

**Submission to NZ Curriculum
The Arts and Technology Year 11 - 13 Learning Areas
July 2026**

BACKGROUND

WeCreate is the alliance of Aotearoa's major creative industry associations and organisations (representing 30,000+ Kiwi creators, support people, and creative businesses), which was founded in 2014 to propel growth in the sector and increase its contribution to New Zealand's social, cultural and economic wellbeing. The creative economy **contributes \$18.5b¹ to New Zealand's GDP** and, with the right policy settings, could be worth \$25b by 2030. The sector has delivered 3.6% five-year per annum average growth from 2020 – 2025, while the rest of the economy only grew at 1.7%. Our sector is an ecosystem and much of the talent we have is fostered in and by arts and culture organisations, as shown in the diagram below.



We would welcome the opportunity for productive engagement with the Ministry as the curriculum change progresses. As we have with other Ministries, we can bring together our members and businesses from across the creative ecosystem to support your work and help to ensure that it meets the needs of both learners and industry, and to propel a positive future for all New Zealanders.

¹ [Infometrics sector profiles 2025 | Manatū Taonga | Ministry for Culture & Heritage](#)

Context for this submission:

1. Creative and tech are **high growth industries, and those most likely to propel New Zealand's economic prosperity**. They are also the **future-focused industries** that understand how education and work-based-learning contribute to personal and economic success.
2. **One third** of New Zealanders in creative occupations work **outside the creative sector**.
3. Creative skills, like tech skills, are needed **across the entire workforce – and this will only increase in the future**.
4. **Creative exports were valued at \$3.6 billion in 2023**. This makes creative exports Aotearoa New Zealand's **fourth-largest export industry**, larger than fruit, and the leading non-commodity export.
5. Analysis of the economy or workforce that relies on the use of ANZSIC and ANZSOC codes **will not accurately reflect the scale and reach of the creative sector**. This coding system is acknowledged by StatsNZ as not having kept pace with the creation and adoption of digital technologies which are prevalent in the creative sector. For example, **our internationally successful games and post-production sector may be buried in “software engineering”**.
6. Cabinet has approved [*Amplify – A Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand*](#). The strategy includes a **Nurturing Talent** Pillar that should be referenced as work on developing any curriculum change is completed.
7. The education and training needs of the creative, cultural, and tech sectors (including school and VET education) differ significantly from those of most other sectors. Many of **the roles in these sectors are highly digital**, and **30.3% of the workforce is self-employed** (compared to 15.5% of the rest of the workforce).
8. Prior to the establishment of Workforce Development Councils, the creative sector did not have an industry training organisation (ITO), and no workforce planning or insights. Toi Mai published a number of [*Workforce Development Plans*](#) **that should be referenced to inform changes to school curricula**.
9. Research by well-known economist, Shamubeel Eaqub, makes [*three recommendations*](#) for boosting the creative sector:
 - a. Recognise **creative skills as essential to long-term public value**.
 - b. Reform the training system to reflect real creative pathways – thinking beyond just longform qualifications.
 - c. Re-establish coordination mechanisms grounded in real conditions (not just qualification development).

Submission

- WeCreate's submission on the Years 0-10 Arts and Technology learning areas (April 2026) identified foundational concerns: the absence of creative industries from the curriculum rationale, the lack of integration between Arts and Technology, insufficient AI literacy, and the risk that implementation sequencing would deprioritise both learning areas. Those concerns apply equally at senior secondary level. Years 11-13 are where students are looking for pathways into work and employment. **If the creative industries are not presented by the education system as a viable career pathway, that is a barrier to entry into the sector.**
- This submission focuses on **career pathway visibility**, creative digital skills, vocational education alignment, and the conditions needed to retain talented, creative, young New Zealanders in the local sector.
- The creative sector's talent pipeline depends on students at senior secondary level being able to identify creative and creative-tech careers as viable, clear destinations. The current and proposed curriculum framework does not support this. **Creative Industries are absent from the rationale of both the Arts and Technology learning areas, leaving career guidance to operate in a silo.**
- We acknowledge the progress that TEC has made with the inclusion of some creative-tech roles on the Tahutū Career Navigator site. However, the connection between the years 11-13 curriculum subjects and these careers is missing.
- WeCreate asks that the rationale for both Arts and Technology at Years 11-13 explicitly name all of the creative industries — advertising, architecture, design, fashion, games, media, mixed reality, music, performing arts, photography, publishing, screen, software and visual arts - as significant employment options. **Careers in the creative industries are not marginal choices and should be treated equally.**
- The proposed curriculum **treats AI primarily as a computer science topic**. This framing is insufficient. Generative AI is already reshaping how creative work is produced, commissioned, and valued across every discipline the Arts learning area covers. Students entering creative careers in the next five years will need to be able to work alongside AI with genuine critical and practical literacy - not encounter it for the first time in employment or work.
- The [TUANZ Education to Employment Position Paper \(June 2026\)](#) identifies a "ladder-pulling" effect in which AI is automating the entry-level roles that have historically trained junior talent across digitally-intensive industries. The creative sector is directly exposed to this dynamic: entry-level roles in post-production, design, music production, and games have served as the traditional training ground for mid-career practitioners. If those rungs are being removed, the curriculum at Years 11–13 must build new ones.
- WeCreate asks that AI content at Years 11-13 be extended beyond computational ethics to include AI as a creative, production and business management tool across the arts and technology disciplines. The distinctly human skills - creative judgement, cultural context, ethical reasoning, and authorial voice – should also be included. If Arts and Technology were integrated, this learning would be in one place. If they continue to be separate, this

learning needs to be in both the Arts learning area, and within Technology or Computer Science.

