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# bridging the creativity gap

# white paper

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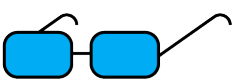
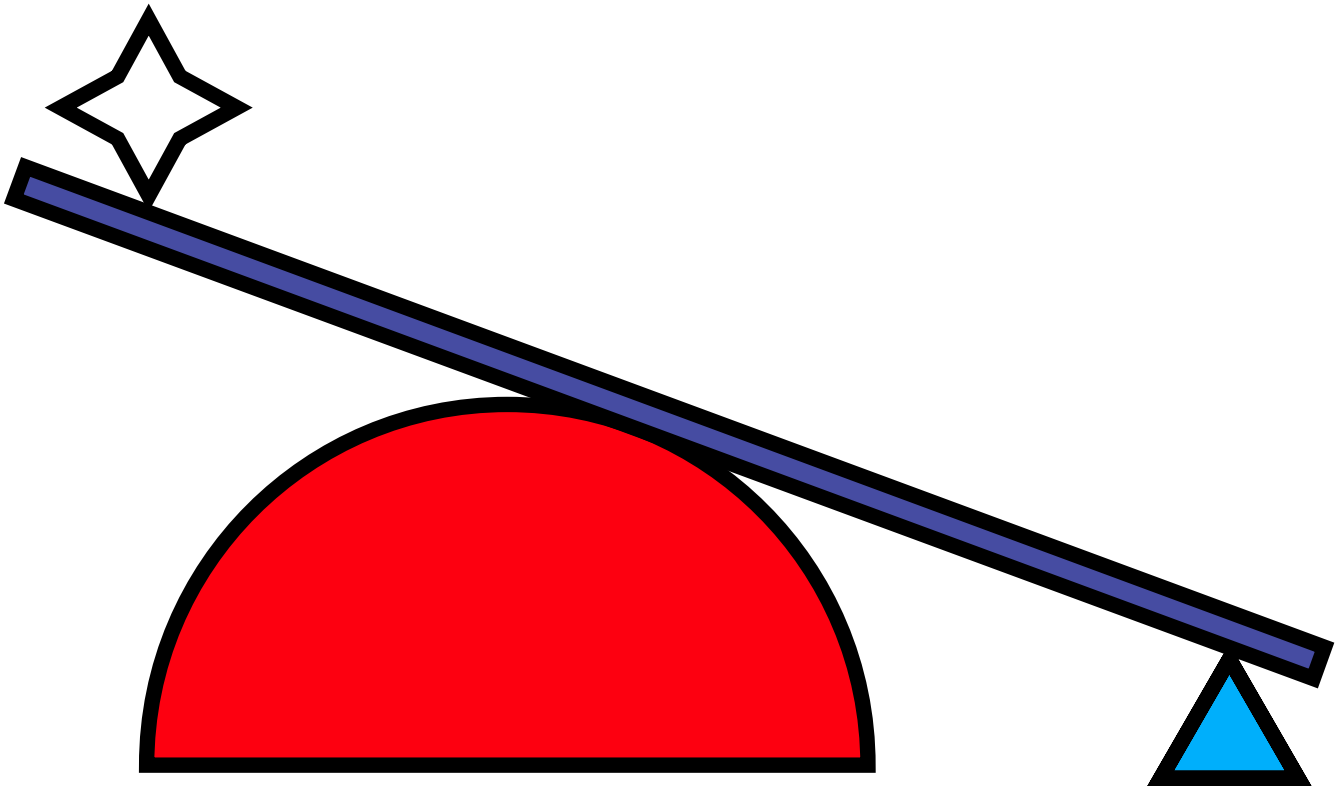


bridging the creativity gap

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

# **White Paper:** An education framework for recent graduates to support competences in the creative industry





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**Executive summary** **4**

**Preliminary Insights from Industry Professionals: A Survey-based Exploration of Creative Graduates' Preparedness for the Workforce** **9**

Background 9

Main results 10

Insights 11

**Finding the lacking competences. Study report.** **13**

Study setup 13

Participants 13

Session structure 14

Different visions of lacking competences 15

Recent graduates perception 15

Teachers' perspective 18

Industry perception 22

Mixing visions. Looking for a common list of skills 25

Strategy and critical thinking 25

Understanding the industrial process 26

Entrepreneurial mindset 26

**Creative industry and Maker Culture** **31**

**Education framework** **32**

Introduction 33

Framework structure 34

Framework implementation and main guidelines 36

Framework Assessment and Evaluation 45

**Implications for creative industry** **46**

**Recommendations for policy makers in the Context of Bridging The Creativity Gap** **48**

**Conclusion** **50**



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# Executive summary

*Context*

The creative sector plays a vital role in the development of societies, economies, and emerging futures.

“The EU has strong and vibrant cultural and creative industries. These are not only essential for Europe's cultural diversity, strengthening social cohesion and increasing Europe’s attractiveness internationally. They are among the continent's most dynamic sectors. According to Eurostat figures, cultural and creative industries employ 8.7 million people in the EU, equivalent to 3.8% of the total workforce in the EU, representing 1.2 million enterprises”[1].

The advertising, visual communications, and design components of this sector have contributed significantly to the growth of economies across the globe. According to a 2017 Deloitte[2]study, every euro spent on advertising adds approximately seven euros to the GDP. In the EU, the €92 billion spent on advertising in 2014 contributed €643 billion to the GDP, representing 4.6% of the overall EU GDP.

The creative industry is also an essential driving force for the labour market. There are currently six million jobs in advertising in the EU, equivalent to 2.6% of all EU employment. Additionally to its contribution to the GDP and labour market, creativity is becoming increasingly valued by people across multiple commercial sectors, with research-led businesses such as McKinsey finding strong correlation between creativity and financial performance[3].As such, creative industry experts will become a crucial asset for any company, regardless of the sector.

On the other hand, digital and technological literacies are becoming an increasingly important facet of modern life. Hence, it is necessary to ensure that the skills taught in the different education programs, including those associated with the creative industry, match the pace of innovation and change.

Despite recognition that skills are an essential component which enable EU businesses and individuals to maximise the potential of the creative industry; previous EU research conducted by D&AD demonstrated a mismatch between the skills required and the skills of new talent.

In recent years D&AD & ADCE have also seen a growing number of experts pointing out that the creative industry is experiencing skill gaps between what is being taught in academic settings and the skills needed by recent students in an ever-changing creative industry. This is

[1] EU Cultural Statistics 2018.. https://culture.ec.europa.eu/policies/selected-themes/data-on-the-cultural-sector

[2] Value of Advertising, 2017. https://wfanet.org/knowledge/item/2017/01/01/The-Value-of-Advertising-2017

[3] (Mckinsey: Creativity's Bottom Line, 2017. https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/creativitys-bottom-line-how-winning-companies-turn-creativity-into-business-value-and-growth)


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a shared concern with various European stakeholders, and described in policy documents such as “Digital Education Action Plan”, and the reports “A new skills agenda for Europe” and “A new European Agenda for Culture” among others. All these reports emphasise the importance of acquiring necessary skills either in different vocational or undergraduate education programs or during other types of education programs targeted to life long learning. Besides practical and economical aspects it is important to take into consideration also ethical considerations - students need to be equipped with the skills they need to forge a successful career after years of study and financial strain.

*Bridging the Creativity Gap: research finding*

To identify the skills required by the industry that are not addressed adequately in the different education programs and investigate how those skill gaps can be addressed, a consortium formed by five leading European partners in different fields within the creativity industry sector carried out two studies during Q1 2021. The first study consisted of a survey answered by 45 creatives from across Europe working at a senior level with recruitment responsibilities. The survey aimed to identify the most relevant subject areas in which the industry finds the biggest skill gaps among new recruits. The survey results identified four main topic areas worth considering: strategy and critical reflection, understanding of creative industry processes, entrepreneurial / maker mindset, and collaboration. The second study, which consisted of two rounds of focus group discussions with three different types of stakeholders (students, experts, and teachers in the creative industry), further explored these four topics, delving deeply into the implications and trying to sketch possible solutions to increase students' opportunities to acquire these skills.

Rather than focusing on specific forms of technology the advice from experts was to respond to enduring skill gaps that inhibit student’s ability to flex to the changing needs of the industry and wider cultural landscape.

Bridging the Creativity Gap: gaps to address

To ensure any learning program delivers against the skills gaps identified each skill gap was interrogated in more detail.

Strategy and critical reflection

There is a strong agreement that students must understand the bigger picture of their creative work and their role within it. By fully comprehending the process, the wants of the client, and the demands of the audience, students can then build a strategy and use creative tools to push boundaries within the set parameters. Academia should guide students toward taking calculated risks within their work rather than displaying huge amounts of creativity with no grounding or reasoning. At the same time, new talent coming into the industry should be able to critically evaluate their own ideas and thinking; be prepared to rationalise and back their thinking; and embrace constructive feedback to improve their work.


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Entrepreneurial / maker mindset

In the dynamic landscape of the creative industry, an entrepreneurial or maker mindset is not just an advantage—it's a necessity. Creative industry agrees that this mindset is characterised by a proactive approach, a willingness to take risks, and an innate drive to create and innovate. For young talents, it means not waiting for opportunities but creating them. It's about seeing gaps in the market, understanding audience needs, and crafting solutions or products that resonate. Beyond the act of creation, this mindset also embodies resilience in the face of challenges and difficulties. Embracing setbacks as learning opportunities and persistently seeking knowledge are integral to this ethos. The maker aspect of this mindset is deeply rooted in the act of creation, of bringing ideas to life, whether it's a digital solution, or a groundbreaking advertising campaign. This goes beyond mere ideation; it's about execution and the ability to transform abstract concepts into tangible realities. Furthermore, as the creative industry often operates at the intersection of art and commerce, an entrepreneurial mindset equips young professionals with the acumen to navigate the business side of creativity. This includes understanding market dynamics, monetizing creative skills, and ensuring that their creative outputs are not just artistically profound but also economically viable. In essence, fostering an entrepreneurial and maker mindset in young talents ensures that they are not only creators but also innovators and leaders, ready to steer the creative industry into its next chapter.

Collaboration

The stakeholders have highlighted the importance of building educational programs that teach students the skills that are essential in the creative industry. They emphasised that teamwork is crucial in the industry, which is entirely different from the educational system that focuses on individual success and grading. Therefore, it is essential to provide students with a general overview of real-life industry experience and teach them basic skills that run consistently throughout the creative industry, such as working in a team, embracing failure, and collaborating with others.

Understanding the industry process

Creative professionals need to have a comprehensive understanding of the inner workings of the industry. The industry demands practical skills that students may not learn in academic settings, such as how to respond to feedback, present ideas effectively, and work within real-world constraints. Without these skills, creative professionals may struggle to navigate the complexities and nuances of the industry, identify areas of inefficiency, and manage client expectations effectively.
To bridge the gap between academic and industry environments, it is important to teach the basic skills and touchpoints that consistently run throughout the creative industry. This includes understanding how to get work, work in a team, embrace failure, and collaborate effectively with others. By providing students with a general overview of real-life industry experience, we can better equip them with the practical skills and knowledge they need to succeed as creative professionals.


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Furthermore, the stakeholders stressed the importance of teaching graduates how the industry works and its business model, not just the creativity aspect. Graduates need to learn practical business skills and develop an entrepreneurial mindset to manage their expectations and push themselves beyond their limits.

In conclusion, the creative industry plays a vital role in the economy and society, and it is essential to ensure that the skills taught in educational programs align with the needs of the industry. There is a growing concern that recent graduates lack the skills needed to succeed in an ever-changing industry, and this skills gap must be addressed. The research conducted by the consortium highlights the four main topic areas that require additional attention in education programs: strategy and critical reflection, understanding of creative industry processes, entrepreneurial mindset, and collaboration. By addressing these gaps, academia can better prepare students for a successful career in the creative industry, ultimately contributing to the industry's growth and success.

**Bridging the Creativity Gap Framework**

In response to industry needs and student aspirations, the consortium, based on the insights from the creative community (professionals, tutors and students ) has formulated the Bridging the Creativity Gap Framework (BCGF - IO2 ), a set of guidelines that, on the one hand, integrates global and local perspectives, adjusting learning content and delivery methods to better align with the challenges faced by the creative industry, lay the foundation for the development of a learning curriculum and open educational resources that encompass those competencies required to enable students to thrive in entry and career development, and on the other, promote creative industry VET and HE tutors' professional development adapting their key competences to the new challenges.

The BCGF is a journey structured in four critical dimensions (exploration, instrumentation, reflection and application ), which when crossed open up a new point of view, understanding and translating ideas into real cases solutions allowing the development of the key skills demanded by the creative industry. These four dimensions are:

- ***Exploration***: We expose the students to a set of technologies that have the capacity to disrupt our present understanding of society, creative industry and the economy.
- ***Instrumentation***: We provide a set of skills and tools that will help to translate briefings into ideas, ideas into prototypes, and prototypes into proposals, which can then be tested and iterated throughout the creative design process.
- ***Reflection***:We support the students in the development of their identity and skill set, knowledge and attitude as designers of possible futures for the industry.
- ***Application***:We encourage students to create a culture of making in which prototypes act as knowledge generators, and the creative process becomes a driver of skills development.


