Response to Government Consultation on the National Curriculum Review: Introducing a Digital Creativity GCSE

Background

- Ukie is the trade body for the UK's video games and interactive entertainment industry. A not-for-profit, it represents more than 700 games businesses of all sizes from start-ups to multinational developers, publishers, and service companies, working across online, mobile, console, PC, esports, virtual reality and augmented reality. Ukie aims to support, grow, and promote member businesses and the wider UK video games and interactive entertainment industry by optimising the economic, cultural, political, and social environment needed for businesses in our sector to thrive.

- The UK video games industry is an economic powerhouse and a hotbed for the development of emerging technologies, generating £6 billion in gross value added to the UK economy and supporting 76,000 FTEs in 23 key locations across the UK. The average GVA per FTE reaching £113k, nearly double that of the UK economy average. 58% of games development jobs are based outside of London and the South East.

- The UK's established video games sector is a global leader in the emerging technologies which will develop and shape the industries of the future, including across the creative sector. This sees the UK leading the world in fusing creativity, art and technology, using cutting-edge techniques to develop new games and to bring new products to the market. We estimate that the spillover effects of video games technology into other sectors, like advanced manufacturing, contributes an additional £760m in GVA growth in the UK alone.

- As a driving force behind policy reform and educational development, Ukie plays a pivotal role in advocating for the future of digital education and its intersection with creative industries. Ukie is particularly committed to bridging the gap between the digital economy and education, ensuring that young people are equipped with the relevant skills to succeed in a rapidly evolving workforce.

- Ukie has for over a decade run the Digital School House (DSH) programme, which uses play based learning to engage the next generation of pupils and teachers with the Computing curriculum. It is backed by the video games industry and is delivered through a network of Schoolhouses and lead teachers who have developed innovative activities and free adaptable resources which aim to bridge the gap between industry and education. We estimate that DSH programmes have reached over 300,000 pupils and have supported 19,000 teachers over the last decade.

Consultation Process Overview

Stage 1: Initial Consultation (2023)

1. Ukie, in partnership with the video games industry and key players in the wider creative industries, as well as educators, examined how to best tackle the decline in creative subject in schools. Stakeholders involved in consultations have expressed strong support for a qualification that combines creative digital skills with technical computing knowledge. Many agree that the current assessment system, which overemphasises theoretical exams, does not adequately reflect the real-world nature of digital creativity. The feedback calls for a more balanced, inclusive curriculum that enables students to apply what they learn in practical, hands-on ways, better preparing them for employment in creative industries or higher education.

2. The first stage of the consultation process, which began in 2023, sought to establish a clear understanding of the current landscape of digital education and the skills required for careers in the video games and creative industries. A commissioned study by Centric was conducted to gather community perceptions around the video games industry and the available roles and career opportunities for young people, particularly those from underrepresented background. The study confirmed that there was a lack of knowledge or exposure to relevant skills and career awareness of roles in the games industry and that both students and educators believe there is a significant gap in education that fails to bridge technical computing skills with creative application.

3. In parallel, Ukie held roundtable discussions involving educators from the **Digital Schoolhouse programme**, an initiative designed to bridge the gap between industry and education. The consultations included input from 10 educators across various phases of education—primary, secondary, and further education (FE). The key insight that emerged was the need for a curriculum that provides a more balanced integration of digital creativity with technical computing, especially for students interested in pursuing careers in game development, digital media, and interactive design. Educators highlighted that current computing qualifications, such as the Computer Science GCSE, are too focused on theoretical knowledge and often fail to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of creative digital skills.

4. Industry representatives from video game companies, digital media agencies, and interactive entertainment businesses echoed these concerns, calling for a qualification that reflects the evolving nature of the digital economy. Many pointed out that the skills needed in the workforce, such as digital design, game development, and multimedia production, are often underrepresented in traditional educational offerings.