- The TUANZ paper also calls for **digital literacy to be elevated to the same status as reading and mathematics at both primary and secondary level, ensuring every student graduates "digital-ready."** WeCreate supports this call and asks that it be understood to include creative digital skills: screen production, music technology, design, animation, interactive media, and games development. These are not peripheral enrichments - they are the competencies underpinning a \$5 billion export industry in which New Zealand has established competitive advantage.
- At present, access to creative digital subjects at NCEA level is heavily dependent on school resourcing and geography. A student in a well-resourced urban school may have access to screen production, music technology, or design; a student elsewhere may not. This inequity directly constrains the size and diversity of the creative sector's future workforce. WeCreate asks that the Ministry treat equitable access to creative digital subjects at Years 11–13 as a curriculum entitlement, not a school-level discretion, and fund professional development and resourcing accordingly.
- TUANZ's position paper calls for career pathways that dismantle cultural barriers and actively encourage Māori, Pasifika, and Wahine into digital education and employment. WeCreate makes a parallel case specific to the creative sector: Māori and Pasifika creators are significantly represented across screen, music, performing arts, and design, and **the curriculum at Years 11-13 should actively support pathways that connect cultural identity and creative practice to viable careers - including self-employment, which accounts for 30.3% of the creative workforce compared to 15.5% of other industries.**
- The *Amplify* strategy's *Nurturing Talent* pillar should be explicitly referenced in the Years 11-13 framework as a guiding policy commitment. Career guidance at this level should be resourced to reflect the realities of creative sector entry, including portfolio-based pathways, the prevalence of freelance and project-based work, and the range of roles that do not follow conventional qualification routes.
- WeCreate asks that the Ministry engage with the ETITC ISB as part of the Years 11–13 curriculum development process, to ensure alignment between NCEA achievement standards and the vocational pathways the ISB system supports. Career guidance resourcing at senior secondary level should include explicit information about both degree and non-degree entry routes into the creative industries.
- TUANZ has argued that New Zealand needs a coherent, bipartisan vision for its digital future that survives electoral cycles and gives business, education, and communities the confidence to invest. WeCreate makes the same argument for the creative sector. Curriculum decisions made now will shape our workforce to 2035 and beyond.
- WeCreate asks the Ministry to develop a long-term implementation roadmap for Arts and Technology at senior secondary level that includes explicit workforce outcome targets, a mechanism for ongoing creative industry input into curriculum review, and dedicated funding for teacher professional development in creative digital disciplines - recognised as one of the most significant areas of workforce shortage in the sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Name the creative industries explicitly in the Arts and Technology rationale at Years 11–13 as significant career destinations, consistent with their scale and growth as contributors to New Zealand's economy.
2. Extend AI curriculum content beyond computational ethics to address AI as a creative tool and its implications for creative livelihoods, with this content sitting within the Arts learning area as well as Technology.
3. Treat equitable access to creative digital subjects at Years 11-13 as a curriculum entitlement, with dedicated funding for professional development and resourcing in under-served schools and regions.
4. Develop career guidance resources that reflect the realities of creative sector entry, including portfolio pathways, self-employment, and the *Amplify* strategy's *Nurturing Talent* pillar, with specific attention to Māori and Pasifika learners.
5. Engage ETITC ISB in the Years 11-13 curriculum development process to ensure NCEA achievement standards align with vocational pathways and to the needs of creative industry employers and the workforce.
6. Commit to a long-term implementation roadmap for Arts and Technology at senior secondary level, with workforce outcome targets and a standing mechanism for creative industry input into curriculum review.

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WeCreate's Members and Friends are:

Advertising & Illustrative Photographers Assn	APRA AMCOS NZ
Auckland Council	Australia & NZ Screen Association
Christian Copyright Licensing International	Coalition for Books
Code NZ	Commercial Communications Council
Copyright Licensing NZ	Creative NZ
Design Assembly	Directors & Editors Guild NZ
Equity NZ	Independent Music NZ
Fashion & Textiles NZ	Kōawa Studios
Māori Music Industry Coalition	Media Copyright Agency
Music Managers Forum NZ	Music Producers Guild NZ
Ngā Aho Whakaari	NZ Comedy Trust
NZ Film Commission	NZ Game Developers Association
NZ Institute of Architects	NZ Music Commission
NZ On Air*	NZ Society of Authors
NZ Writers Guild	Pan Asian Screen Collective
Playmarket	Publishers Association of NZ
Radio Broadcasters Assn	Resale Royalties Aotearoa
Recorded Music NZ	SAE Institute
Screen Industry Guild Aotearoa NZ	Screenrights
Sky Network Television	Screen Producers NZ (Spada)
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