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The BCGF introduces several innovative elements:

- ***Skills Focus***: The content is rooted in three core skills demanded and informed by insights from professionals, students, and tutors.
- ***Personal Growth***: The framework encourages students to carve out their unique identity, pushing boundaries, aligning personal values with industry standards, and embracing challenges.
- ***Interactive OERs***: It offers a suite of industry-crafted Open Educational Resources, covering vital topics. These include self-assessment tools, professional interviews, digital prototyping tools, reflection videos, tutorials, and more.
- ***Flexible Learning***: Students benefit from a versatile learning methodology, with options for online or blended learning environments, complemented by self and peer assessment mechanisms.
- ***Transferability & Networking***: The content boasts high transferability, grounded in the concept of Distributed Design. It's shared via the BCG platform and other industry-specific platforms like D&AD, with support from networks like ADCE and IAAC.
- ***Adaptable Tutor Integration***: The framework stands out for its versatility, allowing tutors to seamlessly incorporate its content into diverse contexts and learning methodologies. While it can be holistically structured within the Learning Programme, individual components can also be selectively integrated into tutors' existing courses, ensuring relevance and applicability.

**Bridging the Creativity Gap: learning programme**

To fill this gap and respond to industry needs and student demands, the consortium with industry professionals, tutors and students insights propose to create an apprenticeship programme (IO3).

The Bridging the Creativity Gap Learning Programme (IO3) is a fast paced, hands-on learning experience where students unleash their creative potential by learning key industry skills that are in demand, understanding and going deep into the creative process using a range of different research techniques, defining and planning strategies for real case scenarios, cultivating a maker mindset, focused on creation and innovation experimenting with digital and physical rapid prototyping tools, which naturally evolves into an entrepreneurial mindset, empowering them to complement their creative visions with industry-needs competences. On the other hand, the approach elevates the critical thinking of the students and provides them with communication tools and philosophical understanding to build new narratives about the possible futures that can be triggered in the creative industry context of today.

The result of this learning program is a personal portfolio of creative ideas, digital competencies and technical achievements that make the development of these skills tangible.


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# Preliminary Insights from Industry Professionals: A Survey-based Exploration of Creative Graduates' Preparedness for the Workforce

**Background**

In order to explore the perception of the industry on the areas that require more emphasis in education, we conducted a poll among senior-level creatives with hiring responsibilities from across Europe. The main objective was to identify the skill gaps that are most relevant for the industry and to gain insights into how education programs can better prepare students for a career in the creative industry. To guide our inquiry, we referenced previous research that identified the following eight specific topics as current skill gaps in the industry:

- *Collaboration* - working in multidisciplinary teams and finding collaborators.
- *Making a prototype* - how to test ideas and fail fast.
- *Strategy/Critical reflection* - how to challenge and push new ideas.
- *Understanding industry processes* - an insight into professional creative processes, from brief to broadcast.
- *Principles for using tech* - make technology work for you and not for itself.
- *Entrepreneurial mindset* - how to sell new ideas and create opportunities.
- *Audience engagement* - how to find universal truths and understand cultural relevance.
- *Purpose and profit* - understanding how to balance good and work that does good - within the realities of a for-profit industry.

In addition to exploring these areas, we gave participants the opportunity to include their own input if they identified other topics that should be addressed in creative education. The poll was sent out to a diverse group of over 2500 professionals in the creative industry across Europe, including those with experience in branding, advertising, product design, visual communication, interactive design, UX and UI, and more. The participants were selected based on their expertise and knowledge in the field, and the responses of the 69 individuals who completed the survey provided valuable insights into the current skill gaps within the industry.

Most of the respondents work in the United Kingdom and Finland, while smaller percentages work in France, Germany, Slovenia and Spain. There were also responses coming from the United States, the United Arab Emirates, and Denmark. The most common work environments were creative agencies or studios, with 34 respondents indicating they work in this setting while 16 indicating they work for a brand as part of an in-house creative team. Rest were freelancers, owners of studio or university lecturers. In terms of creative disciplines, the majority of respondents indicated that they work within advertising or branding, with 64% and 48% respectively. Graphic design and visual communication were also popular disciplines, with 46% and 33% respectively. The respondents represented a variety of job titles, with


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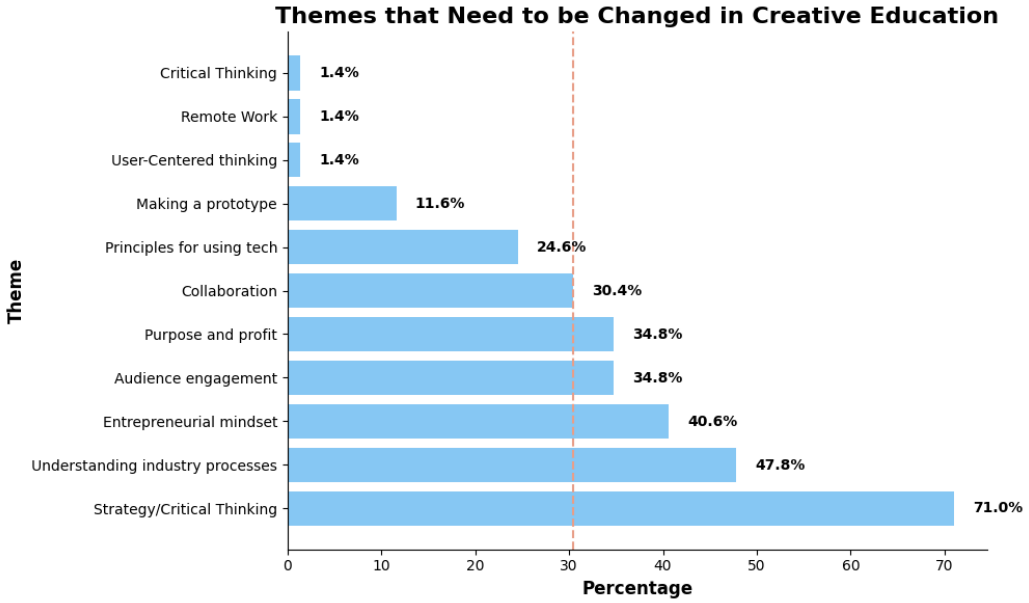
Executive Creative Director, Creative Director, and Senior Copywriter being the most commonly cited. Vast majority of participants (83%) had a role in hiring new talents.

**Main results**

The survey results indicate that the six most significant skill gaps that need to be addressed in creative education are **collaboration**, **strategy and critical reflection**, **understanding industry processes**, principles for using technology, entrepreneurial mindset, and audience engagement.




*Main skill gaps identified in new talents in the creative industry*

*Strategy and critical reflection emerged* as a major skill gap with a 71% response rate emphasising the need of creative professionals to think critically about their work and develop effective strategies to achieve their goals. *Understanding industry processes,* which received a 48% response rate, is also an important skill gap that should be addressed. Understanding the inner workings of the industry allows creative experts to navigate the various complexities and nuances of the industry, enabling them to identify areas of inefficiency and roadblocks as well as manage client expectations. The *entrepreneurial mindset* is another crucial skill gap highlighted in the survey, with 40.6% of respondents emphasising the importance of this skill. Creative professionals need to be able to identify opportunities, take risks, and create value in the market. *Audience engagement* and *purpose and profit* (both with 34.8%) are also significant skill gaps that need to be addressed in creative education. Understanding how to engage with audiences and deliver work with a purpose while generating profit are essential for creative professionals to succeed. Finally,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*Collaboration* (with 30.4%) emerged as an important skill gap. In today's world, creative professionals need to be able to work effectively with others to produce successful projects.

Through the qualitative data the poll respondents highlight a wide range of topics that need to be addressed in creative education in order to better prepare emerging creatives for success in the industry. Increasing diversity within the industry is a key area that was emphasised by many experts, as well as the need to promote inclusivity and equality in creative work. To achieve this, students need to develop an understanding of their biases and learn how to take them into account in their work.

Improving soft skills such as negotiating and building frameworks for teamwork was also frequently mentioned by experts. This includes the need for students to develop their collaboration skills and philosophy, as well as their people management and leadership skills. One of the respondents claimed: "*I'm always shocked that people are allowed to lead/manage other people and promoted into senior roles without being trained in people management. That is why we have so many good creatives who turn into terrible creative directors and bosses. I learned people management and leadership skills after struggling as a leader for quite a few years. It's the best type of training I've ever done for myself.*"

Related to the previous topics, it was also emphasised that students should be able to set realistic expectations, and their ideas effectively to clients. The importance of understanding the difference between an idea and a final product, and developing productive and efficient creative processes were also highlighted.

The insight provided by respondents also emphasised the importance of thinking big and having a broad-minded approach in strategy and critical reflection. Curiosity was a key virtue. It was also mentioned that students should be taught to understand the broader context in which they will work and how they can make a systemic difference to how the world works and communicates, which is also related to the theme of understanding purpose: "*It's not exclusively about process OR purpose, but the marriage of the two. You can never achieve anything if you only have one of those things, and sadly we are an industry drowning in Purpose (self-identity) without Process (politics, ability to reach others) to implement it.*"

Overall, the 2021's COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of adaptability, proactive communication, and collaboration skills in the creative industry. It has also highlighted the need for emerging talent to possess a wide range of hard skills (e.g.idea generation, idea evaluation, and creative automation) and soft skills (e.g. self-management, autonomy, and intergenerational communication to work effectively in remote environments) to succeed in a rapidly changing industry.

**Insights**

The survey results have shown that there are significant skill gaps that need to be addressed in creative education. The top six skill gaps include collaboration, strategy and critical reflection, understanding industry processes, principles for using technology, entrepreneurial mindset, and audience engagement. In today's world, creative professionals need to be able to work effectively with others to produce successful projects, emphasising the importance of


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collaboration. The insights gathered from the survey have highlighted the need for emerging talent to possess both hard and soft skills to succeed in a rapidly changing industry, particularly in the context of the changes produced after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The goal of this process was to identify three main themes to explore deeper later in a direct conversation with experts. The most prominent topics are:

1. **Strategic and critical thinking.** There is a clear need for creative professionals to think critically about their work and develop effective strategies to achieve their goals. Thinking big and having a broad-minded approach in strategy and critical reflection are key aspects for success. In addition, professionals should be able understand the broader context in which they will work and how they can make a systemic difference to how the world works and communicates. It is also essential that experts take risks within their work, but at the same time the work must have a clear rationale, rather than displaying a huge amount of creativity with no grounding or reasoning. At the same time, they should be able to critically evaluate their own ideas and thinking and embrace constructive feedback to improve their work.
   In summary, all points around thinking big while understanding what is being asked, managing expectations within the industry, and learning to embrace failure will be key components within this subject area moving forward.

2. **Understanding the industry process.** Creative professionals need to have a comprehensive understanding of the inner workings of the industry. The industry demands practical skills that students may not learn in academic settings, such as how to respond to feedback, present ideas effectively, and work within real-world constraints. Without these skills, creative professionals may struggle to navigate the complexities and nuances of the industry, identify areas of inefficiency, and manage client expectations effectively.
   To bridge the gap between academic and industry environments, it is important to teach the basic skills and touchpoints that consistently run throughout the creative industry. This includes understanding how to get work, work in a team, embrace failure, and collaborate effectively with others. By providing students with a general overview of real-life industry experience, we can better equip them with the practical skills and knowledge they need to succeed as creative professionals.

3. **Entrepreneurial mindset.** Entrepreneurial mindset is a critical skill set that creative professionals need to possess to thrive in the industry.The importance of "business thinking" skills and the need to balance the needs of users with the needs of the business is clear within the industry. Creative professionals need to have a solid understanding of the basic fundamentals of business, including financial, legal, ethical, risk, compliance, marketing, and innovation. Having confidence in selling their work and ideas in person is essential to success. Being realistic and having a profound understanding on how the world works and focusing on the needs of clients rather than just personal expression and creative originality are crucial components of the entrepreneurial mindset.
   In short, creative professionals need to be equipped with a strong entrepreneurial skill


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set. The fundamentals of business are highly valued in the industry, and graduates must be prepared to manage expectations regarding the business model behind the creative industries, not just their creativity. It is important to acknowledge that graduates are coming from a rigid and heavily guided educational system, while the industry values independence and innovation. Therefore, there is a mix of practical business skills and mindset-based skills needed, encouraging graduates to push themselves and their thinking in order to succeed in a rapidly changing industry.

## Finding the lacking competences. Study report.

In order to delve deeper into the understanding of the educational status quo in three key areas: *entrepreneurial mindset*, *understanding the industry process*, and *strategic and critical thinkin*g, as seen by three distinct groups: university teachers and tutors, last year students and recent graduates, and industry professionals, we continue the investigation organising seven different focus group discussions in which those topics were treated in more depth. The context of the study is of course the creative industry, so participants in all the groups have relation with the field. This investigation sought to identify the critical skills that the industry needs but finds lacking in recent graduates, and how those skills could be better taught after students have graduated. As we endeavour to understand the intricacies of skill gaps in the creative industry, it is crucial to consider the perspectives of those directly engaged in these dynamics.

**Study setup**

The study was conducted through seven online sessions, approximately an hour each, using Zoom and supported by Miro for collaborative brainstorming and interactive discussions. The structure of these sessions allowed for a comprehensive understanding of different perspectives on the state of education within the creative industry and its alignment with industry needs.

### Participants

The first and second session was conducted exclusively with eight creative industry experts each session from Germany, Spain, UK and Slovenia. Their professional experience and understanding of the industry's demands made them an invaluable resource for the study.

In the third and fourth session, the sole focus was on eighteen university teachers and tutors from Germany, Spain, UK and Finland. Their perspective was essential to understand the academic approach to teaching and developing the key skills in question.

The fifth and sixth session centred on 13 recent graduates in the field of the creative industry from Germany, UK, Slovenia, and Spain. Their unique insights, having recently transitioned


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from academia to industry, provided a critical viewpoint on the relevance of their education to the professional world.

