

GCSE

WJEC GCSE Art and Design

Approved by Qualifications Wales

Specification

Teaching from 2025

For award from 2027



This Qualifications Wales regulated qualification is not available to centres in England.

Made for Wales.
Ready for the world.

This specification meets the requirements of the following regulatory documents published by Qualifications Wales:

- [Made for Wales GCSE Qualification Approval Criteria](#) which set out requirements for any new GCSE qualification Approved for first teaching from September 2025 and beyond.
- [Standard Conditions of Recognition](#) which contains the rules that all awarding bodies and their qualifications must meet when offering qualifications to learners in Wales.
- Approval Criteria for GCSE [Art and Design](#) which sets out the subject specific requirements for GCSE Art and Design qualifications from September 2025 and beyond.

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GCSE ART AND DESIGN

SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT

Unit 1: Portfolio Non-examination assessment 60% of qualification	120 marks
Work undertaken within the unit will be internally set, marked by centres and moderated by WJEC.	
Unit 2: Externally Set Assignment 10 hours sustained focus, plus preparatory study Non-examination assessment 40% of qualification	80 marks
The externally set assignment will be set by WJEC, marked by centres and moderated by WJEC.	

This is a linear qualification.

It is not tiered.

The Externally Set Assignment will be released to centres in the autumn term (December) of each series. The first release will be in the autumn term (December) 2026.

Unit 1: Portfolio must be completed before Unit 2: Externally Set Assignment is presented to learners.

The qualification will be first awarded in summer 2027.

Qualification Approval Number: C00/4967/0

GCSE ART AND DESIGN

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims

The GCSE Art and Design qualification must support Learners to:

- explore and appreciate the creative art, design and craft work of other people, develop their own creative talents and support investigative curiosity
- develop knowledge, appreciation and understanding of how meaning is communicated in art, design, and craft
- gain understanding of a range of practices and contexts in art, design, and craft, reflecting their interests and ambitions
- respond to and reflect on the art, design and craft work created by other people, applying knowledge of context to evaluate the effectiveness of ideas and techniques used to communicate meaning
- develop creative skills through experimenting and investigating to plan, devise and design images, artefacts and products with purpose and intent, recognising opportunities to realise ambitions
- develop practical and technical skills, communicating artistic intent with purpose and with increasing sophistication and control
- reflect on, refine, and evaluate their own work
- explore the cross-cutting themes of human rights and diversity, including Black, Asian, and minority ethnic perspectives, identity, culture, and contributions

These aims are set out in Qualifications Wales' Approval Criteria.

1.2 Curriculum for Wales

This GCSE Art and Design qualification is underpinned by the Curriculum for Wales framework and has been designed to ensure that learners can continue to make progress towards the four purposes whilst studying for this qualification. Central to this design are the [principles of progression](#), along with the [statements of what matters](#) and those [subject specific skills and concepts](#) outlined in the '[Designing your Curriculum](#)' section of the Expressive Arts Area of Learning and Experiences.

In developing this qualification, we have considered where there are opportunities to embed the cross-curricular themes and where there are opportunities for integral skills and cross-curricular skills to be developed. Appendix A provides a simple mapping, and information to support teachers will be provided in the Guidance for Teaching.

We have also considered where the qualification can generate opportunities for integrating the learning experiences noted on page 17; the Guidance for Teaching will include further information on integrating these learning experiences into delivery.

The GCSE Art and Design qualification supports the Curriculum for Wales by:

- supporting the statements of what matters¹, by giving learners the opportunity to:
 - develop artistic skills and knowledge
 - respond and reflect as both artist and audience
 - be innovative and bold in developing their own artistic identity.
- supporting the principles of progression² by giving learners the opportunity to:
 - make links in the creative process as they explore and innovate
 - create more sophisticated work
 - refine skills and techniques
 - gain confidence and resilience in giving and receiving feedback.
- supporting the key considerations for Art and Design³ by giving learners the opportunity to:
 - experiment and develop work through a range of resources, materials, techniques and processes
 - produce a range of outcomes and to demonstrate a personal and creative response.

¹ <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/expressive-arts/statements-of-what-matters/>

² <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/expressive-arts/principles-of-progression/>

³ <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/expressive-arts/designing-your-curriculum/#discipline-specific-considerations>

Pathways

The GCSE Art and Design qualification is available in the following pathways:

- Art, craft, and design
- Fine art
- Graphic communication
- Textile design
- Three-dimensional design
- Photography

Learners must select a pathway. The subject content in 1.1 and 1.2 must be followed for each pathway.

Art, craft, and design

The art, craft and design pathway is designed to promote learning across a variety of experiences. This can involve the creative use of a broad range of media, techniques, tools, digital technologies and processes appropriate to learners' intentions and requirements, to create artefacts and to generate diverse evidence of the creative process, working methods and outcomes.

For this pathway the emphasis is on breadth of approach commensurate in demand with the depth of learning required in the more specialised pathways. The Art, Craft and Design title offers the opportunity to explore and create across pathways.

Learners undertaking this pathway could pursue areas of study from the following pathways:

- Fine art
- Graphic communication
- Textile design
- Three-dimensional design
- Photography.

Work is not limited to one of the above.

Learners undertaking this pathway must explore practical and relevant critical and contextual sources such as the work of historical and contemporary artists and the different purposes, intentions, and functions as appropriate to their own outcomes. They should demonstrate the ability to work creatively with processes and techniques appropriate to their chosen area(s) of study.

Fine art

The fine art pathway is the aspect of art, craft and design where work is developed primarily for aesthetic, intellectual or conceptual purposes rather than considerations that are principally functional and utilitarian. This pathway offers a choice of traditional and digital media and processes and involves expressive use of a wide range of materials, techniques and skills.

