

Education Committee Call For Evidence, March 2025, Further Education and Skills

Submission by the British Art Market Federation (BAMF)

[Headings taken from the Call for Evidence]

The British Art Market Federation (BAMF) represents the interests of the UK's large and diverse art market.

The members of BAMF constitute the major elements of this significant sector of the UK's economy. They are: The Antiquarian Booksellers' Association; The Antiquities Dealers' Association; Bonhams Auctioneers; The British Antique Dealers' Association (BADA); Christie's; The Association of Art and Antique Dealers (LAPADA); Phillips Auctioneers; The Society of Fine Art Auctioneers and Valuers (SOFAA); The Society of London Art Dealers (SLAD); and Sotheby's.

The British art market is the third largest art market globally (second largest in 2023) and is comprised of 7,850 businesses, providing direct employment for 41,420 people. This market encompasses a wide range of roles and career paths.

The current curriculum for arts-related education in the UK is a major concern for the British art market; the commercial art sector, much of which is represented by BAMF, is active in organising and supporting various arts-related education and vocational training initiatives.

"Private sector picks up the pieces as UK government cuts art education funding. While university arts departments are being dismantled, dealers and auction houses provide learning programmes." Scott Reyburn and Anny Shaw, The Art Newspaper 19/09/23

BAMF is grateful for the opportunity to explain what its members contribute to arts-based education and opportunities, and to offer its recommendations for improvements to arts-related education in the UK.

Curriculum and Qualifications in Further Education

BAMF considers that the post-16 curriculum is too narrow and lacks incentives for students to pursue interests and studies in arts-related subjects, including History of Art, History, Archaeology and their related subjects.

BAMF considers that the absence of arts-related education (pre- and post-16) has the following detrimental effects:

1. **Opportunities for students.** The loss of alternative career paths for students not suited to a career linked to STEM subjects is highly detrimental. The UK art market and the overall UK cultural sector provide a wide range of opportunities for students who wish

to pursue a university pathway, and also for those who do not. With employment in areas such as art and antiques restoration, conservation, art advisory, logistics and shipping, museum curation and administration, auction house technicians, gallery administrators and many related activities, there is a wide range of academic and non-academic pathways on offer in the cultural sector. The absence of arts-related education means that students may not be aware of these opportunities or may not have the skills or background knowledge to follow them up.

2. **Restricted supply of talent risks restricting growth.** The UK art market has in the past relied to some extent upon the supply of appropriately educated and motivated graduates from other EU countries where arts-related education has been more prevalent, for example France, to support the market's global role. Post Brexit, this supply has dwindled and it is more important than ever to develop arts-related education in the UK to ensure that there is an available pool of suitable talent to support the UK art market and to help it maintain its global importance.
3. **Failing to provide arts-related education and opportunity can be detrimental to students' mental well-being and development.** Providing such education and opportunity enables students to pursue subjects and careers in areas of genuine interest to them. The UK art market and wider cultural sector have many examples of leading participants who did not shine in the narrower STEM environment at school, but who have benefitted significantly from the opportunity to pursue an alternative career, and have contributed significantly as a result.
4. **Lack of arts-related education restricts social mobility.** Experience shows that many of those most likely to experience an arts deficit come from disadvantaged backgrounds, while participation in the arts is shown to fuel social mobility. The cost of study, uncertain career prospects, and a perception of higher education as exclusive and intimidating, can be significant barriers for young people from low socio-economic backgrounds applying to institutions perceived as prestigious. For those who do apply, many candidates are rejected by art schools at the portfolio submission stage as they may not evidence well that they are ready to progress on to further study at university. Under-represented students may often receive less support to tailor and arrange their portfolio for a successful interview. Many of these obstacles can be reduced or overcome by a rounded curriculum which includes arts-related subjects, and pathway partnership with UK art market participants.

Curriculum Policy Recommendations

1. **Reinstate Art & History of Art as A-level choices.** BAMF understands that only 8 state secondary schools offer History of Art as an A-level choice although 80 fee-charging schools do (The Art Newspaper, December 2023). The technical fine art skills are fundamental to aspiring artists in the same way as studying art history is a requirement for many curatorial, specialist and commercial roles in the sector.
2. **Accept an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) in Art History as part of the entry requirements for higher level study of Art History at university,** particularly in the case of differentiated offers to encourage applicants from schools not currently offering Art History A-level.