Each group's isolated focus group session ensured that their unique experiences and perspectives could be shared, discussed, and thoroughly understood without the influence of the other groups' viewpoints, thereby enabling a more authentic and nuanced collection of insights.

Finally, in the seventh session we brought together 10 students, industry experts and tutors with the goal of exploring how to consolidate previous findings by opening opinions from one group to others.

### Session structure

Each session was structured around three main topics correlating with the key skills under investigation: Strategic and critical thinking, understanding the industry process, and entrepreneurial mindset. Each group followed a structured discussion with guiding questions tailored to their experiences  intended to elicit deep, insightful responses about the state of education in the creative industry and the skills required for success. All focus group discussions were structured in three phases:a warm-up phase, a phase for understanding the challenge, and a final phase for exploring opportunities

1. **Warm-up phase:** This initial phase served to initiate conversation and set the stage for the in-depth discussions that followed. Each participant was asked to share their recommendations for recent graduates, drawing from their own experiences, perspectives, and general advice on the transition from academia to the creative industry.
2. **Understanding the Challenge Phase**: The warm-up was followed by a division of the participants into three separate focus groups, each centered on one of the subject areas: *Strategic and Critical Thinking*, *Understanding the Industry Process*, and *Entrepreneurial Mindset*. Each focus group was facilitated by a moderator and guided by a distinct set of questions tailored to their group's perspective and experience - be it as teachers, recent graduates, or industry experts.The guiding questions were different depending on the group:
    a. For *tutors and teachers*, the focus was on the main skills covered by each subject, relevance, academic coverage, and teaching challenges of each subject.
    b. *Recent graduates* reflected on their experiences, learning sources, and areas where they felt less confident. For instance, there was a strong focus on where necessary skills were learnt.
    c. *Experts* identified the necessary skills, the current gaps, and the evaluation methods for recent graduates. Additionally, they discussed their techniques for analyzing the skills of recent graduates during the hiring process.

3. **Exploring the Opportunity Phase:** The final phase of the session involved the participants, once again divided into smaller , discussing opportunities and innovative


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approaches to the challenges previously identified. The guiding questions for this phase, while still tailored to the unique perspectives of the group, encouraged forward-thinking and ideation around how the identified skills gaps could be effectively addressed.

a. *Tutors and teachers*, brainstormed non-traditional teaching methods, design of learning tools, and ways to verify that learning objectives have been achieved
b. *Recent graduates* suggested ways of providing support to their peers and methods to ensure the achievement of learning objectives.
c. *Experts* discussed current practices to address the identified gaps, vital insights for recent graduates, and methods to verify that learning objectives have been achieved.

This study's setup allowed for a dynamic exchange of perspectives, creating a rich understanding of the current educational landscape in the creative industry, the existing challenges, and the opportunities for innovation in teaching and learning methods.

## Different visions of lacking competences

Next, we provide  a tri-fold analysis of the perceived skill gaps in the industry, as seen from the viewpoints of recent graduates, teachers, and industry professionals. The perceptions of these three distinct groups are explored separately in order to comprehend the nuances of their experiences and expectations.

### Recent graduates perception

The first focus of this subsection is to understand recent graduates' perspectives on the subject area of ***Strategic and critical thinking*****,** as they navigate their early professional experiences within the creative industry. In this subject area, many of the concerns were also highly coupled with the *Understanding of the Industry*, which leads to a conclusion that both aspects should be worked hand-on-hand.

A clear gap was identified in the **graduates' comfort with handling commercial briefs**. As one participant stated, "*The first time I saw a commercial brief I felt out of my depth*". This sentiment resonated across the group, underscoring the need for more exposure to, and experience with, commercial briefs within their educational journey.

Inextricably linked to this, and also falling under the umbrella of *'Understanding the industry process*', was a related challenge concerning the **understanding of industry dynamics**. Many graduates confessed to their unawareness of the various roles required to bring creative ideas to fruition, and how these roles interact at different levels of seniority.It was noted with some frustration that while collaboration with other subject areas and universities was discouraged, such cooperation is a routine necessity within the industry.

There was also considerable discussion on the **culture of critique in the academic versus industry settings**. Industry critique, which was grounded in practical, client-focused feedback, was found to be more helpful and understandable than the academic critique they had


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previously encountered. In industry, **critique is supported with reasons why, from a client perspective, the idea or work has flaws**. This feedback helped the learners understand the criticism and learn from it. On the contrary, academic feedback, they felt, was more personally focused and less tied to real-world implications. In academia students make the work for themselves with the approval of tutors, without clear understanding if their ideas might work in real working scenarios.

Further challenges identified by the group included the **industry's fast pace** and the balancing act between striving for perfection and maintaining productivity (that is, **balance between creativity and budget constraints**). There was a general consensus that it was better to have 1000 ideas as at least one will be good rather than trying to create just one perfect idea from the start. In addition, **understanding budgetary constraints** was highlighted as an essential yet often overlooked aspect of their education.

Opportunities for improvement included a deeper dive into **'true strategy' as opposed to surface-level insight** and reshaping the student-teacher dynamic to facilitate better reception of critique. For that, it is necessary an evolution from the traditional student-teacher dynamic into a more collegial conversation to foster more effective feedback and lessen competition among students. It is necessary facilitating reception of colleague-driven criticism underlining the importance of peer-to-peer learning and collaboration. They found **great value in interviews with professionals explaining their project decision-making process** (including moments of self or colleagues' criticism).

A significant insight was the industry's need for **3D design and digital skills**, which are in high demand among the newer generations but aren't adequately addressed in current academic curricula.

Finally, graduates emphasised the need for **cultural relevance** and confronting one's own bias. They urged for a curriculum that promoted **immersion in culture, real-world scenarios, and interaction with real people as opposed to theoretical personas**. This underscores the necessity for a more practical and experiential approach in education to adequately prepare students for the dynamics of the creative industry.

The discussion on "***Understanding the Industry Process***" led to some insights that complement the feedback received from the previous subject area. The discussion helps us identify specific pressure points students feel when they enter the industry.

A major challenge was the **lack of industry-specific terminology and understanding of workplace habits**. As one participant described, "*When asked to make a shoot deck - I didn't know the terminology and so I made it up*". This confusion was echoed across the group, highlighting a clear gap in their educational preparation. Some graduates felt a pressure to **immediately perform at an expert level** in their jobs, questioning if there should be a 'phasing in' period for new graduates entering the industry. Graduates expressed mixed feelings about internships, with some feeling **overwhelmed by the depth of exposure to real-world work,** and others feeling underutilized due to their intern status. One of the participants claimed: "*I wasn't challenged enough during my internships because they just saw me as a 'university intern' rather than a fellow colleague/employee in the design*


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*department*". This dichotomy raises the question of how to prepare students effectively for both scenarios. In that sense, industry might change the mindset promoting education of young interns. To that end, they might need help in defining a key set of learning outcomes for internships.

A consistent theme was the need for **better understanding of financial aspects within the industry**, such as salary expectations, negotiating pay, and understanding client-related financial conversations. As one participant shared, many graduates had little knowledge about average salaries within their chosen industry or how to secure freelance clients. Actually, **working as a freelancer** has been presented as a good learning opportunity. Working as a freelancer requires a skill set that covers most if not all elements of the creative and business process, and could be an interesting way of working in terms of culture, as within this instance you set and build your own brand.

In order to bridge the recognized knowledge gaps, students have been resourceful, turning to various knowledge sources for upskilling such as Intern Mag, Creative lives in progress, CMN, Google searches for pay rates, self-sourced mentors, and online learning platforms like YouTube.

When asked for advice on entering the industry, graduates emphasised the importance o**f setting and reviewing personal goals**, **identifying suitable mentors**, and being **deliberate about the values of the companies they wish to work with**. This was supported by one of the participants stating ". They also stressed the need to slow down, take breaks, and be patient with their own pace, with one graduate advising, "*Once you're working , you're working for the rest of your life. Get off or take breaks from social media and linked in to better enable you to go at your own pace*." Comparing industry with academia one of the participants remarked: "***Should we be helping graduates to understand that the industry is a continuous pace, unlike education that has a set duration and you move through at a constantly progressive pace, industry is constant and is not going anywhere, therefore there is no right or wrong time to enter and no sell by date on your skills***"

In dealing with industry dynamics, the participants urged their peers to **become comfortable with rejection**, seeing it as a normal part of the process rather than a personal failure. As one participant stated, "*search new things and get used to rejections - that has to be your friend. Rejection isn't personal, it's not that you're not good*".

The importance of **self-reliance** and **self-directed** learning was a recurrent theme, with a focus on leveraging personal hobbies and thinking outside the box. The graduates concluded that understanding the industry is crucial, but more importantly, understanding how to fit their skills and strengths into the industry, and being resilient in pushing their position as far as possible, is essential.

The final subject area of discussion was the ***"Entrepreneurial mindset"***. Many skills in this area also overlapped with the previously mentioned subject areas of *strategy and critical thinking*, and *understanding the industry process*. The focus here was on the valuable insights graduates wished they had known when they first entered the industry, and the challenges they faced.


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One key point made by the graduates was the importance of the **relevance of their work**. Graduates stressed that if their work was driven by their passions, then it was relevant and valuable to the industry. The challenge here lies in instilling confidence in students that they indeed **have the ability to influence the industry**. This involves encouraging students to work on projects that they are interested in, with the understanding that these passion projects can create new opportunities, and even potentially be turned into businesses.

Interestingly, the graduates noted a shift in motivation among students. **Traditional motivators such as money, status, or working for a 'cool' agency were less important than creating work that had a purpose**. This shift resonates with an observed movement away from consumerism.

A major area of concern was the **lack of basic business knowledge among students**. It is becoming a common belief among degree students that dealing with financial aspects detracts from the creative process and leads to increased consumerism. **However, the graduates emphasized that understanding how creative businesses operate is vital to producing work relevant to both the company they work for and the clients they serve**.

In terms of personal growth, the graduates highlighted the **importance of understanding one's identity and values**. Knowing who you are, what you stand for, and what you bring to the table are crucial in effectively marketing oneself and one's work. This change in mindset is necessary not just for self-understanding but also for understanding and communicating with the target audience.

Moving to opportunities, graduates felt that the transition from academia to the industry can be jarring, with expectations and realities often being misaligned. They argued for more opportunities for experimental work in the early career stages, to explore what new talent can contribute beyond just practical output.

Lastly, graduates expressed a need for **spaces where individuals could share passion projects and hold discussions**, promoting confidence and pushing boundaries. Such platforms would also allow for connections with stakeholders and communities with similar values.

The common thread in all these discussions was the necessity for resources and talks around resilience and entrepreneurial thinking. However, the graduates felt these conversations often miss the mark, indicating a **need for more practical and straightforward guidance in this area**.

In conclusion, cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset is crucial for graduates transitioning into the creative industry. It encompasses not only understanding the business side of creativity but also staying true to one's passions, values, and identity. By incorporating these insights into educational curriculums, institutions can better equip students with the skills and mindset necessary for a successful transition into the creative industry.


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### Teachers' perspective

The teachers' perspective on the ***Strategic and Critical thinking skills*** needed in the creative industry reveals a complex picture. Their insight into the barriers students face and the opportunities for improved learning provide essential understanding for the development of better educational strategies.

Teachers observed that the **concept of strategy in creative disciplines needs to be demystified**, as students often fail to recognize the strategic skills they possess and their importance within the creative process. They highlighted that s**trategy in creativity is not just about understanding outcomes and impact but also about the ability to critique and sell work**. The application of strategic thinking can help students develop stronger ideas and arguments, thereby improving the quality of their work. A critical observation was that student work often looks impressive but lacks a strong underlying idea: "*Too often students work looks great but there is not always a strong idea behind it*", suggesting a gap in strategic and critical thinking skills . Adequate knowledge on strategic thinking could help students build confidence and arguments in order to push bigger and bolder ideas.

Teachers noted the **important link between strategy and collaboration**. **Understanding the different roles within a creative process** and how they interconnect to deliver excellent work is crucial. Furthermore, teachers stressed the importance of being culturally mindful and **demonstrating empathy in student work**.

The challenge in teaching strategic and critical thinking skills lies in the **perception of these skills as very academic, making students reluctant to engage**. Additionally, the language of strategy in the creative industry often revolves around 'insights', which are seen as sparks of inspiration rather than as ongoing progress plans. This perception may stem from the **industry's tendency to focus more on outcomes rather than the strategic process** that led to them.

Teachers suggested several opportunities to address these challenges. They felt that the **industry could play a significant role in demystifying strategy**, for instance, by providing resources that **deconstruct work to show the role of strategy**. Encouraging students to 'own' the brief, fully understand it, and strategically approach it could help them better meet client needs.

Other tools could promote **collaboration across disciplines**, leveraging the power of peer-to-peer or alumni learning. Teaching students **how to critique and respond to feedback could also be beneficial**. Emphasizing the importance of **exploration, experimentation, and critical analysis** throughout the creative process could enhance their understanding of their audience and challenge their assumptions. It is important to have a "reality check": understanding what is really going on outside of your own bubble helps to better understand the clients.

A red flag raised by teachers was the **inefficacy of video resources for teaching these skills**. They noted that students are often disinclined to watch them, indicating the need for more interactive and engaging learning methods.


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Summing up, teachers' insights highlight the importance of demystifying strategic thinking, fostering collaboration, promoting critical analysis and feedback, and developing more engaging learning resources.

