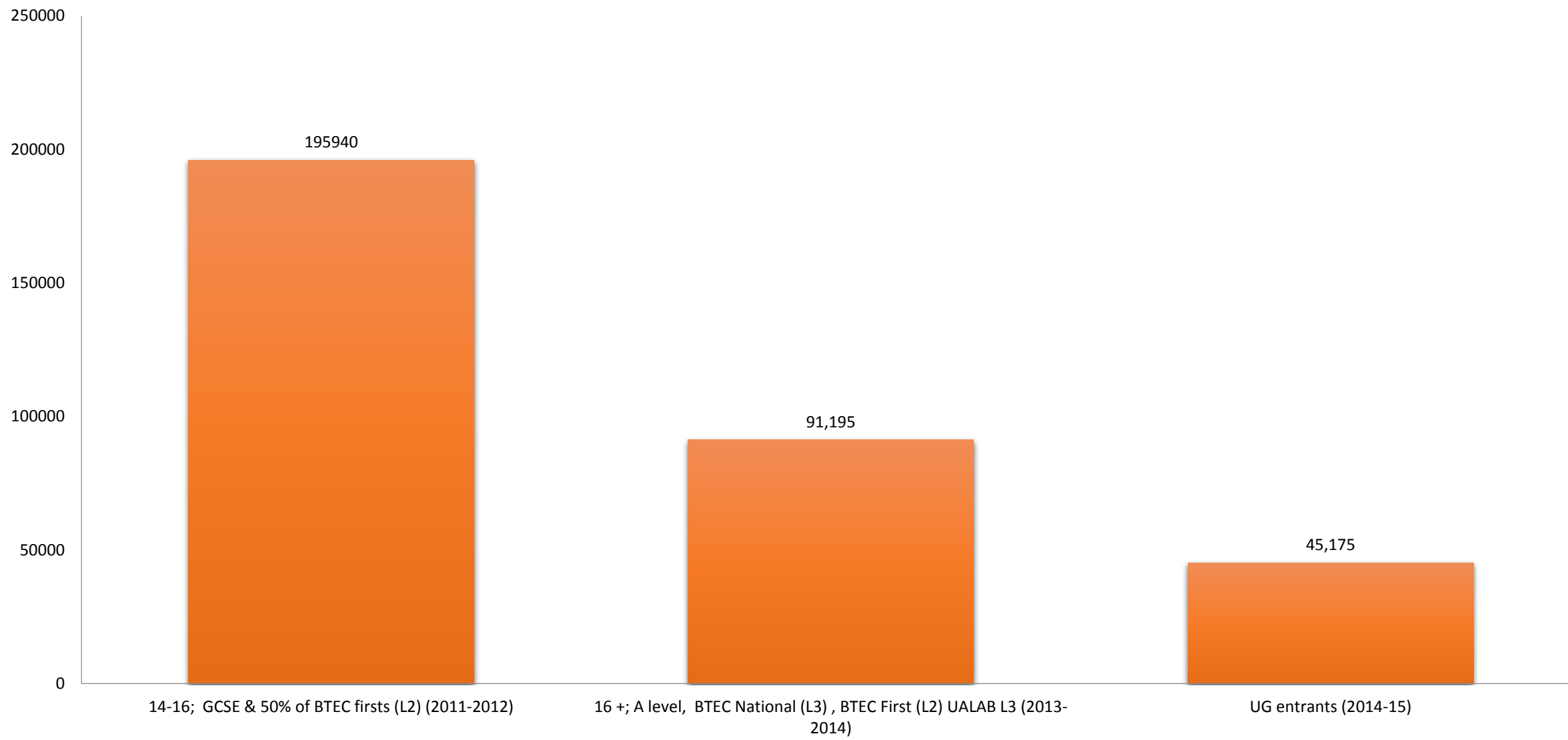# Comparing art & design curricula across compulsory and Higher Education

Ian Thompson

Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon Outreach Manager

'A threshold concept can be considered as akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress. As a consequence of comprehending a threshold concept there may thus be a transformed internal view of subject matter, subject landscape or even world view'

Meyer and Land (2005) *(pg.412)*

*'****transformative*** *(occasioning a significant shift in the perception of a subject),* ***integrative*** *(exposing the previously hidden inter-relatedness of something)* ***irreversible*** *(unlikely to be forgotten, or unlearned only through considerable effort), and frequently* ***troublesome****, for a variety of reasons.*

Land, Cousin, Meyer, Davies, (2005) *(pg.53)*

Difficulty in understanding threshold concepts may leave the learner in a state of 'liminality', a suspended state of partial understanding, or 'stuck place', in which understanding approximates to a kind of 'mimicry' or lack of authenticity. Insights gained by learners as they cross thresholds can be exhilarating but might also be unsettling, requiring an uncomfortable shift in identity, or, paradoxically, a sense of loss.