Stage 2: Development Consultation

5. The second stage of the consultation process involved more in-depth discussions to refine the structure and content of the Digital Creativity GCSE. This stage gathered feedback from a broader set of stakeholders, including representatives from an initial

group of over 50 different companies in the video games and digital sectors during events such as **Ukie Members Day** and **Ukie Education Member Group** meetings. We then held a further round of roundtable discussions, which included a further 30 companies, provided valuable insights into the practical skills that students should acquire through the Digital Creativity GCSE. The focus was on ensuring that the qualification would address the specific needs of industries such as video games, film production, esports, and digital media.

6. Alongside these industry consultations, Ukie engaged with **80 Digital Schoolhouse educators** and **25 Ukie Students Programme members** from across the education spectrum. Educators from both primary and secondary schools, as well as those in further education (FE) and higher education (HE), and educators who had subsequently moved into industry and have developed dedicated skills and apprenticeship programmes, shared their views on the curriculum's current limitations. Feedback indicated that the traditional focus on exams and theoretical content left little room for students to develop practical, hands-on digital creativity skills. The consultation revealed a consensus that a more flexible, interdisciplinary curriculum is needed—one that integrates digital literacy, technical computing, and creative skills development to provide a holistic digital education.

7. The insights gained from these consultations made it clear that the Digital Creativity GCSE would serve as an essential step toward creating a more relevant and inclusive curriculum, bridging the gap between technical computing education and the creative digital industries.

Overview: The state of play of Creativity and Digital Literacy in UK schools

8. In the UK, the cultural and creative industries contribute £126 billion in GVA and continues to outpace in the broader economy in terms of growth. Creativity is a driving force across multiple industries, spanning not only traditional arts but also technology, business and science. As the boundaries of creativity expand, so too does the need for a curriculum that reflects modern career pathways and the skills required to succeed in them.

9. While subjects like Art and Design have seen relatively stable uptake in the UK curriculum over time, this broader trend masks the more complex effects of recent educational policies that have reshaped what is taught in schools. A key example is the introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) in 2010, which has had a profound impact on the prioritisation of certain subjects, particularly at the expense of the creative disciplines. The EBacc requirement focused on five core subject areas—English, Maths, Science, Modern Foreign Languages, and Humanities—with schools under pressure to publish results showing that students achieved at least a C grade in these subjects. As a result, non-EBacc subjects, including arts and creative subjects, have been increasingly de-prioritised, resulting in a shift in focus away from these important areas.

10. This shift has had significant consequences for the creative curriculum. Department for Education (DfE) figures from 2018 revealed that the number of hours dedicated to the broader category of 'arts' subjects dropped by 21% between 2010 and 2017, while the number of arts teachers declined by 20%. The Cultural Learning Alliance's Annual Report Card in May 2024 revealed even more concerning statistics, including that 27% of schools had cut creative courses directly due to the EBacc's implementation. This was particularly detrimental for subjects like Art & Design, Music, and Design & Technology, which became optional at Key Stage 4 (KS4). This shift towards optionality, especially for creative subjects, can act as a disincentive for schools to invest in these areas when they are still mandatory at earlier key stages. This trend perpetuates underinvestment and exacerbates challenges related to teacher supply, as fewer graduates are opting for careers in creative teaching.

11. Further data shows the decline in the uptake of creative subjects at both secondary and post-secondary levels. UCAS data for the period 2019-2023 showed a decline in acceptances for key creative subject areas, with Media, Journalism & Communications down by 0.7% and Design, Creative & Performing Arts seeing a significant drop of 7.4%. These figures highlight a troubling trend, with creative subjects—critical to the thriving UK creative economy—facing diminishing participation and engagement from students.

12. The introduction of Progress 8 in 2016, a measure to hold secondary schools accountable for their performance, further amplified this problem. Progress 8 places a heavy emphasis on EBacc subjects, meaning schools that prioritise these subjects tend to perform better in the league tables. This leaves little room for the creative subjects, which are perceived to be of lesser value in terms of the school's performance. A survey conducted by Escape Studios in 2024 revealed that 40% of the 2,008 UK adults surveyed, including 38% of parents and guardians, did not believe creative roles were "real jobs," highlighting a broader societal bias that undermines the value of creative education.