When discussing the ***"Understanding the industry process"***, teachers agree that the current **curriculum does not adequately equip students with an understanding of how the industry works**. They argue that this knowledge is crucial for students' confidence and their ability to navigate the industry. Teachers point out

This aspect is mainly covered in the curriculum through alumni talks. While these talks provide some industry insight, teachers believe that **industry process understanding should go beyond regurgitation**. It's **important for the industry itself to demonstrate its processes, rather than relying solely on tutors or alumni**. Students also need exposure to a variety of industries, not just advertising, to gain a holistic view of collaboration and their roles within different sectors. All teachers agreed that placements should be a part of students' degree, as hands-on experience is invaluable.

Teachers suggest that the **industry could play a substantial role in supporting education** and preparing students for industry engagement. The **industry itself should take responsibility for teaching its processes**. One proposed opportunity was the creation of a core repository of industry videos, creating a comprehensive content library detailing processes. However,  as it was commented before, relying only on videos might not be an option, since students tend to not watch them.

One big challenge is that processes are unique to each industry, discipline, studio, or agency, which makes **teaching a one-size-fits-all approach impossible.** They consider their role more in **nurturing a creative mind rather than covering all possible processes**. In the same direction, they emphasize the importance of understanding roles and collaborative dynamics within a team. Students should gain an **overall view and understand the importance of collaboration, supplemented by soft skills such as adaptability, independent thinking, and resilience**.

All gaps, teachers conclude, can be filled with experience. If students are provided the **right tools and design methodologies**, the process becomes the final key. A potential solution is to provide each student with hands-on experience or **work placements integrated into their degrees**, preferably in their second year of study. However, this solution may only be feasible for institutions or individuals with strong industry connections, and industry capacity for placements may be limited. Teachers propose exploring alternatives to direct internships such as **exposing students to the inner workings of the creative studio**. New opportunities might lie in **breaking down the walls between the creative and business sides of the industry** and in fostering a more **multidisciplinary understanding** by educating students on both the creative and management aspects of the industry.

In conclusion, while experience cannot be taught directly, teachers can play a more active role in aiding students' adaptation to work life. By understanding the industry process, building soft skills, and promoting multidisciplinary learning, teachers can help prepare students more effectively for their future careers.


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***Entrepreneurial mindset*** is the third subject dealt within the discussion. Teachers see the entrepreneurial mindset as a set of skills that allow students to **identify and create their own opportunities based on their personal passions and talents**. However, they also recognize the challenge in communicating what this mindset actually means and how it can be fostered among students: "*Do we need to start by helping students discover what it is that drives their practice? What is it that makes people gravitate towards you?*".

To cultivate this mindset, teachers believe that students need to discover what drives their practice - what about their work or ideas draws others in. This self-reflection and personal motivation could be guided by means of interventions.

Teachers consider a successful outcome to be **fostering a strong creative drive in students, rather than just a drive to secure a job**. They believe that s**tudents with self-awareness and passion can be more selective in the industry**, finding opportunities that nurture and support their creative drive.

They also acknowledge that **student projects, whether self-initiated or exploratory, are of immense value to the industry**. Encouraging students to own their projects and understand their influence on the industry could be crucial to fostering an entrepreneurial mindset.

Teachers encourage students to view their **career as a journey** with long-term goals. Each project should be seen as a **building block of a practice, rather than isolated pieces of work**. This mindset shift can help students manage their expectations when they first enter the industry, understanding that **their first job doesn't have to be a perfect fit**, but a stepping stone towards their goals. This leads onto a common theme of **balancing the expectations** of students when they enter in the industry. At the end, it is clear that not only academia is rigid, but also the industry, limiting space for entrepreneurship: "*There is little room for entrepreneurship when you have to deliver for clients and keep up with the pressures of industry* ".

They propose that employers invest more in recent graduates, e.g.  allowing them a period to work on personal projects alongside industry work. It is important that employers give **more time and breathing space during this initial entry point and invest in their employees in a way that could enrich them in the long term**. This approach could provide graduates with experience, foster creativity, and provide valuable research and development for employers. This could lead to win-win results both for recent graduates and industry. On one hand recent graduates learn at their own pace how the industry works. On the other hand, the industry might benefit from inspiration and R&D that recent graduates produce.

When it comes to being entrepreneurs, teachers **stress the importance of starting with a purpose**. Both academia and industry should support students in realizing the potential around their work, helping them connect with stakeholders, relevant communities and other partners and turning their projects into reality.

A significant shift has been observed in students' drive, with many showing **increased interest in systems thinking and moving their creativity away from consumerism**. Leveraging this


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shift to foster empathy and purpose in their projects could **bridge the gap between profit and purpose,** aligning with both graduate aspirations and industry needs.

While no specific courses or training on entrepreneurial mindset within the creative industry were identified by the teachers, they agreed on the importance of fostering this mindset within faculty.

Lastly, teachers stressed the need for more **diverse learning spaces, beyond academia or traditional settings**, connecting students, teachers, and industry across different countries and institutions. Those spaces could help to get in touch with other stakeholders to whom to ask questions, and which have a different perspective than the education institution or first employer. However, they recognize the **challenge in getting students to engage with resources and talks, even when the material is excellent.** This issue points to the need for more **innovative ways to incentivize student engagement with educational content**.

### Industry perception

From the perspective of industry professionals, the understanding and application of ***Strategic and critical thinking*** skills among young creatives are crucial, yet they see a gap in this area among recent graduates. These skills, they argue, have become increasingly indispensable in the creative process, blurring the traditional roles and distinctions between creatives and strategists. In fact, many professionals firmly believe that "***strategy is everyone's job.***"

However, while some in the industry perceive that strategy is reasonably covered in education, the manner of its **teaching and the language used around it do not accurately reflect its role or relevance within the industry**. There's a recurring skill gap appearing several times: **many graduates lack a comprehensive understanding of the creative process and how strategy informs it at every stage**. This gap in understanding strategy, therefore, appears to be a significant deficiency in academia's current approach to educating future creatives. Experts consider that graduates are often too "schooled," leading to a disconnect between the maker and the audience or user. **Few seem to comprehend how brand fit operates and how strategy informs it, revealing another area of potential improvement for academia.**

Moreover, industry professionals value graduates who are "open" - those who **have their own opinions but also understand the strategy well enough to make critical and informed decisions**. They see a need for young creatives to immerse themselves in their subject areas and develop the ability to transform what feels like instinct into something informed and tangible.

Finally, the industry notes **a pressure among graduates to produce "professional work" that aligns with what they believe the industry desires**. This pressure can often lead to work that


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lacks emotion or originality. Professionals suggest that the **confidence to create genuinely original and empathetic work can be derived from a strong understanding of strategy**, hinting at another area where academia can better prepare its students for the demands of the creative industry.

Discussions with industry professionals regarding the ***"Understanding of the Industry process"*** have shed light on the skill gaps they notice in recent graduates. One significant observation is that many graduates are unaccustomed to collaborative work with individuals from varying disciplines, as their previous experience is typically confined to working with peers within the same course and discipline.

Moreover, a recurring theme is the **graduates' lack of understanding of the industry's financial workings and their roles within the broader business model**. Professionals see a pressing need for new entrants to comprehend the business for which they're working, and they note a common lack of understanding around the value and cost of different skill sets.

Professionals also highlight the necessity for a shift in mindset among graduates. Young creatives must **grasp that they are crafting within another party's guidelines and needs**. This extends to effective communication with clients, particularly in terms of pitching work: "*Ideas need to be there but also the ability to sell them*". One participant suggested that graduates should **present their ideas as complete concepts, explaining everything, including the underlying process**. Related also to a shift in mindset, professionals remark that a better understanding of the industry process can also lead to a boost in graduates' confidence. An integral part of this is **accepting failure as part of the creative journey**, understanding it as a shared experience, and learning from it. Graduates should also be prepared to challenge hierarchies and feel comfortable asking questions freely.

Another point raised was about diversity of work. **A portfolio demonstrating a wide range of work and skills showcases adaptability and an exploratory spirit**. In contrast, many students' portfolios consist of very similar work. In contrast, the industry professionals value a **display of passion, curiosity, and versatility in a graduate's work**, favoring creativity that isn't confined to a niche area. Students can display this by having a wide range of projects and being able to communicate the same idea/piece of work across multiple platforms.

The industry recognizes its complexity and the challenges it presents to newcomers. Hence, **resources aiding in understanding the industry process are highly valued**. In terms of opportunities for aiding graduates, professionals emphasize the industry's role in supporting early-career individuals. Agencies should **not expect new hires to generate revenue immediately**, acknowledging a learning curve of 9 to 12 months. During this time, **investment in teaching could yield better results**. **Apprenticeship** schemes are not common practice within the industry and this way of learning directly from experience is vital. In order to succeed, a line manager could be assigned as a mento


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Finally, the industry urges graduates to improve their pace of work to meet industry demands.

Talking about "***Entrepreneurial mindset***" industry experts agree that recent graduates **need to display an open mind, curiosity, and a problem-solving attitude**. These qualities are fundamental, but they're only part of the solution to bridging the gap from student to professional.

An important concern among professionals is equality. There is an apparent disparity between students who graduate with industry connections and those without. The latter often find it significantly more challenging to navigate and understand the industry workings. Networking is a critical component of professional success, but it can be daunting for new graduates: *"the hustle is definitely harder if you have no connections."* Hence, it is important to **emphasize networking skills and tools**. However, this is a really hard task, and depends a lot on students underpinning skills: while some students have a natural ability when it comes to introducing and presenting themselves, for others this act of confidence can almost feel impossible. Providing guidelines and altering perceptions around networking can help students approach it with less apprehension: "*if we equip learners with the do's and don'ts or even just change the terminology and mindset around networking it could become less daunting*".

Following on from this, industry professionals stress the i**mportance of presentation skills**. Talented individuals need to effectively showcase their abilities and ideas to be recognized in the industry. This doesn't only mean displaying their projects but also **understanding how to present to clients, considering their needs**. This distinction represents a different skill set and is crucial for business understanding. There was consensus that industry should teach key presentation skills and help students really articulate their ideas and get used to public speaking in new situations and environments. In relation to this topic, **personal branding** was also identified as a potential area for students to work on. They need to learn how to present themselves clearly, defining who they are, what they can bring to the table, and what differentiates them from others. It is important to be able to stand out from the crowd. This can be achieved in many ways, some of them as easy as having a logo, a brand name, and even invoice branding. In relation to branding, students should make them more visible. **They need to learn how to leverage social media, build creative relationships, and self-promote effectively**.

As it happened when discussing the "*Understanding Industry Process*" the importance of mentorship is also emphasized. Students need guidance on finding the right mentor and on being a good mentee to maximize the benefits of the relationship.

Finally, industry professionals suggest that students **need to be patient and resilient as they explore opportunities**. Students often are unaware of the range of opportunities available to


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them and don't know where to find them or how to connect with relevant communities. Increasing awareness about these opportunities, awards, and recognitions can help students carve a niche for themselves and thrive in their chosen field.

## Mixing visions. Looking for a common list of skills

In our endeavour to redefine the academic-industrial interface, we have now reached a pivotal phase: the synthesis of diverse viewpoints into a shared vision. This section will converge the perspectives from students, educators and industry professionals into a collective understanding of key skills needed in the creative industry.

The varied insights we've gathered so far provide a rich substrate from which to distill the core competencies that future professionals must possess. Through a meticulous examination of views across the areas of "*Strategy and Critical Reflection*", "*Entrepreneurial Mindse*t", and "*Understanding the Industry"*, we aspire to establish a comprehensive skillset that marries academic knowledge with practical requirements. This shared vision will serve as a foundation for developing an improved education framework that aligns more closely with the industry's needs. It's in this confluence of academia and industry where we believe the next generation of creative professionals will truly thrive.

### Strategy and critical thinking

A recurring theme is the significance of **'thinking big**' and demonstrating a broad-minded approach to design and creativity. The participants emphasized the necessity of **understanding design and creativity within a broad context**, with an appreciation of how it intersects with life, society, and the world at large. Academia  need to delve deeper into the understanding of **how design and communications can influence people's thinking and behaviour**.

This expansive understanding would be driven by a **critical and creative thought process**, allowing graduates to see how their work fits into the larger world. An important trait **highlighted was curiosity**, seen as an essential component in navigating this expansive scope of influence. One idea championed by the participants was the need for students to comprehend the broader context of their work and understand how they could make a systemic difference in the world's communication and operational landscape.

From this wider perspective, it becomes evident that students need to **understand the bigger picture of their work** and their role within it. It's **not just about making creative designs; it's about understanding the client's needs, audience demands, and subsequently building a strategy that uses creative tools to push boundaries within the set parameters**. Encouraging students to take educated, well-thought-out risks rather than unleashing ungrounded creativity was seen as an essential part of this process.

Further, participants emphasised the importance of students **critically evaluating their own ideas and thinking**. How can they embrace and learn from feedback in a constructive way? Developing this skill would empower them to take well-reasoned risks and continuously improve their work based on constructive criticism.


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In conclusion, all stakeholders agreed on the importance of **thinking big but understanding what is being asked, managing expectations within the industry, and learning to embrace failure**. These will be key components within the subject area of strategy and critical reflection moving forward. To meet industry needs, it's crucial that academic institutions help students cultivate these skills, thus bridging the gap between education and industry requirements.

### Understanding the industrial process

The consensus across participants highlights the necessity for graduates to have a broad skill set that extends beyond the technical aspects of their discipline. **Understanding the broader industrial processes, working within real-world constraints, and collaborating across various skill sets within a larger business model are imperative**. Moreover, **financial knowledge and insights into industry economics** were identified as critical skills that are often lacking, requiring more focus on practicalities over abstract concepts.