3. **Offer Art History as a subject choice at GCSE level.** The course could be delivered by history or art teachers already employed, thereby containing additional investment. Art History Link Up (AHLU) is currently piloting accredited programmes for younger secondary school students, in Y9 and Y10. The first iteration, an Art History HPQ (Higher Project Qualification) taught at the Courtauld and online on term-time Sundays was over-subscribed. The majority of AHLU students come from under-represented backgrounds, and to date this year, almost 70% of AHLU students are from Widening Participation backgrounds, with over half identifying as Minority Ethnic.
4. **Support the Art Market Coordinator Apprenticeship** that is being developed to link to the NVQ system. This is a Level 4 qualification and aimed at school leavers or at someone who had just entered the industry with little experience, and will encourage students from wide and varied socio-economic groups throughout the UK to consider careers in the arts. Further information about the scheme follows later in this submission.
5. **The “Life-long Learning Entitlement” (LLE) rules** need to be made sufficiently flexible to ensure that students on high calibre conservation courses, which are not necessarily to degree level, can be in receipt of a student loan. While the LLE is intended to make attending college/university more flexible and affordable by enabling funding for part time and short courses, it requires students to undertake modules which must be part of degree courses or at least formally validated programmes. This can create an obstacle, as some of the practical hand-skills courses at an establishment like West Dean College of Conservation may not always fit a narrowly defined academic approach.

The Assessment System

The financial and logistical pressures on schools inevitably means that their resources will be targeted on areas important to them under the assessment system. Various members of BAMF and bodies associated with BAMF administer their own schemes to support arts-related education. One example is the Lord Mayor of London’s Cultural Placement Scheme, administered by the Worshipful Company of Arts Scholars. This scheme provides placements at leading cultural institutions for students from London state schools at the end of their lower sixth year (year 12).

The Arts Scholars Company also runs a “Schools-Auction House Programme” with the Society of Fine Art Auctioneers and Valuers (SOFAA), whereby regional auctioneers can invite their local schools to auction house experience days.

If the assessment of schools recognised their support for and participation in projects of this nature (or noted its absence), this would significantly assist the development of such schemes.

Skills and Apprenticeships for the Arts

Various members of BAMF are active in this area. One example is Christie’s, which started an apprenticeship scheme in 2017, now operating at about 30 students per annum. The programme has been a huge success, with retention running at 65%. This has been developed into an

Apprenticeship Trailblazer for an **Art Market Coordinator Scheme** being created by a Trailblazer group comprising the Department of Education, GIAA (Government Internal Audit Agency), and Christie's, LAPADA, Bonhams, The Society of London Art Dealers (SLAD), the Society of Fine Art Auctioneers and Valuers (SOFAA), Dreweatts, Bellmans and Woolley & Wallis auctioneers.

An “art market coordinator” may be employed by galleries, auction houses or art dealers in various roles as part of a team delivering sales. The broad purpose of the occupation is to use specialist knowledge and expertise in art history and research to co-ordinate the selling of artworks in and across the art market with relevant stakeholders. They can work across all art market environments such as galleries, auction houses, and dealers throughout the UK and may include roles in offices, studios, showrooms, warehouses, or a combination of these within the trailblazer group.

In their daily work, an employee in this occupation interacts with the departmental specialists and wider operational teams. They also work with legal and finance departments to provide relevant information on artworks and complete a transaction from end to end. To facilitate sales they liaise with clients, internal colleagues and external stakeholders in the UK or internationally.

An employee in this occupation will be responsible for managing the operational elements of art sales, whether that be in the form of art market auctions (live or online), private sales or ‘buy it now’. This will require specialist knowledge and skills in art history and aesthetics to appropriately coordinate logistics, compliance, negotiation, deal making, client services and marketing and research. Roles and responsibilities may vary from organisation to organisation depending on the size of the employer, the specific method of selling and the nature of the artworks involved.

Collaboration between the further education sector, local government and employers to respond to the skills shortage.

There follows examples of projects and partnerships involving members of the UK art market and associated bodies, responding to the skills shortage in arts-related subjects and creating new pathways to careers in the sector.

Christie's Education is partnering with Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) to develop and deliver the first iteration of the Art Market Coordinator Apprenticeship Scheme this year. Christie's Education will provide some of the educational content, while WAES will oversee the delivery and pastoral care for students. This partnership ensures that the curriculum is aligned with industry requirements and provides students with the necessary skills and knowledge to meet employers' expectations.

SOFAA auction houses and the Worshipful Company of Arts Scholars are liaising with schools around the country to develop an “Schools-Auction House Day”, to provide students with the opportunity to experience a range of activities associated with the work of an auction house, from assessing works of art, conducting an auction and considering related activities such as business administration, marketing and photography.