13. This bias against creative subjects has a disproportionate impact on disadvantaged students, who are less likely to access the creative opportunities that foster cognitive development, well-being, and employability. The decline in access to creative subjects, especially for these students, means fewer can benefit from the cognitive and non-cognitive developmental benefits that come from participation in the arts. The Education Endowment Foundation's 2016 report on the Impact of Arts Education found that participation in creative activities had a positive effect on literacy and numeracy, suggesting that these subjects contribute to academic achievement and cognitive development.

14. The consequences of these educational trends extend into higher education, where creative subjects are facing challenges. For example, A-Level entries in creative subjects like Design & Technology, Drama, and Media/Film/TV Studies have seen steep declines. Between 2011 and 2023, Design & Technology A-Level entries fell by 45%, while Media/Film/TV Studies saw a 32% reduction. The Campaign for the Arts reports that even

Art & Design saw a 4.5% decline in A-Level uptake. These decreases are indicative of the ongoing devaluation of creative education at the school level, and they risk further diminishing the talent pipeline for the creative industries.

15. Importantly, the gender disparity within these subjects is noteworthy. For example, in 2018, there were twice as many female students taking GCSE Art and Design as male students, and for Performing and Expressive Arts, the disparity was even greater. These subjects tend to appeal to female students, in contrast to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects, which still see a significantly lower uptake among females. This suggests that creative subjects offer an important route for female students who may feel excluded from the STEM pipeline.

16. Unfortunately, as creative subjects have been sidelined, there has been an increased focus on STEM subjects, especially under policies like the EBacc and Progress 8. This focus, while essential for preparing students for many modern careers, has come at the cost of broader creative education, which is equally vital in preparing students for a rapidly changing and increasingly digital world. As industries like architecture, design, animation, and music become more technology-based, students need both digital skills and creativity to excel. The integration of digital skills with creativity is essential for the future workforce, particularly in fields that require both artistic vision and technical proficiency, such as video game design, digital media production, and digital art.

17. In addition to these policy-driven shifts, there are broader financial pressures at play. The School Cuts campaign has revealed that seven out of ten schools in England are facing real-term budget cuts, with funding for creative subjects disproportionately affected. Data from the Design Council's 2022 report further illustrates this issue, noting that the cuts to education funding have led to a reduction in the number of specialist teachers for creative subjects. In many schools, non-specialist teachers are being asked to deliver arts education, which impacts the quality and depth of instruction.

18. These financial constraints are also evident in the broader extracurricular opportunities available to students. As extracurricular activities in creative fields become increasingly limited, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are disproportionately affected. Research from the Cultural Learning Alliance highlights an 'enrichment gap', where young people from wealthier backgrounds continue to have access to private extracurricular activities, while their less affluent peers miss out on these valuable opportunities. The National Saturday Club (NSC) has been identified as one example of an initiative that helps bridge this gap by providing affordable access to creative education, but more widespread initiatives are needed to ensure equitable access to creative education across the country.

The Importance of Integrating Creativity and Digital Skills

19. The decline in creative education is particularly concerning given the growth of the creative industries. According to DCMS, the creative industries contributed £126 billion

to the UK economy in 2022, a 12% increase in real terms since 2019. This growth has been mirrored in sectors like video game development, which saw a 4.4% increase in value in 2023, reaching £7.82 billion. However, the UK's future success in the creative industries depends on ensuring that young people are equipped with the right blend of digital and creative skills.

20. The fusion of digital skills and creativity is not just important; it is essential for innovation. Fields such as design, animation, music production, and video games have been transformed by technology, and the demand for professionals who can combine technical proficiency with creative thinking is growing. Without the opportunity to develop these combined skills at school, young people may struggle to reach their full potential in these dynamic sectors.

21. Additionally, the need to foster gender equity in creative education is paramount. The Durham Commission on Creativity and Education has noted that creativity should be practiced across all disciplines, not confined to specific subjects. When students can apply creative thinking to all aspects of their learning, they are better equipped to succeed in an increasingly complex and technology-driven workforce. This is especially important in closing the gender gap in fields like video game development, where women remain underrepresented. Fostering both creativity and digital skills in all students can help bridge this gap, empowering them to shape the future.