The ability to **effectively communicate**, particularly in the context of presenting ideas and responding to feedback, is another pivotal aspect that graduates should master. Working within a creative process, which may have been chaotic or unstructured during academic years, needs to be refined and optimized for efficiency within the industry setting. **Building a diverse portfolio reflecting adaptability and exploration is crucial,** with the mindset and understanding of the process being essential for fostering resilience and confidence in a fast-paced industry.

Industry entry can be a complex transition for students, largely due to the **shift from individual academic success to collaborative professional practice**. The discussions highlighted that students often struggle with the pace of the industry, hierarchy, collaboration within a **multidisciplinary team**, client feedback, production processes, and even understanding where the money comes from. It's crucial to provide a realistic overview of the industry, touching on consistent elements like securing work, team collaboration, and embracing failure. While specifics may vary between agencies and disciplines, these core elements form the basis of the creative industry and should be ingrained in educational programs to better prepare students for their professional journeys.

### Entrepreneurial mindset

The Entrepreneurial mindset conversation illuminated the need for a **balance between creative freedom and business understanding**. Professionals underscored the importance of devising solutions that harmonize the needs of users with business objectives. This suggests a call for graduates to be v**ersed not only in artistic expression and originality but also in the fundamental mechanics of business, including financial, legal, ethical, risk, compliance, marketing, and innovation aspects**.

This dichotomy also manifested in the **ability of graduates to 'sell' their work and ideas confidently and compellingly**, not just in digital settings like Zoom, but face-to-face—an arena that presents a distinct set of challenges. The ability to pitch ideas effectively is paramount, as it straddles both the creative and business realms. The creative industry appreciates original ideas, but those ideas must also meet clients' specific needs and adhere to their business goals.


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Participants noted a disparity between the educational environment and industry realities. Graduates **transition from a rigid, heavily-guided system into a world that celebrates independence and self-propulsion. This shift requires not only an understanding of the creative process but also a grasp of the business model underlying the creative industry.** It's a call for a shift in mindset, where graduates need to understand and manage expectations of how the industry works and push themselves to innovate within those parameters.

Overall, the entrepreneurial mindset dialogue pointed to a mix of skills needed by industry. While some skills were practical business knowledge, others were more mindset-oriented, emphasizing the need for graduates to **expand their thinking and learn how to navigate the complexities of a creative industry that is both artistic and business-driven**. This amalgamation of skill sets would make them more adaptable and able to meet the diverse needs of the creative industry.

| SUBJECT | DEVELOPMENT AREAS |
|---|---|
| **Strategy and critical thinking** | Thinking Big |
| | Broad Mindedness |
| | Critical and Creative Thinking |
| | Understanding Design in Context |
| | Embracing and Learning from Feedback |
| **Understanding the industry process** | Understanding financial aspects |
| | Knowledge on industry-specific terminology, roles and workplace habits |
| | Presenting Ideas and Responding to Feedback |
| | Working within Real World Constraints |
| | Building a Diverse Portfolio |
| | Transition to Professional Practice |
| **Entrepreneurial mindset** | Balancing Creativity and Business Understanding |
| | Selling Work and Ideas Face to Face |
| | Understanding Business Fundamentals |
| | Navigating the Complexity of Creative Industry |
| | Balancing Creativity and Business Understanding |

*Table summarising identified development areas*


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Based on the identified development areas we have defined a set of skills that cover skill gaps identified after the focus group discussions. These skills can be used in any training program as learning outcomes of different activities and as a guide for assess different learning activities

| **Strategy and critical reflection** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Strategic thinking | Understanding audience | Interpretation of the brief | Working for a client |
| Critical thinking and reflection | Stepping out of comfort zone | Deeper into the subject area | Challenging your bias |
| Confidence to make mistakes | Building argument | Defend and justify decision making | Confidence in having opinion |

| **Understanding the Industry processes** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Understanding of company structure | Terminology and presentation formats | Collaboration skills | Presentation and speaking skills |
| Emotional intelligence | Management and financial literacy | Build collaborative relationships | Team mentality |
| Having a vision | Communication skills | | |

| **Entrepreneurial mindset** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Business literacy | Understanding your purpose and values | Be a good mentee | Resilience |
| Recover from mistakes | Risk assessment | Personal branding | Resourcefulness;desire to learn |
| Inquisitiveness | Leave comfort zone | Face new challenges | |

*Table with skills required in different subject areas*

Next we will define the main skills that are required in the three main subject areas

**Strategy and critical reflection**

- ***Strategic Thinking***:Ability to identify long-term objectives, visualize the possible ways to achieve them, and make decisions that align with these goals. It requires a broader view of your work and its potential implications and outcomes.
- ***Understanding Audience***:Comprehending the needs, interests, behaviors, and demographics of the target audience of a design or a message. This understanding can then inform and shape the direction of a project. Empathy is an important subskill to develop


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- ***Interpretation of the Brief***: Fully understanding of the client's requirements and expectations outlined in the brief. It involves analyzing the brief, asking the right questions, and using this understanding to guide the design process.
- ***Working for a Client:*** Understanding the relationship dynamics, communication styles, and professional boundaries involved in client work. It often involves presenting ideas, receiving and implementing feedback, and balancing client needs with good design principles.
- ***Critical Thinking and Reflection*:** Ability to objectively analyze and evaluate an issue or situation to form a judgment. Reflection is about looking back and learning from these judgments, asking oneself what worked, what didn't, and why.
- ***Stepping out of Comfort Zone***: Willingness to take on challenges that may feel unfamiliar or difficult. It involves pushing one's boundaries and embracing the learning opportunities that come with discomfort.
- ***Deeper into the Subject Area***: Cultivating an in-depth knowledge of one's field, including its theories, methods, and current trends. This kind of deep understanding can inform more effective and innovative designs.
- ***Challenging your Bias***: Recognizing and questioning one's preconceived notions and biases. By challenging these biases, one can approach design problems from a more open-minded, innovative perspective.
- ***Confidence to Make Mistakes:*** Having the courage to take risks, knowing that failure is often a part of the process. It means seeing mistakes as opportunities to learn and grow rather than as setbacks.
- ***Building Argument*:** Ability to logically structure reasons or facts to support a conclusion or a decision. In design, this might involve articulating the reasons behind certain design choices to a client or a team.
- ***Defend and Justify Decision Making***: Explaining and providing reasons for your decisions. It's about communicating the thought process behind your actions and demonstrating their alignment with the project's goals.
- ***Confidence in Having Opinion***: Having the courage to express one's thoughts, ideas, or feelings even if they may be unpopular or challenged. It involves trusting in one's knowledge, skills, and perspectives and valuing them as contributions to a project.

**Understanding the Industry Process**

- ***Understanding of Company Structure:*** Comprehending the organization and hierarchy within a company. It involves understanding how various departments interact, how decisions are made, and how tasks are delegated and coordinated.
- ***Terminology and Presentation Formats:*** Knowing the specific jargon used in the industry and being able to structure information in formats commonly accepted and used in the industry.
- ***Collaboration Skills***: Ability to work effectively with others, often in a team environment. It includes skills such as active listening, cooperation, coordination, and conflict resolution.


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- **Presentation and Speaking Skills:** Ability to communicate information and ideas effectively in front of an audience. This could involve structuring a compelling presentation, speaking clearly and confidently, and engaging with audience questions and feedback.
- ***Emotional Intelligence:*** Capacity to understand, manage, and respond to emotions in oneself and others. It involves skills like empathy, self-regulation, motivation, and social skills.
- ***Management and Financial Literacy***: Understanding basic principles of business management and finance. It includes skills such as budgeting, financial planning, understanding financial statements, and making informed financial decisions.
- ***Build Collaborative Relationships:*** Ability to form productive, mutually beneficial relationships with colleagues, clients, and other industry professionals. It often involves skills like networking, teamwork, and conflict resolution.
- ***Team Mentality****:* Ability to work effectively as part of a team. It involves understanding one's role within the team, supporting other team members, and working towards common goals.
- ***Having a Vision:*** This is about having a clear, inspiring idea of the work that you want to create, and how this would have an impact on the client and the audience. It involves the ability to communicate this vision to others and to make decisions that align with this vision.
- ***Communication Skills:*** This includes both verbal and written abilities to express ideas and information effectively. It involves clarity, brevity, and the ability to tailor communication to the audience's needs.

**Entrepreneurial mindset**

- ***Business Literacy:*** Understanding of the basic principles of business operations, including marketing, finance, strategy, and management.
- ***Understanding Your Purpose and Values:*** Introspection process to identify one's personal mission, goals, principles, and what they value in life and work. It helps guide decision-making and aligns personal actions with beliefs.
- ***Be a Good Mentee:*** Being a good mentee involves actively seeking guidance, being open and receptive to feedback, demonstrating willingness to learn, taking initiative, and following through on advice or tasks.
- **Resilience:** Capacity to recover quickly from difficulties, adapt to change, and keep going in the face of adversity.
- ***Recover from Mistakes:*** Ability to learn from errors or failures, use them as opportunities for growth, and move forward without dwelling on them.
- ***Risk Assessment:*** Evaluating the potential risks involved in a given situation, decision, or action. It involves weighing the potential for negative outcomes against the potential benefits. It helps to develop alternative plans quickly when risks materialise.
- ***Personal Branding:*** Practice of marketing oneself and one's career as a brand. It's about creating a unique professional identity and coherent message that


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sets you apart in your industry. This involves knowing how to create a diverse portfolio as well as how to effectively use social media for showing your skills.

- ***Resourcefulness:*** Being able to find quick and clever ways to overcome difficulties.
- ***Desire to Learn***: A desire to learn shows a continuous pursuit for knowledge and understanding.
- ***Inquisitiveness:*** Quality of being curious, eager for knowledge, and inclined to ask questions and explore.
- ***Leave Comfort Zone:*** Ability to push beyond one's usual boundaries or routines in order to try new things, and grow both personally and professionally. Do not be afraid of trying different solutions that have not been tested before.
- ***Face New Challenges:*** Having the ability and willingness to take on unfamiliar tasks or problems and see them as opportunities for learning and growth rather than as threats.

Following the identification of the key skills that the creative industry deems essential, it becomes clear that a comprehensive education framework is necessary to guide students and recent graduates in their development. This framework will not only serve to cultivate the specific abilities pinpointed by professionals but also foster a mindset that promotes resilience, innovation, and adaptability. It's about nurturing a generation of creatives who are technically proficient, strategically astute, industry-savvy and entrepreneurial in spirit, all of which will empower them to navigate the complexities of the creative industry with confidence and dexterity.

## Creative industry and Maker Culture

The creative industry is a vital sector, contributing significantly to economic growth, innovation, and cultural development. However, one of the persistent challenges faced by employers in this sector is the skills gap among new graduates. Despite the industry's dynamic nature and its substantial contribution to the economy, there is a disconnect between academic training and real-world industry demands. Our previous studies have highlighted key challenges in hiring new graduates, such as a lack of practical experience, insufficient understanding of the creative process, and limited skills in strategic and critical thinking. These gaps not only make the onboarding process more cumbersome but also impact the industry's overall productivity and innovation capacity. The results from our prior projects underscore the urgent need for a more aligned educational approach to better prepare graduates for the complexities of the creative industry.

Our innovative approach aims to bridge the skills gap by integrating the creative industry with the maker movement. The maker culture, with its emphasis on hands-on learning, problem-solving, and interdisciplinary collaboration, offers an ideal framework to cultivate the practical skills and entrepreneurial mindset that are often missing in traditional educational


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settings. By combining the theoretical foundations of the creative industry with the experiential learning aspects of the maker culture, we aim to produce students who are not only well-versed in creative principles but also adept at applying these principles in real-world scenarios. This synergy promises to address the challenges employers face when hiring new graduates, ensuring a workforce that is both technically skilled and practically experienced.

In Europe, the integration of the creative industry with the maker movement is already gaining momentum, both at the policy level and within creative communities. For instance, Distributed Design[4] offers a compelling framework that merges the ethos of the Maker Movement with design sensibilities. This approach aims to foster sustainable, inclusive, and collaborative design practices. It champions the idea that while "bits travel globally, atoms stay local," emphasising the need for local productivity in the face of global challenges. The book "This Is Distributed Design" serves as a comprehensive resource, outlining how designers and makers can innovate towards a more sustainable paradigm.

Furthermore, the European Commission has been proactive in bridging the gap between creative professionals and maker culture through various initiatives, primarily funded by the Creative Europe[5] program. Projects like Made@Eu[6] and Future Artist-Maker Labs[7] focus on equipping designers, craftsmen, and artists with digital fabrication skills. These projects offer tailored educational content, workshops, and residency programs to achieve this goal. Another notable project, "FUSION: Fashion Up-Skilling Innovation Network," aims to integrate digital fabrication into traditional craft heritage processes, thereby fostering intergenerational knowledge transfer in fashion and textile design. The European Commission also supports fablabs.io, the official platform of the global Fab Lab network, which serves as a hub for creatives and designers to share knowledge and best practices.

These initiatives demonstrate a growing recognition of the symbiotic relationship between the creative industry and maker culture. They serve as promising examples of how this integrated approach can address the skills gap, promote sustainable practices, and drive innovation in the creative sector.

## Education framework

After a thorough examination of the educational landscape in the creative industry, it became evident that a structured approach was essential to bridge the existing gaps. Drawing from the invaluable insights of the creative community, including professionals, tutors, and students, the consortium crafted the Bridging the Creativity Gap Framework (BCGF - IO2). This framework serves as a comprehensive set of guidelines that seamlessly integrates global and local perspectives. It refines learning content and delivery methods to resonate with the

[4] https://distributeddesign.eu/

[5] https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/

[6] https://madeat.eu/

[7] http://futureartistmakers.org/


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unique challenges of the creative industry. Furthermore, it establishes a robust foundation for the development of a learning curriculum and open educational resources, ensuring students are equipped with the competencies vital for both entry and progressive career development. Simultaneously, it champions the professional evolution of creative industry VET and HE tutors, enabling them to adeptly navigate and adapt to the industry's evolving needs.

