



Pearson and the Future of Design Education

Throughout 2022 and 2023, Pearson has worked with schools, teachers, learners and professionals across a variety of sectors to consider the question “How might we imagine a new future for design education?”.

This work, which aims to design the next iteration of design and engineering education, has resulted in a collective vision for what students should be taught at each key stage in a sequenced and purposeful way, and proposes a future-focused redevelopment of D&T within the national curriculum.



Responsible Design and Innovation (RD&I)

By prioritising the pathways available from secondary education to further education or employment, we believe that this curriculum vision would widen the opportunity for more students to realise their creative potential through design education. To achieve this every student between the age of 5 and 14 needs to be given the core design skills needed for life, and every qualification available post-14 needs at its heart, a shared set of high priority ambitions and characteristics that relate to the modern world. For students who choose to continue their design education, they will study qualifications that extend and specialise the curriculum as part of a sequenced and cohesive 5-19 vision.



The vision for RD&I

RD&I develops the human capabilities needed to create solutions to the most important problems facing society now and in the future.

This is achieved through the study of inclusive user and climate centred design approaches which build empathic intelligence and responsibility, to be able to purposefully utilise the materials and processes around us and focus on real people with real problems, to realise both digital and physical solutions.

RD&I provides opportunities for students to realise their creative potential, by drawing together disparate bodies of knowledge, existing and emerging technology and societal changes, in innovative ways, and builds the persistence and resilience needed to solve problems in ways that enrich the lives of everyone, and help to shape a more equitable future.

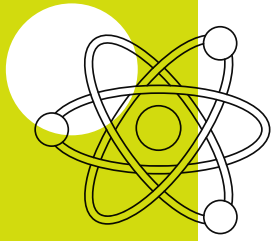


Why was this vision created?

In January 2022, following the EPI report on the decline of D&T education in UK schools, Pearson launched a research programme committed to providing the qualitative data needed to understand the national decline of D&T. This identified that without qualification or curriculum reform, the subject would see:

- An annual decline in D&T GCSE and A level qualification entries of approximately 5-6% (subject to alternative qualification routes remaining unchanged).
- An annual decline in the total number of specialist trained D&T teachers of 6.5% against the previous year, in line with shortfalls in recruitment, poor retention, and demographic trends of retirement.
- The ongoing decline of D&T workspaces including workshops, equipment and resources.
- The movement of examination groups and specialist teachers from D&T to Art, Craft and Design.
- The disappearance of a progression pathway from D&T A level to design or engineering degrees.

Keeping the current status quo for the next four years would result in an extremely challenging future for the subject, and substantially impact the D&T communities ability to deliver purposeful D&T education across all state schools to all students.



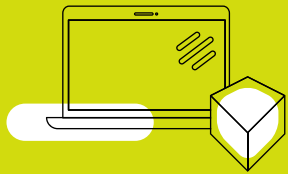
How was the vision created?

Within six months of wider research with the D&T community, it was clear that a single vision which industry and education could align with was needed.

Since this time, over 350 D&T teachers have fed into multiple rounds of **ongoing research**, and have **reviewed and critiqued** our proposals, whilst we have worked with the sector to **raise the awareness** of the critical need to set a new vision for Design Education in schools.

Pearson acting as a coordinator, facilitated an additional three months of **roundtable events** with a consortium of the UK's and world's leading design and engineering organisations, teachers and higher education experts. These organisations provided their expertise on the future vision for the subject, and also the creation of subject content and programmes of study documents typically reserved for the Department for Education. In doing so, the consortium provided the proof that industry and education could align to a single purposeful vision, and could accelerate the work to meet the urgency of subject decline happening in UK schools today.





The final proposal documents

A range of documents created through this work are available below. These have been subject to multiple rounds of critique and review, and have been adapted to ensure top down ambitions for the subject can be met by current teachers of the subject.

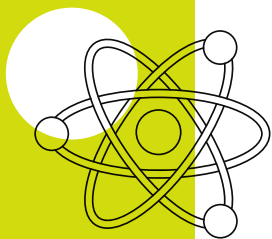
- [**> Programme of Study for KS1-2**](#)
- [**> Programme of Study for KS3**](#)
- [**> Subject Content GCSE**](#)
- [**> Subject Content A Level**](#)
- [**> The Design Perspective Series**
\(sharing insights from stakeholders who helped develop the vision\)](#)

Whilst these documents reflect our current best thinking, we recognise that they will need to continue their evolution over the coming months and years as such a vision is realised.

What next?

We wanted to raise the profile and urgency around D&T education, and are thrilled that we are seeing further research and discussion taking place across the UK and internationally.

By providing our vision and documents created by the consortium to targeted politicians, decision makers and opinion formers, we are committed to maintaining the call for change, and will continue, alongside others, to support the delivery of future reform.



Improve D&T today

In the meantime, there is still much that can be done to meet the needs of teachers and students today.

Through the following routes and approaches, we can support positive steps towards a new future of design education:

- Supporting current D&T teachers to deliver the best possible version of the subject through GCSE and A level qualifications we offer.
- Improving opportunities for responsible design and innovation within the coursework element of the current qualifications.
- Expanding support for alternative pathways through which design and engineering progression benefits.
- Working with the growing community of RD&I teachers who are ready for reform now, and can help build the evidence base needed during a future reform consultation window.
- Work with all of the stakeholders and organisations that formed the consortium to support their own immediate ambitions to support the design and engineering sectors.
- Continue to encourage other organisations to join this ambitious call for changes to D&T that go beyond a small iteration.



Thank you

Pearson would like to thank all of the organisations, individuals, teachers and students, who contributed to the development of the first truly cohesive vision for the Future of Design Education. We are confident this collective thinking will form the basis of future calls for change to the UK curriculum for D&T, which will support all students to use design throughout their lives, solving the problems of today and the future.