22. Stakeholders involved in consultations have expressed strong support for a qualification that combines creative digital skills with technical computing knowledge. Many agree that the current assessment system, which overemphasises theoretical exams, does not adequately reflect the real-world nature of digital creativity. The feedback calls for a more balanced, inclusive curriculum that enables students to apply what they learn in practical, hands-on ways, better preparing them for employment in creative industries or higher education.

23. The Digital Creativity GCSE would address these issues by providing a qualification that integrates creative problem-solving with technical skill development, making it possible for students to engage with both the artistic and technical elements of the digital world. This would offer a more inclusive educational pathway that reflects the increasing demand for digital and creative skills across a variety of sectors.

***Nasser Masri**, Computer Science Teacher at Brentford School for Girls:*

"A Digital Creativity GCSE could open pathways to explore computing in a way that feels relevant and engaging, fostering a more inclusive digital future. This GCSE offers a unique entry point, combining creativity with tech skills, which could diversify and enrich the field. A Digital Creativity GCSE would make computing more accessible, particularly for girls, by showcasing the creative possibilities within technology."

***David Eley**, Teacher of IT at St Thomas More School:*

"The Digital Creativity GCSE looks like an IT qualification that students will really engage with - the fun parts of Creative iMedia mixed in with up-to-date topics and a theme of video games. I will sign my students up for it straight away when it becomes a reality."

General Views on Curriculum, Assessment, and Pathways

What Works in the Current System?

24. While there are many areas of concern regarding the current curriculum, there are some aspects that educators and industry professionals feel work well. For example, the existing core subject framework, which includes digital literacy, provides a solid foundation for students to engage with basic technological concepts. Digital literacy is increasingly viewed as an essential skill, not just for those pursuing careers in tech, but for all students, given the pervasiveness of digital technology in everyday life.

25. Furthermore, some subjects benefit from specialist teaching, particularly in fields where expertise is critical for students to develop a deep understanding of complex topics. Computer Science at the GCSE level, while often seen as overly theoretical, does have value in offering a foundation in computational thinking, algorithms, and programming.

What Doesn't Work or Isn't Helpful?

26. Despite these positive elements, the current curriculum faces significant limitations. One of the most widely cited issues is the **outdated nature** of the existing content. The computing curriculum has become increasingly fragmented. New content is added without properly addressing outdated material, which results in an overloaded syllabus. This creates pressure on educators who are tasked with delivering increasingly complex material within a limited time frame. The result is often a superficial engagement with topics, rather than deep, meaningful exploration of subjects.

27. Another critical issue is the **narrow focus** on Computer Science, which tends to concentrate on technical, theoretical aspects of computing at the expense of creative digital skills. While understanding algorithms and coding is important, it does not prepare students for the creative demands of the digital economy, where industries like video games, animation, digital marketing, and media production require a mix of technical and artistic skills. Students are often left without the opportunity to engage with creative problem-solving or design work in a digital context, limiting their exposure to careers that require a blend of technical and creative skills.

28. Digital Skills at Key Stage 4 is often left to be covered solely as a cross curricular piece through a range of subjects and has no independent recognition or certification – and as such in the context of the current structure is **deprioritised by both students and teachers.** In order to improve the standards of digital skills in all students leaving school at 16 we must raise the priority of digital skills and look at how a qualification could be made mandatory.

29. The **over-emphasis on exams** is another significant concern. Traditional assessments in computing focus heavily on theoretical knowledge, often neglecting practical application and creative expression. This does not align with the real-world demands of industries like video games, where the ability to create, test, and iterate is as important as understanding theory. Many educators argue that exam-based assessments are not an adequate reflection of a student's abilities, particularly in fields that require hands-on creativity and collaboration.