## Introduction

The BCGF is a holistic solution, tailored to bridge the educational needs of students and tutors with the dynamic demands of the creative industry. It's meticulously designed to cater to the unique needs of two primary target groups, main beneficiaries, within the creative industry:

1. ***Students***: This includes individuals studying or recently graduated in fields such as advertising, branding, visual communications, graphic design, service design, product design, interactive design, UX, and UI. It also encompasses emerging creatives entering the market, both with and without prior professional experience. For these budding talents, the framework emphasizes:

    - ***Skill Showcasing***: Development of a digital portfolio to highlight their expertise in real cases scenarios.
    - ***Skill Enhancement***: Comprehensive training to refine and expand their competences.
    - ***Industry Recognition***: Opportunities to gain validation from established creative industry professionals.
    - ***Tool Mastery***: Training in digital rapid prototyping tools to stay ahead in the industry.
2. ***Tutors***: This group comprises educators teaching the aforementioned subjects, spanning both VET and Higher Education. It also includes in-company tutors dedicated to the creative industry. To support their pivotal role, the framework offers:
    - ***Facilitation Guidance***: Tailored methodologies and guides to enhance teaching effectiveness.
    - ***Resource Access***: A rich repository of open educational resources for enriched teaching.
    - ***Assessment Tools***: Comprehensive guides and tools to ensure accurate and effective student evaluation.

Also, ***Vocational Education and Training (VET) centres and Higher Education (HE) institutions*** stand to gain immensely from the Bridging The Creativity Gap Framework. By integrating this framework, these educational establishments can ensure their curricula remain industry-relevant, addressing the dynamic needs of the creative sector. The framework offers a structured approach to cultivating essential skills like strategic thinking, understanding industry processes, and fostering an entrepreneurial mindset. Moreover, the inclusion of digital tools and methodologies equips students with hands-on experience,


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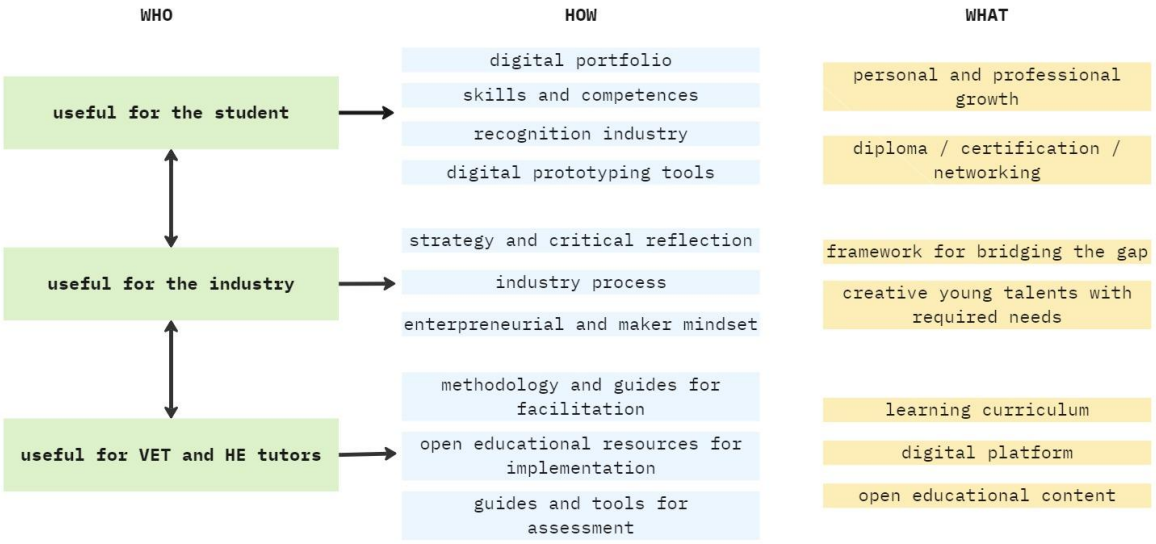
bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world scenarios. Ultimately, VET and HE centres adopting this framework will produce graduates who are not only technically proficient but also industry-ready, enhancing their employability and contribution to the creative industry.




*Infographic illustrating the framework's foundation from the study insights, its target audience, and anticipated outcomes*

## Framework structure

The Bridging The Creativity Gap Framework is intricately designed around four pivotal dimensions: exploration, instrumentation, reflection, and application. These dimensions come to life through a comprehensive learning programme that encompasses modules such as The Creative Process, The Brief, Research and Insights, Ideation, Prototyping and Making, Pitching, and Industry Integration. To gauge the impact and effectiveness of the framework, we employ a multifaceted assessment approach, incorporating self-assessment tools, feedback, comments, a digital portfolio, tests, surveys, and crucially, industry recognition. Furthermore, the framework is enriched with detailed guides, tools, and an inventory to ensure seamless and effective implementation.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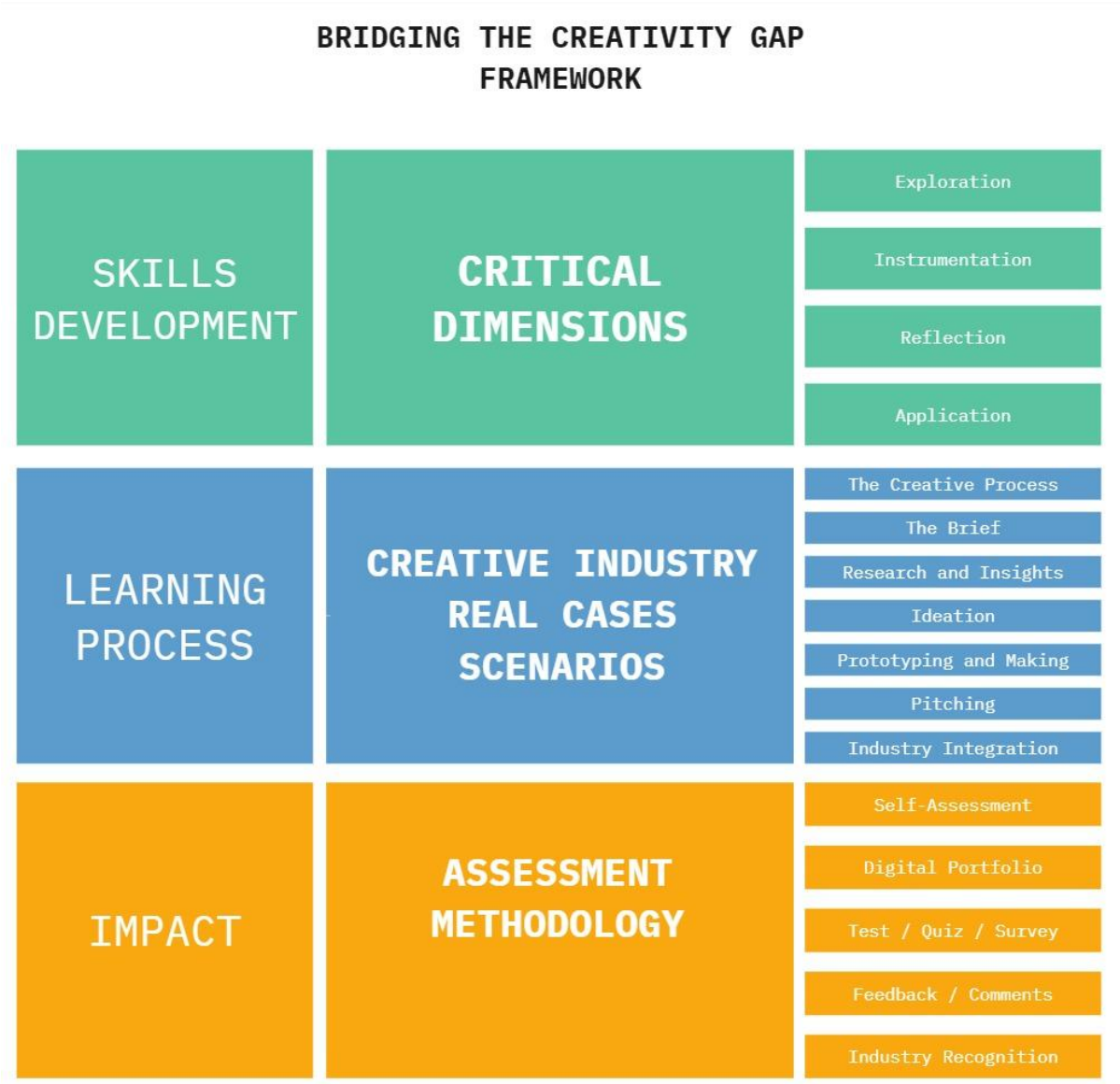


*Infographic illustrating the framework's principles*

The BCGF is a journey structured in four critical dimensions (exploration, instrumentation, reflection and application ), which when crossed open up a new point of view, understanding and translating ideas into real cases solutions allowing the development of the key skills demanded by the creative industry. These four dimensions are:

- ***Exploration***: We expose the students to a set of technologies that have the capacity to disrupt our present understanding of society, creative industry and the economy.
- ***Instrumentation***: We provide a set of skills and tools that will help to translate briefings into ideas, ideas into prototypes, and prototypes into proposals, which can then be tested and iterated throughout the creative design process.
- ***Reflection***:We support the students in the development of their identity and skill set, knowledge and attitude as designers of possible futures for the industry.


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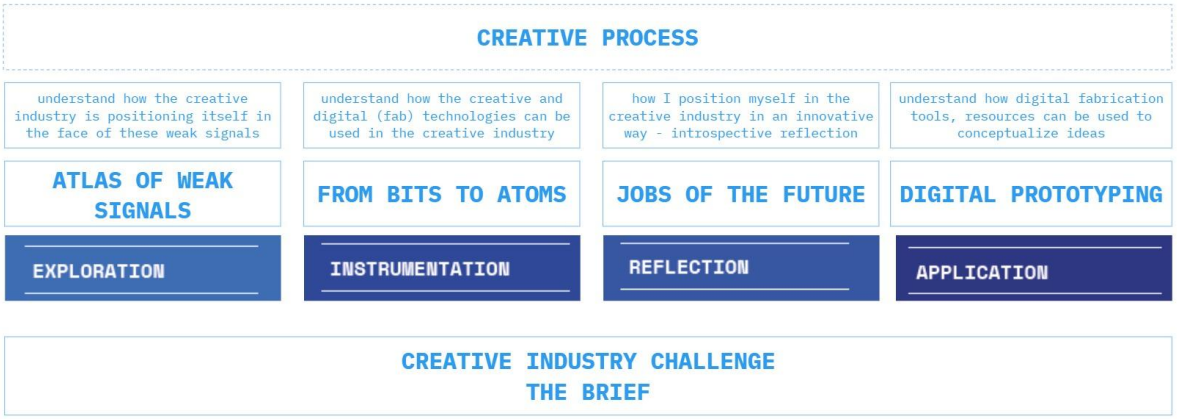
- ***Application***:We encourage students to create a culture of making in which prototypes act as knowledge generators, and the creative process becomes a driver of skills development.

The BCGF introduces several innovative elements:

- ***Skills Focus***: The content is rooted in three core skills demanded and informed by insights from professionals, students, and tutors.
- ***Personal Growth***: The framework encourages students to carve out their unique identity, pushing boundaries, aligning personal values with industry standards, and embracing challenges.
- ***Interactive OERs***: It offers a suite of industry-crafted Open Educational Resources, covering vital topics. These include self-assessment tools, professional interviews, digital prototyping tools, reflection videos, tutorials, and more.
- ***Flexible Learning***: Students benefit from a versatile learning methodology, with options for online or blended learning environments, complemented by self and peer assessment mechanisms.
- ***Transferability & Networking***: The content boasts high transferability, grounded in the concept of Distributed Design. It's shared via the BCG platform and other industry-specific platforms like D&AD, with support from networks like ADCE and IAAC.
- ***Adaptable Tutor Integration***: The framework stands out for its versatility, allowing tutors to seamlessly incorporate its content into diverse contexts and learning methodologies. While it can be holistically structured within the Learning Programme, individual components can also be selectively integrated into tutors' existing courses, ensuring relevance and applicability.

## Framework implementation and main guidelines

The Bridging The Creativity Gap Framework is not just a theoretical construct; it's made tangible through a meticulously designed learning programme.





