

Five reasons to study the arts

OCR's new creative GCSEs and A Levels feature Jean Paul Gaultier to Bach, stage lighting to Lady Gaga and curating to Alan Ayckbourn

Key features

- The creative industries have moved into first place to be the fastest growing economic sector in the UK¹, responsible for 5.6% of jobs, and worth £76.9bn to the UK economy.
- Arts in school are a crucial ingredient in the making of UK's creative life – one of the nation's USPs. But artists, musicians, writers and actors are not born skilled.
- Huge numbers of creative professionals can trace the igniting of their creativity back to experiences at school, whether it was encouragement from a school art teacher, acting in a play or singing a particular piece of music at school. This includes Lily Allen, Grayson Perry and Evelyn Glennie to name a few.
- An independent report in 2012 for the DCMS and DfE by Darren Henley² substantiates this, finding: "Schools remain the single most important place where children learn about Cultural Education."
- To support creativity at school, OCR has worked hard to make its new GCSEs and A Levels, for first teaching from September 2016, relevant and engaging. OCR's arts subjects know no borders. They take inspiration from the 'best of British' but also from the 'greatest of global' – from Bach to Bhangra, Purcell to Frank Lloyd Wright, Lady Gaga to the Beatles, and Jean Paul Gaultier to Frantic Assembly.
- OCR's subject specialists are concerned that the arts are too often dismissed as easy options: "The arts are certainly not easy. They take really hard work and require students to dig deep. We hope our list below contributes to a celebration of the creative arts."

OCR's five reasons to study creative subjects

The art, music and drama specialists at OCR have selected the five main reasons to study creative subjects:

1. The arts make self starters and develop emotional intelligence

All require the student to set their own agenda from within themselves, rather than follow set topics as in other subjects. They have to make independent decisions all the way, and be self-critical. They also need to be brave in exposing their creations, and accept criticism. Working in teams makes students into good communicators.

2. The arts are stretching

Music, art and drama require long hours of hard work and dedication. Students have to pay great attention to detail, to perfect and redo. Putting on a play, exhibition or concert takes strong organisational skills.

3. Arts students are highly sought-after by employers

Many employers now actively seek those who have studied the arts. Steve Jobs, founder of Apple, was fond of saying his success was due to his hiring artists and musicians fascinated by technology rather than computer geeks. Top talent management agency, The Curve Group, specialising in financial and business services, declares that employees with arts degrees have developed more quickly in their roles from the start and has found them to have discipline, confidence and the ability to accept criticism.

4. Arts 'reach the parts other subjects can't reach'

The arts develop the broader dimensions of the human being – mind, body and soul. The arts can express the inexpressible and make sense of things that otherwise do not seem to. This can be very fulfilling and helps us function as human beings – which can only be good for society as a whole.

5. Arts 'reach the students other subjects can't reach'

Teachers find arts subjects particularly beneficial for two groups: those who struggle with traditional subjects and those who are high achieving. Less academic students can become defeatist if they feel they can't achieve: drama, music or art can be the place they blossom. With studious students, the arts can bring them out of themselves and be a release."

¹Creative Industries Economic Estimates, Department for Culture Media & Sport, January 2015

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/394668/Creative_Industries_Economic_Estimates_-_January_2015.pdf

This number has increased three years in a row and is predicted to rise again next year. The creative industries account for 5.6% of UK jobs, a number which has increased yearly since 1997. The UK's creative industry is above average in every economic measure reported.

²Cultural Education in England, an independent review by Darren Henley for the DCMS and the Dept for Education, 2012.

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