30. Additionally, the issue of **unequal access to resources** continues to be a significant barrier in digital education. Schools, especially those in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, often lack access to the necessary hardware, software, and teacher training required to deliver a high-quality computing education. This creates an uneven playing field, where students from affluent areas have access to advanced technology and better training, while others are left behind.

James Cole, a Northern Ireland educator, shared concerns about the overly prescriptive primary curriculum: “The primary curriculum is too prescriptive and focuses on the outcomes rather than creativity and curiosity. There is no time for freedom or exploration because everything is rushed onto the next objective.”

He also noted significant gaps in digital literacy between primary and secondary school students:

“Progression between Primary and Secondary in computing drops massively between year 6 and 7. Children have lower digital literacy skills, e.g. word processing, image copying and pasting.”

Jose Rodriguez:

“The curriculum in general is too restrictive in material and time. It also seems like once something is learnt we move on and never see it again, leaving those skills learnt behind and obsolete. Assessment should not be necessary and learning is more about experience, saying that a rubric or guidance would be ideal so teachers can guide students knowing properly what outcomes can be expected.”

Suggestions for Improvement

31. Educators, industry professionals, and other stakeholders have made several suggestions to improve the current curriculum. One of the most frequently proposed solutions is the need for a **broader, more balanced curriculum**. There is a clear consensus that digital education should integrate both creative and technical skills, rather than treating these areas as separate and distinct. A curriculum that blends technical knowledge with creative problem-solving would better prepare students for the real-world demands of industries such as video games, digital media, and design.

32. Another key recommendation is to shift towards a **student-centred approach** that encourages exploration and creativity. Rather than adhering strictly to a rigid syllabus, educators should be given the flexibility to tailor lessons to the needs and interests of their students, allowing for more hands-on learning experiences. This would allow students to engage with digital content in a way that fosters curiosity, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving.

33. Furthermore, there is a strong call for **cross-curricular teaching** that connects computing and digital creativity to other subjects, such as art, design, and media studies. This approach would allow students to see the real-world applications of their learning and better understand the interdisciplinary nature of digital careers. This could also help students build a portfolio of skills that span both technical and creative domains, giving them a more competitive edge in the job market.

34. Coupled to this, Government should consider **a mandatory qualification encompassing digital skills** for school leavers ages 16. Currently as there is no recognition or certification, digital skills are deprioritised by students and teachers. The review should consider whether a requirement to sit computer science, digital creativity or another related subject such as a BTEC should be compulsory in order to both develop and recognise digital skills in the national curriculum. Government could also look at a micro-accreditation system which could recognised digital skills gained through the use or application of technology across a range of subjects.

35. Lastly, **professional development for teachers** is crucial. Educators need ongoing training and support to stay up to date with the latest technologies, pedagogies, and industry trends. Investing in teacher development ensures that educators have the tools and resources they need to deliver high-quality, engaging digital education to their students.

Inclusion

36. A major concern raised throughout the consultation process is the issue of **equitable access to resources**. In many schools, particularly those in disadvantaged areas, students are unable to access the digital tools and resources that are necessary for success in digital education. The lack of sufficient hardware, software, and internet access places these students at a disadvantage compared to their peers in wealthier schools. This technological divide exacerbates existing educational inequalities and limits opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to develop the digital skills needed for future success.

37. Equally, there is a concern that many teachers in these areas lack the training and support needed to teach digital subjects effectively. Without proper professional development, teachers are often unable to provide the level of expertise required to guide students through the complexities of digital learning, particularly in creative fields like game design and multimedia production. Ensuring that all students have access to high-quality digital

education is crucial to closing the achievement gap and providing every student with the opportunity to succeed.

Curriculum and Qualification Content

38. The proposed **Digital Creativity GCSE** represents a much-needed response to the current limitations of the curriculum. The focus of this qualification would be to combine creative and technical digital skills, offering students the opportunity to explore fields such as game development, digital design, multimedia production, and interactive content creation. These areas are not adequately covered by existing GCSE qualifications, such as Computer Science, which is often too theoretical and focused on preparing students for a career in IT rather than the broader creative digital economy.

