

Craft Blueprint: Developing the Craft Workforce in the UK

The Council for Higher Education in Art & Design (CHEAD) is the association of 80 educational institutions with degree or postgraduate provision in art and design, represented by their most senior academic concerned with art and design.

CHEAD's primary concerns are to provide a forum for debate and exchange of information and ideas for senior managers and to seek to inform, influence, and initiate policy in higher education in art and design at national and other levels.

As set out in your consultation paper, the UK craft sector is vibrant and growing and it is important to note the crucial contribution of Higher Education (HE) to this sector. We therefore take a strong interest in the continued development of the sector and welcome the opportunity to contribute to the consultation:

1. Do you agree that the actions outlined throughout section 5 are the most important? Do you have any additional actions to suggest?

CHEAD broadly supports the actions outlined in the paper and would be keen to be involved in the further development / implementation of the Blueprint. Moreover, in order to develop the most effective initiatives, we would welcome an opportunity for continued debate on some of the points raised in the Blueprint, as outlined below:

Vocational vs. Higher-level skills

We agree with the assertion of the important role of crafts and craft skills as foundation to the creative industries. However, we are concerned that more debate and data is needed in order better to define industry needs so that makers can continue to adapt to new developments and the sector can continue to grow.

We strongly feel that the key to the crafts' importance to the creative industries is the high-level knowledge of materials and processes that is generated through the process of making. Correspondingly, it is important to recognise the central role of the higher education environment in the development of such knowledge as well as of other crucial skills.

Alongside the teaching and learning of high-level craft skills, the key objective of Higher Education is to guide students to become *reflective* learners in the course of their HE studies. It is this ability to reflect on one's work and to adjust it to new circumstances that is at the core of the creative process. Moreover, it will allow students to adapt their practice to new and rapidly changing technologies and contexts or, indeed, arguably to be more successful in a general work environment outside crafts, art, design and media.

While apprenticeships certainly do constitute one route into the sector, we are highly sceptical whether the renewal of an apprenticeship approach (p. 12) would be the appropriate or most effective way forward in light of the above points.

Starting out in the Craft Sector

We broadly agree with the challenges to craft provision at HE level outlined in the

document. However, while they certainly compound the existing situation, we would challenge the notion that these threats are the main cause of the decline in the number of courses offered. Rather, CHEAD members have consistently reported that the main problem is a fall in students wishing to study crafts at HE level, which then led to the closure of courses.

Business and Entrepreneurship Skills

CHEAD recognises the need to strengthen business and entrepreneurship elements within art and design higher education. However, with regard to the Blueprint section 5.5, it is important to note that virtually all HE A&D programmes now incorporate some form of entrepreneurship education. There is also evidence of considerable variation in the range and type of delivery and learning environments.

Together with other organisations, most notably the Higher Education Subject Centre for Art, Design and Media, CHEAD has contributed to research and worked closely together with government and other agencies (sector skills councils, Design Council, etc) further to strengthen entrepreneurial learning opportunities.

It is therefore essential that the actions proposed in section 5.5 take into account the existing curriculum models and draw on the insights of the various research efforts.

2. What do you see as the most important actions to progress initially?

As outlined above, we strongly believe that the most urgent intervention needs to be at school level in order to raise students' exposure to and awareness of crafts. We therefore support the proposed actions and would like to offer our support in the development of any particular initiative.

Another priority should be the actions proposed under 5.2.

3. Which of the suggested actions would have the most impact on you and/or your organisation?

See above.

4. Have you experienced, or do you know of any examples of activities or approaches currently being used to address the issues summarised in section five? &

5. Can you contribute additional activities, which you think could make an impact on this area of workforce development?

As the representative organisation for the A&D HE sector, we believe that it is crucial that CHEAD is involved in any further debate and in the implementation of the Blueprint. In addition, CHEAD can draw on its experience from having worked closely with sector skills councils on strengthening links between employers and HE. For example, CHEAD is a lead partner for the implementation of the CCSC's Design Blueprint, and we have been invited

to join a similar working group to develop a workforce development plan for the Visual Arts Sector. Moreover, we have been invited to join a Skillfast HE Consortia Meeting. CHEAD is also a member of the Skillset Higher Education Advisory Group, which provides advice and guidance for the development of the 14–19 Creative and Media Diploma.

Beyond the above co-operation with the various sector skills councils, CHEAD is engaged in a number of projects and initiatives that we feel could make an important contribution to the debate:

Awareness, network and further action

In October 08, CHEAD, together with the Crafts Council and the National Arts Learning Network (www.naln.ac.uk) organised a seminar to explore the issues surrounding craft provision at all levels. We had invited representatives from all levels of craft education as well as from external agencies. The aim of the seminar was to start the debate and map out how we can work together to sustain craft education in the future. Some 83 delegates attended the seminar and we envisage that this was only the beginning of what we hope will become an ongoing dialogue between the sides. The conference report is currently being written up and we believe that it could make a positive contribution to the implementation of the Craft Blueprint.

Research intelligence

Creative Graduates – Creative Futures: Together with the University of the Arts London, CHEAD is leading a partnership of higher education institutions providing practice-based first degree courses in art, design and media subjects in this flag-ship project. Together the partnership has commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) to undertake an important study to explore the early career paths of art, design and media graduates. The research is also supported by key bodies and stakeholders in the Creative Industries.

This study will focus on the experiences of graduates from 2001/02, 2002/03 and 2003/04 to examine the differences in these experiences over time and will compare to the career experiences of graduates ten years ago. The study will go beyond other destinations studies to focus specifically on art, design and media graduates, and to explore experiences more than six months after graduation, giving individuals time to make employment and career decisions and actions. Specifically,

- It will give the real story of graduate careers and help students and prospective students make decisions about their future.
- It will show the contribution graduates make to the UK economy and wider society – the skills and abilities they bring to all situations.
- It will identify the most useful and valued aspects of the HE experience to inform curriculum development and careers advice within HE.

As outlined above, CHEAD would be keen to be involved in further work of the Craft Blueprint and through use insights of the research to contribute to the debate.

In addition, CHEAD has conducted other research on related issues, such as entrepreneurship education in HE A&D, widening participation in HE A&D, etc, which we feel may be of use to the implementation of the Blueprint.

6. Would you like to be part of an action delivery group in 2009 responsible for one of the actions mentioned?

Yes!

CHEAD welcomes the opportunity to feed into the development of the Craft Blueprint and hopes that this response may be of use to CCSC. We look forward to further collaboration with CCSC in the future.

Thank you for your support

Christoph Raatz
Executive Secretary
CHEAD

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