Pearson

GCSE Art and Design Reform Readiness **Checklist**

Know what to focus on now and what comes next.

For Heads of Art and Design and Multi Academy Trust leaders preparing for every stage of GCSE Art and Design reform.



Mapped to the GCSE Art and Design reform timeline from 2026 through to first exams in 2031.

*First teaching in 2029 and first exams in 2031 represent the earliest anticipated dates based on current DfE and Ofqual information and are subject to change.

Independent of which awarding body you eventually choose.

Now:

Baseline & Readiness Audit

Curriculum & Sequencing

- Review current KS3 schemes of work against likely reformed GCSE content
- Map where existing KS3 content and SoW already provides strong foundations for GCSE content, and where this could be improved
- Establish a shared curriculum review template and process across all schools, rather than each site working independently
- Nominate a lead school or subject lead to coordinate curriculum review across the trust

Engagement & Consultation

- Respond to the DfE public consultation when it opens
- Engage with Art and Design subject associations and exam boards on their consultation responses
- Coordinate a single trust-wide consultation response informed by input from all schools, alongside individual responses where useful

Art & Design Resources & Facilities

- Audit equipment, materials, digital technologies and specialist spaces to assess readiness for potential reform changes
- Identify any resources, software or facilities that may require investment or replacement, regardless of reform

Workforce & Staffing

- Audit current non-specialist teaching proportion in Art and Design, by year group and endorsed titles
- Identify likely CPD needs based on anticipated content and assessment changes
- Compare non-specialist teaching proportion across your schools so investment is targeted where it's needed most
- Explore cross-school teacher/ technician deployment or timetable-sharing options where specialist capacity is thin at a single site

Governance

- Name a single lead responsible for tracking reform preparedness for your department
- Stay up to date with the latest reform news, sign up for Subject Advisor updates.
- Add 'GCSE Art and Design reform' as a standing item on appropriate meeting agendas to keep the team in the loop
- Establish a trust-level reform steering group with clear information sharing and decision-making processes for schools
- Open a transition risk register at trust level and ensure individual schools feed into this for a smooth transition to reformed GCSEs (advised whether switching or staying with current exam board)

= Actions specifically for Multi Academy Trust leaders

Autumn 2026 – 2027:

Public Consultation & Accreditation

Curriculum

- Submit your consultation response on the draft subject content
- Monitor exam board accreditation announcements as specifications are developed
- Update your earlier gap analysis once draft subject content is published
- Agree the criteria which you will use to evaluate reformed qualifications from each exam board

Workforce & Staffing

- Commit a CPD budget line for reform-related training
- Scope your recruitment and ECT pipeline for Art and Design
- Prioritise recruitment and CPD spend where specialist gaps are greatest across your schools
- Identify opportunities for shared CPD delivery or joint training days across the trust

Art and Design & Resourcing

- Budget for Art and Design materials, equipment and resources 12–18 months ahead of first teaching, given publisher and supplier lead times
- Review health and safety procedures and risk assessment protocols in light of any anticipated changes to materials, equipment or practical activities
- Coordinate procurement discussions across schools to take advantage of trust-wide purchasing power

Assessment & Data

- Capture a historic attainment baseline now, so the impact of reform can be properly measured later
- Start assessing the likely Progress 8 impact under the proposed accountability changes
- Align baseline data collection methodology across all schools so trust-wide comparisons remain valid
- Consider how Progress 8/ Attainment 8 impact might vary between schools in your trust

Digital & SEND

- Audit device and connectivity readiness to support digital teaching and learning resources
- Review access to photography, digital portfolios and creative software where these are used within your Art and Design provision
- Assess staff digital literacy and training needs for new platforms or tools
- Review EAL considerations alongside SEND planning, including the accessibility of written annotation and supporting contextual work
- Flag likely exam access arrangement implications once assessment format detail is known

2028: Schools Choose & Prepare

Strategic Decisions

- Review new GCSEs from each exam board. Choose your specification and exam board
- Revisit the range of Art and Design titles and pathways currently offered
- Finalise KS3 sequencing changes ready for first teaching
- Decide whether to standardise your Art and Design offer across all trust schools, or retain site-by-site flexibility
- Agree a trust-wide position on exam board choice, or confirm deliberate flexibility, and the rationale either way

Governance & Communication

- Report reform progress as a tracked risk to SLT and governors
- Develop a parent/carer communication plan for qualification changes
- Update options, careers and progression guidance to reflect changes to the Art and Design qualifications and titles offered
- Report reform progress as a tracked risk to the trust board, not just individual local governing bodies
- Agree a consistent trust-wide parent and carer communication approach, adapted locally as needed

Workforce & Staffing

- Finalise Art and Design specialist plans and recruitment for the September 2029 start
- Confirm your ECT and specialist training pipeline is in place
- Finalise a trust-wide CPD calendar and any cross-school deployment plans agreed in 2026–27

Resourcing & Finance

- Confirm procurement of new teaching resources and specialist materials once your specification is chosen
- Flag any capital investment needs, studio, workshop, storage, specialist equipment or digital resources upgrades, to SLT or the trust board early
- Coordinate capital investment across schools ahead of trust level budget-setting

Legacy Planning

- Plan arrangements to manage any cohorts partway through legacy specifications at the point of transition
- Ensure management of completing legacy qualifications is consistent across all schools

September 2029 (earliest):

First Teaching

Delivery Readiness

- Complete a Day 1 provisioning check: resources, staffing and timetabling all in place
- Redesign your internal assessment calendar to reflect new content and assessment requirements
- Realign your preparatory and mock assessment strategy to the new specification
- Monitor developments to Progress 8 and accountability measures and consider implications for Art and Design
- Confirm exam access arrangements are updated for the new assessment format
- Monitor implementation of reform changes

Trust Coordination

- Keep a close eye on delivery across your schools in the first year, and act quickly on early issues
- Share early delivery learnings across schools to support consistency, particularly where staffing or resourcing gaps were identified during 2026-28



Summer 2031 onward:

First Exams & Embed

Results & Review

- Prepare for first results day under the reformed qualification, including staff and student expectation-setting
- Review outcomes against the pre-reform baseline captured in 2026-27
- Refine curriculum and resourcing based on the first cohort's actual experience
- Update careers and HE guidance based on any confirmed university response to new grading or content

Trust-Wide Learning

- Reflect on how results varied across your schools, and where further support might help
- Capture and share lessons learned across the trust ahead of Phase 2 GCSEs (from September 2030) or subsequent year groups



Pearson

Stay connected

with the GCSE Art and Design reform conversation



Stay informed

Register your interest to stay connected and be part of the conversation.

Register your interest



Explore reform insights

Visit Creative Minds, Brighter Futures.

Visit the Hub