and augmented reality innovations that will underpin the creative sector and the wider economic resilience and recovery. At a time, when the Creative Industries Federation, BBC, and other cultural organisations are advocating for increased investment in the skills areas that our higher education programmes provide and given an identified need for this investment to build resilience in and through the creative arts, design and technologies for the future, we are concerned about the impact on the higher education provision of new policy that will affect the stability of our existing programmes and institutions. We are very concerned that the proposal for funding for high-cost subjects to be reduced by 50%, and potentially removed entirely, appears at odds with other recently announced policy interventions, and particularly during a recession when we need to rebuild and upskill to ensure capacity for the continued

The Council for Higher Education in Art & Design is the representative body for the art and design higher education sector. Its mission is to contribute to the development of the A&D community, its standing and stature as well as its engagement with the outside world.

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and future success in these creative and cultural industries, as a UK and global strength. The additional costs borne by universities for practical programmes and specialist industry-standard facilities in art, design, architecture, crafts, fashion, film, TV, music, the performing arts, creative media and computer games are considerable, and necessary to ensure the excellence and preparedness of our graduates for these thriving sectors.

The success of the UK creative and cultural industries would not have been achieved without the talent pipeline generated through the educational provision of Art and Design schools (both the specialist providers and the art and design faculties in multi-disciplinary universities). Our world-leading Higher Education provision in Art and Design fuels the economy and is very attractive to students. The creative subjects were the fourth most desirable choice of study for home and overseas students and, in 2018/19, were the top subject choice amongst students aged 20 and under was Creative Arts & Design; with art, creative media and design degree programmes receiving 9.11% of the total applications to Higher Education in the UK. We, therefore, have serious concerns that this success and provision will be adversely affected by the announcements of the Secretary of State for Education on the 21 January 2021.

Progression from our undergraduate degree programmes also underpins the postgraduate and research base, evidenced by the REF2014 Impact Case Studies, and the extensive contribution the sector makes to the economic, societal and cultural health of the nation. We believe that this alone justifies the return on public investment made in art and design research, which we anticipate will be further evident in the REF2021 submission and demonstrates the major contribution to research and innovation that the art and design higher education sector makes and will continue to make as we emerge from the crisis the pandemic has generated. The new DCMS *Framework for Assessing Cultural and Heritage Capital* is consistent with Treasury Green Book principles and will continue to provide a robust evaluation of return on investment. While the UK creative and cultural sector has been severely impacted by COVID-19, and needs strategic support and investment to bounce back, we must not allow the UK to lose momentum in maintaining excellence in the nurturing and development of creative talent through our leading higher education provision.

As the representative body for the Art & Design Higher Education sector in the UK we urge you to recognise the value of ensuring a thriving student and research base in our subjects across the UK. We respectfully request that the Government reconsider the recent policy interventions that will adversely affect art and design higher education in many settings; and that it addresses the need for central government support in offsetting the impact on the sector as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As always, we welcome dialogue with you on these matters.

Yours sincerely,

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