Land, Meyer Smith (2008) *(pg.10)*

You need resilience because learning is recursive: if you don't 'get it,' you come at it a different way. And you need a certain degree of self-efficacy; you need a certain belief that 'Okay I don't get this, but I know if I hang in there I will get it.' But this US group says this resilience has to be linked to these emotional/affective qualities of hope and optimism. Some kids are tough, but if they don't see a way through or have some kind of hope, they may not make it

Rhem (2013) Stanford faculty blog

Assessment Evidence Descriptor Strand	Level 2 GCSE	Level 3 A'Level	Level 3-4 (UALAB) Extended Diploma and FAD	UAL undergraduate	QAA Benchmark Statement Threshold Standards
Research	Develop ideas through investigations, demonstrating critical understanding of sources.	Develop ideas through **sustained and focused** investigations **informed by contextual and other sources**, demonstrating **analytical** and critical understanding	Have a critical and contextual awareness of **different perspectives** and approaches within art, design or related subjects of study or work **Research**, analyse and evaluate **relevant information** and ideas in order to develop **creative solutions**	Research; **Systematic identification** and investigation of a **range of academic and cultural** sources Analysis; **Examination and interpretation** of resources **Subject Knowledge; Understanding and application of subject knowledge and underlying principles**	The graduate's understanding is informed by research, practice and theory in their discipline(s), including: • the critical, **contextual, historical, conceptual and ethical dimensions** of the **student's discipline in particular**, and art and design in general • the **creative practitioner's relationship with audiences, clients, markets, users, consumers, participants, co-workers and co-creators within a professional environment** • the implications and potential for their **discipline(s) presented by the key developments of current and emerging media and technologies, and of inter and** • **multi-disciplinary approaches to contemporary practice in art and design.** • **Information skills** - students will have the ability to: **source, navigate, select, retrieve, evaluate, manipulate and manage information** from • a variety of sources • select and **employ communication and information technologies.**
Developing ideas	Refine work by exploring ideas, selecting and experimenting with appropriate media, materials, techniques and processes.	Explore and select appropriate **resources,** media, materials, techniques and processes, **reviewing** and refining ideas **as work develops**	**Understand, adapt** and **safely use** appropriate and practical methods and **skills** for **creative production** **Solve complex problems** through the application of art, design or related practical, **theoretical and technical understanding**	Experimentation; Problem solving, risk taking, experimentation and **testing** of ideas and materials in the **realisation of concepts** **Technical Competence; Skills to enable the execution of ideas appropriate to the medium**	• **generate** ideas, **concepts, proposals, solutions or arguments** independently and/or collaboratively as self-initiated activity and/or in response to set briefs • employ both **convergent and divergent thinking** in the processes of **observation, investigation, speculative enquiry, visualisation and/or making** • select, experiment with and make appropriate use of materials, processes and **environments** develop ideas through to outcomes, for **example images, artefacts, environments, products, systems and processes, or texts**
Presentation	Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and demonstrates understanding of visual language	Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and, **where appropriate, makes connections between visual and other elements**	**Effectively** present **themselves and their work** to **appropriate audiences.**	**Communication** & Presentation; **Clarity of purpose; skills in the selected media; awareness and adoption of appropriate conventions; sensitivity** to the needs of **diverse** audiences	• **manage and make appropriate use of the interaction between intention, process, outcome, context, and the methods of dissemination**
Evaluation	Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses.	Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions, **reflecting critically** on work and progress	Critically **review** the **effectiveness** and **appropriateness** of methods, actions and results Use **evaluative** and reflective skills in order to take **responsibility for own learning, development and decision making**	**Personal & Professional Development;** Management of learning through reflection, planning, **self direction, subject engagement and commitment**	Critical engagement: • **analyse information and experiences, and formulate independent judgements** • **articulate reasoned arguments** through reflection • review and evaluate • **use the views of others in the development or enhancement of their work** • **identify personal strengths and needs and reflect on personal development** **Personal qualities** - students will have an enthusiasm for enquiry into their discipline and the motivation to sustain it.
Meta-cognition & Self-management			Take **responsibility** for the research, **planning, time management** and actions to access **progression opportunities**	**Collaborative and/or Independent Professional Working;** Demonstration of suitable behaviour for working in a professional context alone, or with others in diverse teams	Self-management: • **study independently, set goals, manage workloads and meet deadlines** • **anticipate and accommodate change, and work within contexts of ambiguity, uncertainty and unfamiliarity.** • **be resourceful and entrepreneurial.**

