



Press Information
AGM March 2009

Sacking Route B

The National Association of Fine art Educators have become increasingly concerned about the impact of decisions to eliminate the Route B option in the application process for students applying to and entering Art and Design education in Higher Education. Current proposals from Guild HE and the Delivery Partnership, to simplify the process of application, are effectively undermining traditions of teaching and learning in the Art and Design sector and posing a direct threat to the quality and depth of pre-degree education. The real problem, or risk, as the Association sees it, is not the simplification itself but more the increasing momentum for an early deadline for the submission of UCAS applications that would destabilise the current offering to students. We are fearful that the trajectory of proposals affecting UCAS changes will result in a January deadline and we are solidly against such a development. At the March conference of the Association, the NAFAE Steering Group is setting aside specific time to debate the impact of the changes to the application procedure and is inviting colleagues to present their observations and arguments. We have no confidence in proposals from the Delivery Partnership as they stand.

Over recent months, members of the Association from the Further Education sector have become increasingly animated and vocal about the negative impact of the Delivery Partnership proposals on; progression opportunities, advice and guidance and the quantity and effectiveness of skills based teaching within Art and Design. As the national debate has evolved, teaching staff in Further and Higher Education have added the value of their experiences to the argument. If we are to maintain anything close to the standards of provision and opportunity that we have been used to in the sector then it is surely the case that we must protect the tradition of a thorough diagnostic provision at Level 3 of the curriculum and that teaching content must be given to time to embed in the student experience, enabling these University applicants to make informed and appropriate choices for their higher level studies.

Following reports of consultation across the Art and Design education sector, Guild HE and the Delivery Partnership have constructed a process to remove the Route B application process from the UCAS system. Arguments for or against this decision are, by now, retrospective as that decision is already complete. What is now under negotiation is the choice of when the single date deadline should fall. Under current proposals, Higher Education Institutions will have the choice in mid-January or a date in late March. The National Association of fine Art Educators is arguing that this is a meaningless choice. The effect of the January option would be disastrous for any diagnostic programmes, whether

they be Foundation Diplomas or BTEC NDs, as it would be too early for students to make sense of all of their options or even complete a sensible portfolio. There is no need for the option of a January date as the only sensible outcome, for the students benefit, would be the date in late March.

NAFAE contest that proposals and decisions developed by the Delivery Partnership thus far have not adequately engaged with those who deliver the curriculum direct to students. For whatever reason, both teaching staff and students in Art and Design have been overlooked in the consultation process. The move to present Higher Education Institutions with a choice over submission deadlines will not attract opinion from academics and teachers but from accountants and business managers. More importantly, the choice is pitched at the wrong correspondents. At this stage of the proposals, any options for setting a single date for applications through UCAS ought to be the preserve of teaching staff in Further Education. NAFAE are asking that the decision over a single deadline for application deadline is given to those who work most closely with students during their formative education within the subject field and through their diagnostic experiences; it is college and Level 3 tutors who best understand the process that students are going through and best understand the learners experiences and needs at this crucial stage of their education. We submit that choice should not be on offer to HE, but that teaching staff in FE should provided with the opportunity of a thorough consultation at this stage and the results of that the true results of that consultation should be binding.

We hope that representative from Guild HE, the Delivery Partnership and UCAS can join is in March and that they will listen to the serious concerns, that have accumulated through our own processes, about the cultural impact of any decisions within the sector that might detract from the importance of diagnostic provision in Art and Design.

NAFAE Steering group
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