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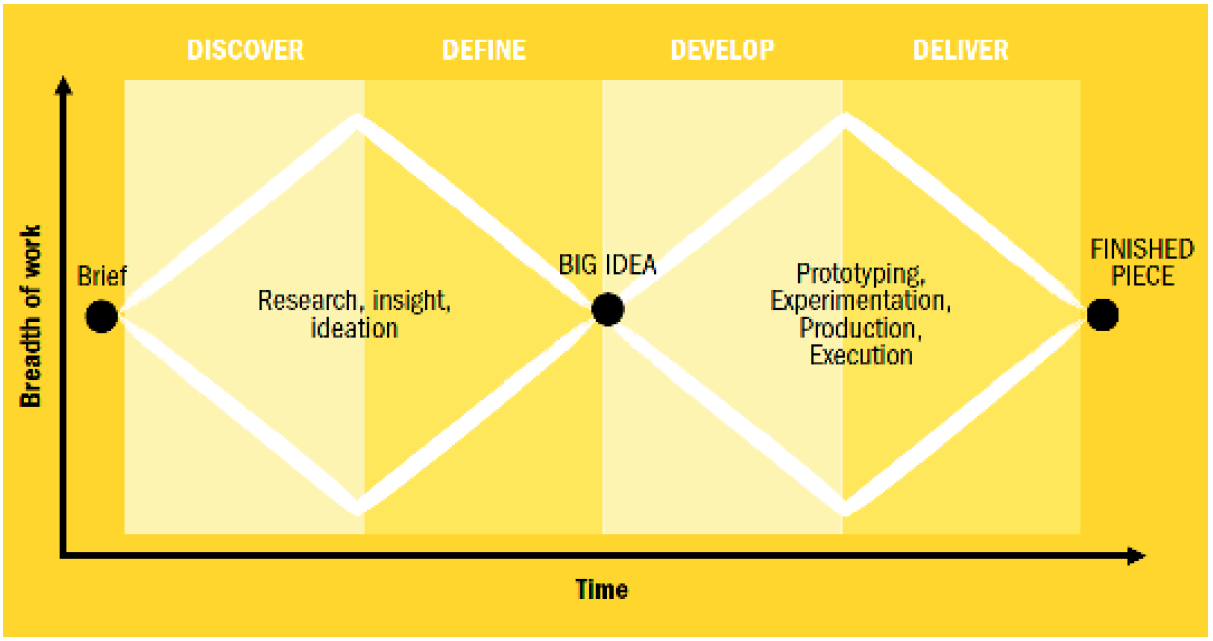
*Conceptual infographic for the framework implementation*

The Bridging the Creativity Gap Learning Programme (BCGLP - IO3) is a fast paced, hands-on learning experience where students unleash their creative potential by learning key industry skills that are in demand, understanding and going deep into the creative process using a range of different research techniques, defining and planning strategies for real case scenarios, cultivating a maker mindset, focused on creation and innovation experimenting with digital and physical rapid prototyping tools, which naturally evolves into an entrepreneurial mindset, empowering them to complement their creative visions with industry-needs competences. On the other hand, the approach elevates the critical thinking of the students and provides them with communication tools and philosophical understanding to build new narratives about the possible futures that can be triggered in the creative industry context of today.

The Bridging The Creativity Gap Learning Programme (BCGLP) is uniquely designed to address the three core skills demanded by the creative industry: entrepreneurial mindset, understanding the industry process, and strategic and critical thinking. To achieve this, the program employs a synergistic approach that integrates the creative industry's needs with the maker mindset. This is operationalized through the Double Diamond methodology and the program's four foundational dimensions: exploration, instrumentation, reflection, and application.

**Double Diamond Methodology**




The Double Diamond methodology is a globally recognized design process that consists of four phases: Discover, Define, Develop, and Deliver. This methodology aligns seamlessly with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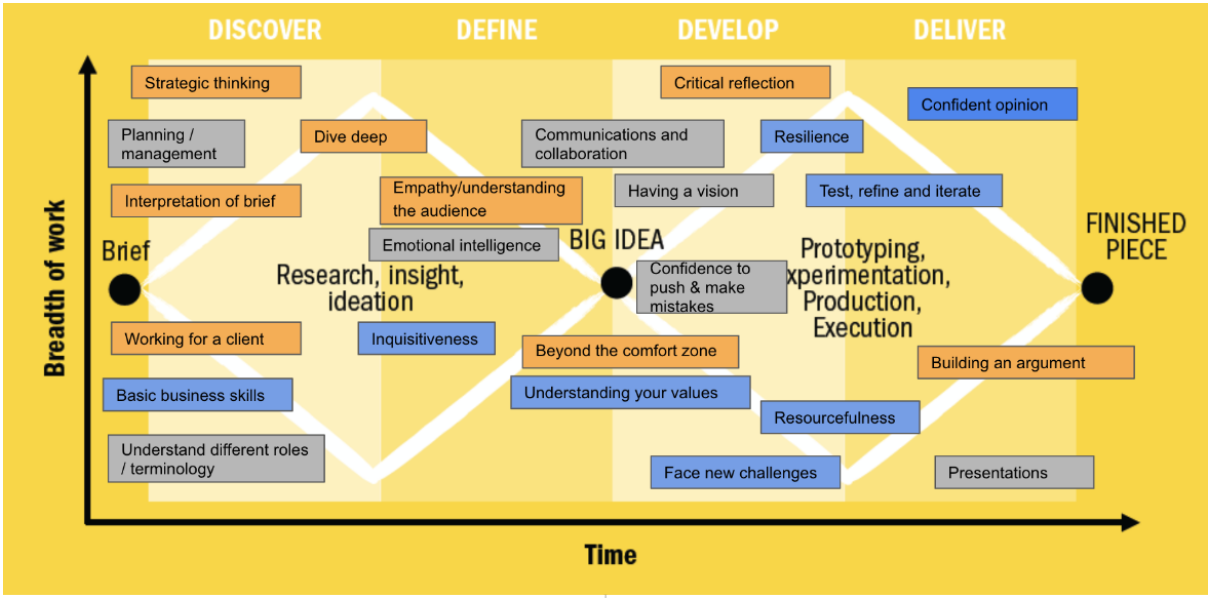
the four dimensions of the BCGLP, providing a structured yet flexible framework for skill development.

- Discover (Exploration): In this phase, students are exposed to disruptive technologies and methodologies that are shaping the creative industry. This aligns with the 'Exploration' dimension, where students are encouraged to broaden their horizons and understand the landscape of the creative industry.
- Define (Instrumentation): The 'Define' phase of the Double Diamond corresponds with the 'Instrumentation' dimension. Here, students are equipped with the tools and skills needed to translate briefings into ideas and prototypes. This is where the Maker Mindset begins to take shape, as students learn to use various tools to bring their creative ideas to life.
- Develop (Reflection): The 'Develop' phase is where ideas are iterated and refined, aligning with the 'Reflection' dimension of the BCGLP. Students are encouraged to develop their identity and skill set, considering how they can contribute to the future of the creative industry. This is where strategic and critical thinking skills are honed.
- Deliver (Application): Finally, the 'Deliver' phase corresponds with the 'Application' dimension. This is the culmination of the Maker Mindset, where students are encouraged to create prototypes as knowledge generators. They apply what they've learned in a practical setting, thereby demonstrating their entrepreneurial mindset.

***Points of Connection***




- Entrepreneurial Mindset: The Maker Mindset and the 'Application' dimension encourage students to take their ideas from concept to reality, embodying the entrepreneurial spirit. This is further reinforced by the 'Deliver' phase of the Double Diamond, where ideas are finalized and executed.
- Understanding the Industry Process: The Double Diamond methodology provides a real-world framework that mirrors the processes used in the creative industry. By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working through each of the four dimensions, students gain a comprehensive understanding of how projects evolve from inception to completion in a professional setting.

- Strategic and Critical Thinking: The 'Reflection' dimension and the 'Develop' phase of the Double Diamond encourage students to think critically about their work and its broader implications. This aligns with the program's emphasis on strategic thinking, preparing students to make thoughtful decisions in their professional lives.

By integrating the Double Diamond methodology with the four dimensions of the BCGLP, we create a holistic learning environment that not only addresses the skills demanded by the creative industry but also equips students with the practical competencies needed to excel in their careers.

The BCGLP structure is meticulously designed, integrating the Double Diamond methodology, the Maker Mindset, and the three core skills demanded by the creative industry. This synthesis results in a curriculum that is not only aligned with industry needs but also fosters a dynamic, hands-on learning environment. A collaborative design exercise with the creative community ensures that the course wireframe effectively bridges the gap between academic learning and real-world application.

The BCGLP is structured in these modules:

| **Module** | **Context** |
|---|---|
| **1. Welcome to Bridging the Creativity Gap** | An introduction to the course, methodology, resources and toolkits. |
| **Outcomes**<br>- Learn how to use the platform, do the tasks and the methodology to follow.<br><br>OER's: Videos, workbook, teaching guide and digital board. | |
| **Module** | **Context** |
| **2. The Creative Process** | The importance of understanding the creative process is threefold.<br><br>- It is important to comprehend where your discipline and those of others sit within a broader creative process.<br>- Creativity is often messy but using a creative process that works for you / your team can help avoid unnecessary frustration and provide a better chance of repeating success.<br>- It enables you to be more adept at |


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| | recognising the quality, usefulness, and worthiness of your ideas. |

**Outcomes**

- Define what the creative process is and its benefits.
- Analyse what your creative process looks like and determine where your skills fit.
- Understand different roles within the agency structure and how they contribute to the creative process.
- Analyse a worked example of the creative process.
- Identify your creative personality with the Creative Process Test

OER's: Videos, workbook, teaching guide and digital board.

| Module | Context |
|---|---|
| **3. The Brief** | What is a brief?<br>- The creative brief is the main difference between creating personal work or work as an artist and producing work for the commercial creative space. The brief is how every project should begin. |

**Outcomes**

- Understand what a creative brief looks like.
- Define what strategy is and its importance.
- Discover your process of breaking down a brief.
- Identify and develop the who, what and why.

OER's: Videos, workbook, teaching guide and digital board.

| Module | Context |
|---|---|
| **4. Research and Insights** | Once you are clear on what the brief is asking you to do; the next step often requires a period of Discovery, where you can use a range of different research techniques to dig deeper into the challenge.<br>Whilst research and creativity are often seen as very different disciplines, together they can unlock some of the best ideas and executions.<br>Getting to know the business or product you are working for, the audience you are creating for and |


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| | the context/culture within which your work will sit can tip the odds in your favour in terms of getting work made and objectives achieved.<br>In this module, we might not go over all the different types and ways of researching that you can use to make your work relevant. But, we want to show you how important it is to have a strategy, be reflective, and have empathy in the creative process. |

**Outcomes**

- Recall why digging deeper into your product/audience/client/culture matters.
- Be able to step outside your comfort zone and into the shoes of others.
- Comprehend the process of moving from research to insight.
- Apply frameworks to help you to unearth creative inspiration.

OER's: Videos, workbook, teaching guide and digital board.

| Module | Context |
|---|---|
| **5. Ideation** | Now that you have your brief, you've done your research and hopefully found your insight it's time for you to delve in and start thinking of all the ways that we can answer the brief.<br>There are many different ways to inspire new thinking and part of the fun is testing different techniques to find what is right for you and the people you work with. In this module, we'll emphasise the importance of warming up your brain and getting fresh stimulation to generate innovative ideas for your brief challenge. |

**Outcomes**

- Understand the power of fresh thinking.
- Engage in a brain-warming exercise to increase your chances of generating fresh ideas.
- Apply a tool to inspire divergent ideas.
- Build your capacity to refine, defend and rationalise your ideas.

OER's: Videos, workbook, teaching guide and digital board.


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| Module | Context |
|---|---|
| 6. Prototyping and Making | Bringing your ideas to life can be a challenging task that requires an entrepreneurial mindset and a willingness to create. It involves taking risks and experimenting to ensure that your solution is as strong as it can be.<br>By adopting a "maker mindset", you can push yourself to develop and refine your idea until it's ready to be presented to clients or investors. It can also provide you with evidence and validation to satisfy clients increasing the chances of getting your work made.<br>In this module, we will use prototyping to demonstrate the value of an enterprising mindset and believing in an idea enough to make it and take it out into the world. |
| **Outcomes**<br><br>- Understand the importance of the maker mindset within the creative process.<br>- Give you the experience of two replicable prototyping methods.<br>- Test the idea you have for your brief response.<br>- Build your capacity to refine, defend and rationalise your ideas.<br><br>OER's: Videos, workbook, teaching guide and digital board. | |
| **Module** | **Context** |
| 7. Pitching | Once you've developed your idea, tested it, and refined it, you need to be able to sell it. Unless you can get someone to buy into your idea it will stay just that and won't be realised in the real world - this could be a business, an investor, a partner, a collaborator or a colleague.<br>It can be daunting to tell others about your idea, but unless you do, the chances of getting your idea made will be much reduced.<br>Therefore, practice doing it. The more often to talk about your ideas and give feedback on other people's the less daunting pitching will become. |
| **Outcomes** | |


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| - Understand what a pitch is.<br>- Explore a basic pitch structure.<br>- Receive hints and tips from those who pitch regularly.<br>- Finally, you will be asked to consider ways to finally evaluate and feedback on ideas.<br><br>OER's: Videos, workbook, teaching guide and digital board. | |
| **Module** | **Context** |
| **8. Next Steps** | A look back at all we have touched on during our Bridging the Creative Gap journey. |
| **Outcomes** | |

The Bridging The Creativity Gap Framework transcends traditional boundaries, offering not only a tangible learning programme for students but also detailed guides for tutors. These guides encompass facilitation techniques, implementation strategies, and robust assessment methods, ensuring a holistic educational experience. At its core, the framework's primary objective is to provide a comprehensive approach for nurturing and enhancing the capacity skills of creative students, preparing them for the dynamic demands of the industry.

The tutors' guidelines are specifically designed for the Bridging The Creativity Gap Learning Programme, ensuring a seamless integration with its objectives and methodologies. These guidelines are meticulously structured in 4 chapters to provide *a holistic overview of the entire programme*.

Chapter 2: Getting Started

This chapter is designed to equip you with the knowledge and confidence to embark on the BCGLP with your students.

Section 2.1, *"Preparing for the Course"* walks you through the initial steps to set the stage for your teaching journey. Here, you'll learn how to access the course, its open educational resources, and compile an inventory of essential materials.

Moving on to 2.2, *"Familiarising Yourself with the Modules"* introduces you to the intricacies of each module, understanding the core skills they aim to impart and their overarching objectives.