	GCSE Subject Level Guidance for Art and Design- Assessment objectives, March 2015, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414161/gcse-subject-level-guidance-for-art-and-design.pdf)	GCE Subject Level Guidance for Art and Design- Assessment objectives, (May 2014) , https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/371208/2014-05-23-gce-subject-level-guidance-for-art-and-design.pdf)	UALAB Diploma in Art & Design - Foundation Studies- Programme Aims, page 3, Level 3 and Level 4 –Specification http://www.arts.ac.uk/media/arts/about-ual-awarding-body/documents/specifications-and-handbooks/Foundation-Diploma-Art-Design-specification-v8.0.pdf. NB UALAB Level 3 Extended Diploma has identical aims	Eight UAL Marking Criteria. http://www.arts.ac.uk/assessment/markingcriteria/	Subject Benchmark Statement describing subject standards for Undergraduate Art & Design. (http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/SBS-Art-and-Design-consultation-16.pdf).

Looking forwards, Land, Cousin, Meyer, Davies, (2005) , highlight the use of effective teaching strategies; *'The task for course developers and designers here is to identify, through constructive (and constructivist) feedback, the source of these epistemological barriers, and subsequently to free up the blocked spaces by, for example, redesigning activities and sequences, through scaffolding, through provision of support materials and technologies or new conceptual tools, through mentoring or peer collaboration, to provide the necessary shift in perspective that might permit further personal development'.*

Land, Cousin, Meyer, Davies, (2005) (*pg. 62-63)*

ual:

Creative Attributes Framework is guidance for embedding and enhancing enterprise and employability within the curriculum at University of the Arts London.

The framework demonstrates how, through our curriculum, we empower our students and graduates to develop the wide ranging qualities, experience and behaviours that prepare them for the future and enable them to develop and sustain a rewarding professional life.

It articulates what we do well currently through surfacing good practice, ensures students understand they access this learning through the curriculum, and sets out an aspirational territory, in order to help us to further improve.

Enterprise and employability is not new to the curriculum. Nor is it a bolt-on. It is core to a creative education and to our practice at UAL. However, translating enterprise and employability into student learning can be complex. The framework provides a systematic approach that supports curriculum making, and provides descriptors that join enterprise and employability to benchmark a wide range of curriculum delivery.

The framework sets out three groups of attributes:

2 Showcasing abilities and accomplishments with others

We will enable students to communicate about themselves and their ideas and develop their own narratives. They will be open to receiving feedback, adapt to different situations, demonstrating the following attributes:

Cm **Communication** – the skills needed to present themselves, their work and their ideas, to inspire others and respond to feedback.

Cn **Connectivity** – the ability to collaborate with others, create networks and develop and contribute to communities of practice.

St **Storytelling** – the ability to demonstrate their unique talents, abilities and experiences to others in an engaging manner.

1 Making things happen

We will support our students to practice and apply their learning in a variety of situations inside the University, in the workplace and in the community. These experiences will enable our students to develop the following attributes:

Pr **Proactivity** – the initiative, hard work and passion required to make things happen in society, in the community, and in the workplace.

En **Enterprise** – the mindset that takes measured risks and that perceives and creates opportunities, and the resourcefulness to pursue these opportunities in an ethical and sustainable way.

Ag **Agility** – the ability to embrace rapid change and retain an open mind.

3 Life-wide learning

We will equip our students to thrive in uncertain futures and navigate change by developing the following attributes:

Cu **Curiosity** – the enthusiasm to seek out new perspectives, to create and build on existing knowledge.

S-E **Self-efficacy** – confidence in their abilities, and the ability to respond positively in various situations.

Re **Resilience** – the willingness to adapt and remain motivated, overcome obstacles, and deal with ambiguity, uncertainty, and rejection.