39. The Digital Creativity GCSE would allow students to engage with both the technical and artistic sides of digital education, providing them with a more holistic understanding of the skills required for success in the modern digital economy. This would prepare students for a wide range of careers, including roles in video games, animation, digital marketing, app development, and more.

40. Moreover, by incorporating practical projects and hands-on learning, the Digital Creativity GCSE would better reflect the real-world demands of the digital economy. Students would gain experience in creating digital products, working with industry-standard tools, and developing their creative portfolios. This would give them the skills and experience necessary to transition smoothly into further education or employment in the digital and creative sectors.

Assessment and Accountability

41. One of the most significant challenges with the current curriculum is its **overemphasis on exams**. Many educators and industry stakeholders argue that exams are an inadequate measure of students' abilities, particularly in creative and technical subjects like computing and digital media. Exams tend to focus on theoretical knowledge and often fail to assess the practical, hands-on skills required in the digital economy. For a subject like Digital Creativity, where the application of skills is as important as theoretical knowledge, this approach is problematic.

42. Instead, the assessment system should be rebalanced to include both **practical and theoretical components**. The Digital Creativity GCSE should allow students to demonstrate their creative problem-solving abilities through project-based assessments, coursework, and practical exercises. This would give a more accurate picture of their abilities and better reflect the demands of the industries they may pursue after graduation.

43. Moreover, **innovative assessment techniques** such as digital portfolios, interactive projects, and collaborative tasks should be introduced. These assessments could be

tailored to suit the digital and creative nature of the subject, offering students the chance to showcase their talents in ways that align with industry expectations. Introducing more flexible and diverse assessment methods would ensure that all students, regardless of their learning style, are given the opportunity to demonstrate their strengths.

Qualification Pathways (16-19)

44. The current qualification pathways for students aged 16-19 are often viewed as too rigid, with academic qualifications like A Levels being seen as the preferred route for many students. Meanwhile, vocational qualifications such as T-Levels are viewed as secondary, often with limited recognition within creative and digital industries. This mismatch creates a barrier for students interested in pursuing careers in video games, digital media, and related fields, as current vocational offerings do not align well with industry needs.

45. To address this issue, the Digital Creativity GCSE should be part of a broader effort to create more flexible and diverse pathways for students aged 16-19. Both **academic and vocational qualifications** should be seen as equally valuable, with students having the option to pursue a combination of both. Vocational qualifications, including those in digital creativity, should be given equal standing with A Levels to ensure that students have a broad range of pathways to choose from, depending on their interests and career goals.

Curriculum and Qualification Content (continued)

46. In the context of modern digital industries, **digital creativity** has become an essential skill across a wide range of sectors. The introduction of the Digital Creativity GCSE would ensure that students have the opportunity to develop both technical and creative skills, preparing them for careers that demand a combination of both. This would enable students to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and technical expertise, all of which are essential for success in the digital economy.

47. The qualification would also better prepare students for the rapidly evolving landscape of the digital world. By introducing students to current tools, platforms, and technologies, the Digital Creativity GCSE would ensure that they are equipped with the skills needed to adapt to new digital developments as they emerge.

Conclusion

48. The consultation response underscores a critical need for reform in how the UK educates its students in the digital and creative sectors. Current curricula, particularly in subjects like Computing and Digital Media, have become increasingly outdated, offering limited exposure to the practical, hands-on skills required for success in today's rapidly evolving digital economy. As the demand for digital literacy, creative problem-solving, and technical expertise grows across a broad range of industries—spanning everything from video game development and digital media production to emerging fields such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality—it is essential that the educational system adapts to better meet these needs.

49. The Digital Creativity GCSE offers a vital opportunity to bridge the gap between the technical and creative dimensions of digital education. The need for a qualification that integrates both technical computing knowledge and creative digital skills has been consistently echoed by educators, industry professionals, and students alike. While traditional qualifications such as Computer Science GCSE have a place in educating students about the fundamental principles of computing, they are increasingly seen as insufficient to equip young people for careers in the digital economy, which require a much broader skill set that spans creativity, collaboration, and technical execution. By focusing solely on theory, and often neglecting the practical, hands-on applications of digital learning, current qualifications do not sufficiently prepare students for the diverse career opportunities available in the digital and creative sectors.