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Recognizing the diverse teaching environments you might operate in, 2.3, "*Adapting the Course for Online or Face-to-Face Facilitation"* offers insights to ensure you can transition smoothly between online and traditional classroom settings.

Chapter 3: BCG Learning Programme Handbook - The Course

In this chapter, you'll delve deep into the heart of the Bridging The Creativity Gap Learning Programme which are the different **modules such The Creative Process, The Brief, Research and Insights, Ideation, Prototyping and Making, Pitching and Industry Integration (Next Steps)**.

***M1 - Creative Process***

Step outside of the student discipline and see how collaboration can enable great results. Insight from creative leaders and a case study will break down the different roles/departments in a creative agency/studio and introduce you to one process that student can employ in their projects. Finally, it will give the student the opportunity to consider where your strengths/skills naturally sit within the creative process.

***M2 - The Creative Brief***

Begin to unpack a client brief and turn it into a jumping-off point which enables student creativity to flourish. The brief will provide the practical application for the remainder of the course.

***M3 - Strategic and Reflective Thinking***

Build Strategic and Reflective Thinking into student work. It will provide tips and tools for developing empathy and understanding of the student audience.

***M4 - Ideation Process***

Take part in a workshop to demonstrate the importance of drawing on different stimuli and students will apply a framework to help you to assess the value of the ideas the student is having.

***M5 - Prototyping***

Develop your Entrepreneurial Thinking and apply Prototyping to the students' creative process. Students will also explore the Maker Mindset and take part in workshops to exercise the making of muscle.


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***M6 - Practical Pitch Deck***

Bring all student knowledge together in a pitch deck that will help them sell their thinking and increase the chances of moving ideas to reality.

Each module is meticulously detailed to provide you with a comprehensive understanding of its content and objectives. It is *a detailed breakdown, encompassing an overview of the module's content, its specific learning outcomes, recommended teaching strategies, suggested activities and exercises, necessary resources and materials, and methods for evaluation and assessment*. This comprehensive structure ensures that you, as educator, are equipped with both a broad perspective of the curriculum and the granular details essential for effective module-specific instruction.

Chapter 4 - Evaluating Student Progress

In this chapter, you'll be introduced to the comprehensive approach of gauging your students' growth and understanding throughout the Bridging The Creativity Gap Learning Programme.

Section “4.1 Assessment Criteria For Course Activites” delves into how the course employs a formative assessment approach, focusing on continuous feedback and reflection to enhance learning. Students engage in various tasks and maintain a reflection diary, while tutors have the opportunity to evaluate their progress through pre and post-surveys and module-specific questionnaires. Teamwork assessments further enrich the learning experience by encouraging self-assessment and peer feedback.

Section *“4.2 Evaluating Course Success”* explores how the learning programme (course) is evaluated through a combination of platform-generated data and stakeholder surveys. Key metrics include course and module completion rates, self-assessment participation, and diversity in participant backgrounds and locations. These metrics and feedback from students, academic professionals, and industry experts collectively provide a comprehensive view of the course's effectiveness, relevance, and impact.

The Bridging The Creativity Gap Framework, including the learning programme , is designed with adaptability at its core, especially for tutors. Its versatile nature allows educators to either adopt the structured approach presented on the platform or embed specific components into their existing courses. With all modules and open educational resources readily accessible, tutors have the flexibility to tailor the content to best fit their teaching context, ensuring both relevance and applicability. This dual approach ensures that the framework can be seamlessly integrated into a variety of educational settings, maximising its impact and utility.

## Framework Assessment and Evaluation


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In the Bridging The Creativity Gap Learning Programme, the focus is on experiential learning, where students acquire a blend of technical skills, artistic principles, and a deep understanding of the creative process. Our assessment strategy is rooted in formative assessment, designed to provide actionable feedback that facilitates learning. This approach helps students reflect on the skills and principles they are acquiring and understand how these elements interconnect.

To ensure a cohesive assessment framework, we align course objectives, expected outcomes, and the assessment process. This alignment is achieved through clear articulation of course objectives, further broken down into specific, measurable aims. This sets the stage for designing assessments that are both self-administered and tutor-evaluated, focusing on the skills and tools that students practice and apply.

Our assessment approach addresses both ongoing progress through individual module assessments and final course outcomes. Formative assessments within each module allow both students and tutors to gauge progress and inform further learning. These can be digital written tasks, immediate verbal tasks, or, in the case of our online course, online questionnaires. Each activity is also documented in an online notebook, serving as a reflective tool for students to track their learning journey.

We recommend supplementing this with pre and post-module surveys. These surveys help students self-assess their skills before and after each module, providing a comprehensive view of their skill development. A final summative assessment encapsulates the students' achievements, contextualising their newly acquired skills and knowledge.

The course comprises seven modules, each containing approximately three tasks documented in the BCG Workbook, a reflection and activity diary. This workbook and the tasks within it are meticulously aligned with the learning outcomes, serving as both a tool for self-assessment and a means for tutors to quantitatively evaluate students' progress.

## Implications for creative industry

The Bridging The Creativity Gap Framework stands poised to usher in a transformative era for the creative industry. Its impact is multifaceted, addressing both immediate needs and long-term industry aspirations.

1. ***Bridging Skill Gaps***: One of the most pressing challenges in the creative industry is the disconnect between academic training and real-world industry demands. This framework, built upon comprehensive research and insights from industry professionals, tutors, and students, directly addresses this disparity. By focusing on the core competencies that the industry deems essential, it ensures that emerging talents are not just theoretically proficient but also practically equipped to navigate the complexities of the creative world.


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2. ***Fostering a Culture of Continuous Learning***: The creative industry is ever-evolving, with new tools, technologies, and methodologies continually emerging. The framework's emphasis on exploration, instrumentation, reflection, and application ensures that learners are not just passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in their learning journey. This culture of continuous learning is vital for ensuring that professionals remain at the cutting edge of industry developments.

3. ***Enhancing Industry-Academia Collaboration***: By providing a structured approach that can be seamlessly integrated into various educational settings, the framework fosters closer ties between academia and the industry. This symbiotic relationship ensures that academic institutions are always attuned to industry needs, while the industry benefits from a steady influx of talents who are both innovative and industry-ready.

4. ***Empowering Tutors***: The framework's adaptability ensures that educators are not left behind. With access to a plethora of resources, guides, and methodologies, tutors can enhance their teaching techniques, ensuring that they are always delivering content that is both relevant and impactful. This empowerment of educators indirectly benefits the industry by ensuring that the quality of education remains consistently high.

5. ***Driving Economic Growth***: A skilled workforce is a direct driver of economic growth. By ensuring that emerging talents are equipped with the skills that the creative industry demands, the framework indirectly contributes to the economic vitality of the sector. Companies spend less time onboarding and training new recruits and more time leveraging their skills for business growth.

6. ***Promoting Ethical and Sustainable Practices***: Beyond just skills, the framework also emphasizes the importance of strategic and critical thinking. This ensures that the next generation of creative professionals is not just technically sound but also ethically grounded, understanding the broader societal implications of their work. In an era where sustainability and ethical considerations are paramount, this aspect of the framework ensures that the industry moves in a direction that is both profitable and responsible.

The Bridging The Creativity Gap Framework is strategically aligned with key European policies, addressing the continent's pressing challenges and capitalising on its vast potential.

- ***Digital Education Action Plan***: BCGF resonates with the plan's priorities by enabling VET partners to adopt innovative digital practices. The project emphasizes the effective use of digital technology for teaching and learning and fosters the development of crucial digital skills, preparing students for the digital transformation era.
- ***A New Skills Agenda for Europe***: BCGF directly addresses the evolving skills needs across various economic sectors, especially those undergoing rapid technological changes. By ensuring the timely provision of relevant skills, BCG bolsters competitiveness and innovation across the creative industry.


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- ***Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning***: BCGF emphasizes the acquisition of essential digital and entrepreneurial competences. The project nurtures creativity, strategic thinking, problem-solving, and critical reflection, all pivotal for innovation in the digital age.
- ***The Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition***: BCGF's alignment with this coalition is evident in its commitment to enhancing digital skills for the workforce and in education. The project focuses on upskilling workers, providing career guidance, transforming digital skills teaching, and training educators for the digital age.
- ***A New European Agenda for Creative Culture***: Recognizing the transformative power of the cultural and creative sectors, BCGF taps into Europe's creative potential. The project underscores the importance of design and creative industries in driving economic competitiveness and innovation.
- ***The Innovation Union***: BCGF champions the role of design in translating ideas into market-ready products or services. Europe's leadership in design, with its vast pool of professional designers, finds a supportive framework in BCG. The project recognizes design skills as a blend of creativity, technical prowess, and interpersonal competencies, crucial for leveraging technological advancements.
- Design Council's Report: BCG acknowledges the immense value of design skills to the economy, as highlighted by the Design Council. The project addresses the skills gaps in design-skilled occupations, which have significant economic implications. BCG's approach ensures that the creative industry remains agile, adapting to new products, services, practices, and technologies.

In essence, the Bridging The Creativity Gap initiative is a comprehensive response to Europe's strategic objectives, ensuring that the continent remains at the forefront of creativity, innovation, and design in the global landscape. It is not just an educational tool; it's a strategic investment in the future of the creative industry. By addressing current challenges and anticipating future needs, it ensures that the industry remains vibrant, innovative, and economically robust.

## Recommendations for policy makers in the Context of Bridging The Creativity Gap

The Bridging The Creativity Gap project underscores the importance of a dynamic Vocational Education and Training (VET) system in shaping the future of the creative industry. This system is crucial in bridging the divide between academic learning and real-world applications. As the creative landscape continually evolves, our VET approach must be agile, adapting to ensure it remains attuned to both learners' aspirations and industry needs. The forthcoming recommendations, tailored for policy makers at European, national, and local levels, aim to bolster the VET system's adaptability, inclusivity, and alignment with contemporary industry demands. By embracing these suggestions, we can pave the way for a thriving and resilient creative sector for generations to come.


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**European Level**

- ***Unified Standards***: Establish a unified set of standards for VET programs across member states to ensure consistency and quality in the training provided.
- ***Funding and Grants***: Allocate dedicated funds and grants to support VET institutions in adopting ***innovative frameworks*** like the Bridging The Creativity Gap.
- ***Collaborative Platforms***: Promote cross-border collaborations, allowing VET institutions to share best practices, resources, and methodologies.
- ***Research and Data Collection***: Regularly commission studies to understand the evolving needs of the creative industry, ensuring VET programs remain relevant.

**National Level**

- ***Curriculum Integration***: Encourage the integration of industry-relevant frameworks into national VET curricula to ensure students are equipped with skills that match industry demands.
- ***Professional Development***: Offer continuous professional development opportunities for VET educators, ensuring they are updated with the latest industry trends and teaching methodologies.
- ***Industry Partnerships***: Foster partnerships between VET institutions and local creative industries, facilitating internships, workshops, and real-world project experiences for students.
- ***Infrastructure and Technology***: Invest in the necessary infrastructure and digital tools that can aid in the delivery of modern VET programs.

**Local Level**

- ***Community Engagement***: Engage local communities in understanding the value of VET, ensuring that students and parents recognize the potential of vocational training.
- ***Local Industry Insights***: Regularly liaise with local creative businesses to understand their specific needs, tailoring VET programs accordingly.
- ***Flexible Learning***: Promote flexible learning environments, including part-time courses and evening classes, ensuring VET is accessible to a broader demographic.
- ***Feedback Mechanisms***: Establish mechanisms for regular feedback from students and local industries, ensuring the VET approach remains responsive to local needs.

In conclusion, for the VET approach to remain effective and relevant, policymakers at all levels must prioritize continuous adaptation, industry collaboration, and investment in both educators and infrastructure. By doing so, they can ensure that VET students are well-prepared to contribute meaningfully to the creative industry.


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## Conclusion

The Bridging The Creativity Gap project embarked on a mission to understand and address the skill gaps prevalent in the creative industry. Through meticulous research and collaboration, the initiative delved deep into the educational status quo, focusing on three key areas: entrepreneurial mindset, understanding the industry process, and strategic and critical thinking. Engaging with a diverse group of stakeholders, including university teachers, recent graduates, and industry professionals, the project organised focus group discussions to gain a comprehensive understanding of the educational landscape and its alignment with industry needs.

The insights garnered from these discussions laid the foundation for the Bridging The Creativity Gap Framework (BCGF). This framework, structured around four critical dimensions - exploration, instrumentation, reflection, and application - offers a tangible pathway for students and tutors. It's not just a theoretical construct; the BCGF is brought to life through a hands-on learning programme. This programme, encompassing modules from the creative process to industry integration, ensures that learners are equipped with the skills and competences that the creative industry demands.

Furthermore, the project recognized the importance of adaptability in education. Tutors are provided with guides that allow them to either follow the structured learning programme or embed individual components into their existing courses, ensuring the content's relevance and applicability. This flexibility ensures that the framework can be seamlessly integrated into diverse educational contexts, catering to both VET and Higher Education.

But the project's vision extended beyond just the educational realm. Recognizing the broader implications of its findings, the Bridging The Creativity Gap initiative also put forth policy recommendations. These recommendations, tailored for policy makers at European, national, and local levels, emphasize the need for a robust VET approach that aligns with the ever-evolving demands of the creative industry.

In conclusion, the Bridging The Creativity Gap project has been a holistic endeavor, addressing the multifaceted challenges of the creative industry. From understanding the gaps to crafting a comprehensive framework, from implementing a tangible learning programme to suggesting policy changes, the initiative has left no stone unturned in its quest to ensure that the next generation of creatives is well-equipped to meet industry needs and drive innovation.


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