Appendix 1, AED Table 1

Assessment Evidence Descriptor Strand	Level 2 GCSE	Level 3 A'Level	Level 3-4 (UALAB) Extended Diploma and FAD	UAL undergraduate	QAA Benchmark Statement Threshold Standards
Research	Develop ideas through investigations, demonstrating critical understanding of sources.	Develop ideas through *sustained and focused* investigations, *informed by contextual and other sources*, demonstrating **analytical** and critical understanding	Have a critical and contextual *awareness of different perspectives* and approaches within art, design or related subjects of study or work *Research*, analyse and evaluate *relevant information* and ideas in order to develop *creative solutions*	Research; *Systematic identification* and investigation of a *range of academic and cultural* sources Analysis: *Examination and interpretation* of resources *Subject Knowledge; Understanding and application of subject knowledge and underlying principles*	The student's understanding is informed by research, practice and theory in their discipline(s), including: - the critical, contextual, historical, conceptual and ethical dimensions of the student's discipline in particular, and art and design in general - the creative practitioner's relationship with audiences, clients, markets, users, consumers, participants, co-workers and co-creators within a professional environment - the implications and potential for their discipline(s) presented by the key developments of current and emerging media and technologies, and of inter and multi-disciplinary approaches to contemporary practice in art and design. - information skills - students will have the ability to source, navigate, select, retrieve, evaluate, manipulate and manage information from a variety of sources - select and employ communication and information technologies.
Developing ideas	Refine work by *exploring ideas*, selecting and experimenting with appropriate media, materials, techniques and processes.	*Explore* and select appropriate *resources*, media, materials, techniques and processes, *reviewing* and refining ideas *as work develops*	**Understand, adapt** and **safely use** appropriate and practical methods and **skills** for **creative production** **Solve complex problems** through the application of art, design or related practical, **theoretical and technical understanding**	Experimentation; Problem solving, risk taking, experimentation and *testing* of ideas and materials in the *realisation of concepts* *Technical Competence; Skills to enable the execution of ideas appropriate to the medium*	generate ideas, concepts, proposals, solutions or arguments independently and/or collaboratively as self-initiated activity and/or in response to set briefs - employ both convergent and divergent thinking in the process of observation, investigation, speculative enquiry, visualisation and/or making - select, experiment with and make appropriate use of materials, processes and environments - develop ideas through to outcome, for example images, artefacts, environments, products, systems and processes, or texts
Presentation	Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and demonstrates understanding of visual language	Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and, *where appropriate, makes connections between visual and other elements*	**Effectively** present **themselves and their work** to **appropriate audiences**.	*Communication* & Presentation; *Clarity of purpose; skills in the selected media; awareness and adoption of appropriate conventions; sensitivity* to the needs of *diverse* audiences	- manage and make appropriate use of the interaction between intention, process, outcome, context, and the methods of dissemination
Evaluation	Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses.	Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions, *reflecting critically* on work and progress	Critically *review* the *effectiveness* and appropriateness of methods, actions and results Use *evaluative* and reflective skills in order to take *responsibility for own learning, development and decision making*	*Personal & Professional Development;* Management of learning through reflection, planning, self direction, subject engagement and commitment	Critical engagement: - analyse information and experiences, and formulate independent judgements and articulate reasoned arguments through reflection. - review and evaluate - use the views of others in the development or enhancement of their work - identify personal strengths and needs and reflect on personal development Personal qualities - students will have an enthusiasm for enquiry into their discipline and the motivation to sustain it.
Meta-cognition & Self-management			Take *responsibility* for the research, *planning, time management* and actions to access *progression opportunities*	*Collaborative and/or Independent Professional Working;* Demonstration of suitable behaviour for working in a professional context alone, or with others in diverse teams	Self-management: - study independently, set goals, manage workloads and meet deadlines - anticipate and accommodate change, and work within contexts of ambiguity, uncertainty and unfamiliarity - be resourceful and entrepreneurial

GCSE Subject Level Guidance for Art and Design - Assessment objectives. March 2015. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414161/gcse-subject-level-guidance-for-art-and-design.pdf)

GCE Subject Level Guidance for Art and Design. Assessment objectives. (May 2014) - https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/371200/2014-03-03-gce-subject-level-guidance-for-art-and-design.pdf)

UALAB Diploma in Art & Design - Foundation Studies- Programme Aims, page 3, Level 3 and Level 4 –Specification. http://www.arts.ac.uk/media/arts/about-ual-awarding-body/documents/specifications-and-Handbooks/Foundation-Diploma-in-Art-Design-specification-v8.0.pdf. NB UALAB Level 3 Extended Diploma has identical aims.

Eight UAL Marking Criteria. http://www.arts.ac.uk/assessment/marking-criteria/

Subject Benchmark Statement describing subject standards for Undergraduate Art & Design. http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/SBS-Art-and-Design-consultation-16.pdf)

References

Land R. Cousin G. Meyer J, Davies P. (2005) Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge: implications for course design and evaluation. From: Rust, C (ed) (2005) Improving Student Learning Diversity and Inclusivity. Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development

Land.R, Meyer.J and Smith.J (2008). Threshold Concepts within the Disciplines: Sense. ISBN 978-90-8790-267-4

Rhem.J, (2013). Before and after students "get it": threshold concepts, November 6, 2013, Stanford teaching commons. https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/teaching-talk/and-after-students-get-it-threshold-concepts, accessed 13/7/2016

Contact; i.thompson@arts.ac.uk