50. Through its consultations, Ukie has gathered overwhelming support for the Digital Creativity GCSE, both from those in the educational field and from stakeholders within the creative industries. This widespread support indicates that the introduction of such a qualification is not only timely but essential. It would offer students a more inclusive, practical, and creative pathway that reflects the interdisciplinary nature of modern digital careers. A more balanced curriculum—one that integrates technical skills with creative thinking—would provide students with a far more rounded education, one that mirrors the complex nature of many of today's most exciting industries.

51. The Digital Creativity GCSE would address key shortcomings of the current educational framework. It would offer a curriculum that encourages students to think critically and creatively, integrating project-based learning that encourages real-world application of knowledge. It would also provide students with the opportunity to develop portfolios of work that demonstrate both their technical ability and their creative problem-solving skills. In an era where employers are increasingly looking for young people who are not only technically proficient but also innovative and able to think outside the box, such a qualification would be incredibly valuable.

52. Additionally, the introduction of the Digital Creativity GCSE would help address the stark disparities in digital education access. The unequal distribution of resources—especially in disadvantaged schools—has been a recurring concern throughout the consultation process. In order to ensure that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, have equal opportunities to thrive in the digital economy, it is vital that access to high-quality digital education be expanded and made more equitable. The government must prioritise funding for schools and training for teachers, ensuring that all students, regardless of location or background, have access to the resources, technology, and pedagogies necessary to succeed.

53. Furthermore, the qualification must be part of a wider overhaul of the 16-19 education pathways. The current system, which places A Levels on a pedestal while relegating vocational qualifications to secondary importance, does not provide the flexibility or

inclusivity needed for students to pursue both academic and vocational pathways concurrently. Many of the most innovative and exciting careers in the digital and creative industries require a blend of academic knowledge and vocational expertise. By reassessing the qualification structure to give equal weight to both A Levels and vocational qualifications like the Digital Creativity GCSE, the government can help create more diverse career pathways for young people, ensuring that they have the flexibility to follow the path best suited to their interests, skills, and aspirations.

54. Ultimately, the introduction of the Digital Creativity GCSE is not just a chance to improve one subject within the curriculum but a broader opportunity to rethink how digital and creative education is delivered across the system. By introducing a qualification that integrates technical and creative skills, the government can help to prepare young people for the diverse and evolving demands of the workforce. In doing so, it would make a significant contribution to the UK's ambition to be a global leader in digital innovation and creative industries.

55. This consultation response calls on the government to act now to ensure that the Digital Creativity GCSE is introduced in a way that maximises its potential to equip students with the skills they need to thrive in a digital world. With the right investments in resources, teacher training, and curriculum development, the Digital Creativity GCSE could serve as a model for how creative digital education can be integrated into mainstream schooling, ensuring that the next generation of learners is fully equipped to take on the challenges of tomorrow's digital economy. Through the introduction of this qualification, the government can provide a more inclusive, accessible, and future-facing education system—one that not only prepares students for the world of work but also enables them to shape and lead the digital creative industries of the future.

Recommendations

56. **Integrate Creativity with Technical Skills**: The Digital Creativity GCSE provides and opportunity to combine both creative and technical digital skills to prepare students for careers in the digital and creative sectors.

57. **Ensure Practical Assessment**: Practical work, including project-based learning and coursework, should be a key component of assessment in digital creativity subjects.

58. **Promote Equitable Access to Resources**: Ensure all students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have access to the digital tools and expertise necessary to succeed.

59. **Review Post-16 Pathways**: Reassess the structure and flexibility of the 16-19 qualification pathways to ensure that both academic and vocational options are equally accessible and relevant to students' career aspirations.

60. **This response calls on the government to prioritise the introduction of the Digital Creativity GCSE as a key step in ensuring that the education system evolves to meet the needs of students and the industries that will drive the future economy.**