The British Antique Dealers Association (BADA) and the Company of Arts Scholars Charitable Trust each support restoration and conservation courses at West Dean College of Conservation. These support students in restoration of antique furniture, clocks, ceramics, books and metalware. Such skills are of great importance to the arts sector. Some bursaries are open to post graduate applicants and some are offered post school to students showing particular financial need, as an alternative to university education.

Members of the Society of London Art Dealers (SLAD) run several initiatives to improve and diversify career opportunities in the art market. Examples include the gift to 40 students in summer 2023 of involvement in a four-week Slade Widening Participation Summer School. The Slade Widening Participation Summer School helps to diversify the talent pipeline by equipping learners with the necessary skills, confidence and networks to bridge the gap between secondary school and further education in fine art.

Lisson Gallery launched the Solomon B. Hayden Fellowship for Art History in 2020 to support diverse candidates wishing to pursue a career in art history and/or curation. In 2022 the gallery offered bursaries of £10,000 to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students on postgraduate courses at Goldsmiths College.

The Arts Scholars Charitable Trust pays the ticket price and travelling expenses for state school students and their teachers to attend the annual “Ways of Seeing” Conference organised by the Association of Art History in London. In its first year this support meant that state school student participation at the Conference was raised from 20 to 100 students and similar levels have been maintained since, indicating a strong demand for support in this field.

Christie’s and the Arts Scholars Charitable Trust both support the “Art History Link-Up” (AHLU), which has run free-of-charge Art History A Level and EPQ courses for sixth form state students since 2016, on term-time Saturdays at the Wallace Collection, National Gallery, online and now hybrid from the Courtauld, with exceptional outcomes. The success of the AHLU courses also evidences strong demand for arts-related courses and qualifications at the 16+ level.

LAPADA works alongside the Sotheby’s Institute of Art to take two Art Business students (April to June) annually to do a part time internship to gain credits against their MA. LAPADA also manages an annual fair in Berkeley Square that recruits a team of ten to gain experience in all aspects of running an art fair and actively seeks to find them employment through the LAPADA membership and beyond.

Phillips has introduced a number of initiatives reduce barriers for applicants from a wider variety of backgrounds to apply for jobs, including the elimination of degree requirements from many roles, working with The Courtauld in presentations to demystify the roles and careers at auction, and has produced a series of videos of interviews with a diverse group of staff discussing how they achieved their careers at auction. Phillips has also been a longtime financial supporter of Bold Tendencies, which helps to open opportunities for careers in the arts to young people in underprivileged communities.

Sotheby's partners with Creative Access who are a social enterprise providing career-long access, opportunities, support and training for people from under-represented groups. Sotheby's guarantee that 2 out of the approximately 20 programme positions will be given to Creative Access candidates. Sotheby's have also partnered with the Sotheby's Institute of Art to support and part fund the SIA's "Cultural Leaders Programme". This programme is a fully funded scholarship programme, designed to empower and nurture the next generation of diverse leaders in the contemporary art world, and provides a 100% fee waiver for three scholarships over a three-year period (nine students in total) to enable the scholars to pursue one of the Institute's prestigious one-year, full-time Master's degree.

Current challenges for apprenticeships, including employer engagement, funding issues and apprentice pay.

Despite positive advances in recent years, several challenges remain, including apprentice pay, employer engagement, and funding.

There appears to be a continuing misconception that only large employers can benefit from the apprenticeship levy, whereas even small employers who do not pay into the levy can have 90-100% of the cost of the course covered by the government. This misconception has led to an engagement issue with the concept of apprenticeships, but hopefully this can be addressed with better communications around the scheme.

Apprentice pay is dictated by the government with a specific apprentice pay rate (<https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>) which allows some latitude for employers. It will be important to strike a balance between more employers participating in apprenticeship programmes (therefore providing valuable opportunities for students) while ensuring that apprenticeships remain a viable and attractive option for students.

The Quality and Availability of work placements within vocational courses.

The UK art market has a wide range of expertise and can offer rich, high quality, and engaging placements.

The Art Market Coordinator Apprenticeship will provide meaningful and relevant experiences for students across the country, helping them develop the skills and knowledge needed for their future careers. This will be achieved through continuing close collaboration with employers, regular evaluations, and continuous improvement of the placement programs. This will be bolstered by the pastoral care and context provided by WAES, and the content provided by Christie's Education to deliver online courses and in-person modules – regular reviews are part of the course, and can also help identify any issues in a work placement relating to the employer and not the course.

There are a number of other individual placement schemes across the art market, including those mentioned above, which can support, and would be supported by, better arts-related education in UK schools.

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