Pearson

Creative Resources

Creative careers

Why creativity matters everywhere



Olly Newton

Executive Director
at Edge Foundation

Have you always considered yourself a creative person?

Yes! Alongside lots of other subjects, I did art at GCSE, and I've always been very creative outside school. **Ever since I was a kid, I've done a lot of knitting, sewing and paper craft, and it's something I still really enjoy.** And I'm inspired by both of my grannies, who were both artists.

I actually didn't study a creative subject at university. I went on to study history and politics. I was always fascinated by the behind-the-scenes workings and decision-making of government.

How did your career path unfold?

After university, I went into the Civil Service Fast Stream. I definitely knew I wanted to work in the government space, even though I didn't want to become a politician.I'd always had a real interest in human development, particularly that teenage phase of how we get from being a child to being a grown-up.

When I joined the Civil Service, I put education down as my top area of interest. I got to work on a whole range of policies: school conversions to academies, 14–19 diplomas, private office work directly with a minister, policies for young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET), and finally, apprenticeships.



You moved from government policy to leading a charity. Tell us about that.

Ten years ago, I moved across to the voluntary sector to run the Edge Foundation, an independent charity. We try to make education more relevant through research, policymaking, and working directly with schools and colleges to develop more engaging ways to teach.

This role opens up different creative opportunities. Working in an organisation of 13 or 14 people gives you a lot more freedom. We can bounce around ideas, come up with something new, and just run with it.

Is there room for creativity in policy/strategy?

Definitely. Essentially, everything I do in my role is about persuasion; bringing people around to a certain point of view. So, for me, creativity means a couple of things.

First, there's the literal side of making a beautiful product. In a work context, that might be laying out our research in a really appealing way. Communicating these things is half the battle when you're trying to persuade people.

Second, it has that more subtle meaning of bringing new ideas to bear and expressing things in ways that make people think differently. A lot of the policy issues I've dealt with are pretty knotty. Take young people not in education, employment, or training - we've been talking about that for 20 years. If we just roll out the same responses we've tried before, we're not going to get anywhere, which is why creativity is so key.



Why are creative skills so vital today?

Employers are increasingly looking for transferable skills: teamwork, problem-solving, and creativity.

These are so important because they're **heavily protected from AI and automation.** They're fundamentally human attributes and are often developed deeply through creative subjects.

> Employers are increasingly looking for transferable skills:
>
> - Teamwork
> - Problem-solving
> - Creativity

When it comes to their futures, what advice would you give students studying creative subjects?

Focus on how best to draw out and present those transferable skills to a potential employer or university. If you're doing a music qualification and applying for a job in law, you're not literally going to be playing your trumpet in the courtroom. **However, you are going to be much more familiar with being on stage and presenting yourself.** It's about having that extra trick up your sleeve, showing how the skills you drew from a creative subject can be put to work anywhere.



And what about when you hit a creative rut?

In a work context, **I usually talk to someone with a completely different perspective.** Step outside your comfort zone - it opens you up to new viewpoints you can apply to your own work.

Outside of work, when I'm making things, it's about switching tracks to a different discipline to bring a new spark. **Engaging in creative hobbies gives me huge satisfaction and a chance to relax.** I find using a completely different part of my brain like that deeply meditative.

Learn more

go.pearson.com/creatives