Learners undertaking this pathway could pursue the following areas of study:

- Drawing
- Installation
- Lens based media
- Mixed media
- Painting
- Printing
- Sculpture
- Fine art textiles.

Work is not limited to one area of study.

Learners undertaking this pathway must explore practical and relevant critical and contextual sources such as the work of historical and contemporary fine artists and the different purposes, intentions, and functions of fine art as appropriate to their own outcomes. They should demonstrate the ability to work creatively with processes and techniques appropriate to their chosen area(s) of study.

Graphic communication

The graphic communication pathway is defined as the process of creating visual material to convey information, ideas and emotions using graphic elements to a target audience. This pathway encompasses a wide and developing area of study, incorporating a variety of related disciplines and utilising traditional skills, alongside cutting-edge digital technologies suited to the commercial design field of graphic design.

Learners undertaking this pathway could pursue the following areas of study:

- Advertising and branding
- Information design
- Concept art
- Illustration
- Interactive media
- Motion graphics
- Packaging design
- Typography.

Work is not limited to one area of study.

Learners undertaking this pathway must explore practical and relevant critical and contextual sources, such as the work of historical and contemporary graphic designers and the different purposes, intentions, and functions of graphic communication as appropriate to their own outcomes. They should demonstrate the ability to work creatively with processes and techniques appropriate to their chosen area(s) of study.

Textile design

The textile design pathway is defined as the creation of designs and products for woven, knitted, stitched, or printed fabrics and involves an understanding of fibres, yarns, and fabrics. Textile design encompasses a broad range of materials, techniques and processes, including sustainable materials and processes as well as new technologies.

Learners undertaking this pathway could pursue the following areas of study:

- Constructed textiles
- Digital textiles
- Dyed fabrics
- Fashion design
- Installed textiles
- Surface print design
- Soft furnishings
- Stitched and/or embellished textiles.

Work is not limited to one area of study.

Learners undertaking this pathway must explore practical and relevant critical and contextual sources, such as the work of historical and contemporary textile designers and makers, as well as the different purposes, intentions and functions of textile design as appropriate to their own outcomes. They should demonstrate the ability to work creatively with processes and techniques appropriate to their chosen area(s) of study.

Three-dimensional design

The three-dimensional design pathway is defined as the design, prototyping, and modelling or making of primarily functional and aesthetic consumer products, objects, and environments. Learners should demonstrate the ability to work creatively with processes, techniques and materials, including those that are sustainable, appropriate to the chosen area of study such as: computer-aided design; model making; prototyping; constructing and assembling. An understanding of the relationship between form and function is essential.

Learners undertaking this pathway could pursue the following areas of study:

- Architectural design
- Ceramics
- Design for theatre, film, and television
- Environmental/landscape design
- Exhibition design
- Interior design
- Jewellery and body adornment
- Product design
- Sculpture.

Work is not limited to one area of study.

Learners undertaking this pathway must explore practical and relevant critical and contextual sources such as the work of historical and contemporary three-dimensional designers and makers, as well as the different purposes, intentions, and functions of three-dimensional design as appropriate to their own outcomes. They should demonstrate the ability to work creatively with processes and techniques appropriate to their chosen area(s) of study.

Photography

The photography pathway involves both the technical aspects of camera operation and the development of a visual language to communicate ideas and emotions through imagery. It is defined as the practice of creating static or moving images by recording light with light-sensitive materials such as photographic film or digitally by means of an image sensor. It includes still photography and other lens-based media.

Learners undertaking this pathway could pursue the following areas of study:

- Darkroom photography
- Documentary photography
- Experimental imagery
- Fashion photography
- Installation
- Moving image: film, video, and animation
- Photojournalism
- Studio photography.

Work is not limited to one area of study.

Learners undertaking this title must explore practical and relevant critical and contextual sources such as the work of historical and contemporary photographers and the different purposes, intentions, and functions of photography as appropriate to their own outcomes. They should demonstrate the ability to work creatively with processes and techniques appropriate to their chosen area(s) of study.

1.3 Prior learning and progression

Although there is no specific requirement for prior learning, the qualification is designed primarily for learners between the ages of 14 and 16 and builds on the conceptual understanding learners have developed through their learning from ages 3 – 14.

The qualification allows learners to develop a strong foundation of knowledge, skills and understanding which supports progression to post-16 study and prepares learners for life, learning and work. The qualification provides a suitable foundation for the study of Art and Design at either AS or A level. In addition, the specification provides a coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study for learners who do not progress to further study in this subject.

1.4 Guided learning hours

GCSE Art and Design has been designed to be delivered within 120 – 140 guided learning hours. The qualification has been primarily designed as a 2-year programme for learners in years 10 and 11.

1.5 Use of language

As our understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion evolves, so must our language. Updated terminology better reflects individual identities and fosters respect and accuracy. Language used should be specific as possible. Staying informed and adaptable is crucial, as inclusive language promotes dignity and equity. Recognising that language will continue to evolve, we will remain open to further amendments to ensure it accurately represents and supports all individuals. WJEC will inform centres of any amendments and the most up to date version of the specification will always be on the website.

1.6 Equality and fair access

The specification may be followed by any learner, irrespective of gender, ethnic, religious or cultural background. It has been designed to avoid, where possible, features that could, without justification, make it more difficult for a learner to access and achieve because they have a particular protected characteristic.

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments are made for eligible learners to enable them to access the assessments and demonstrate their knowledge and skills without changing the demands of the assessment.

Information on access arrangements and reasonable adjustments is found in the following document from the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ): Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration: General and Vocational Qualifications. This document is available on the JCQ website (www.jcq.org.uk).

We will be following the principles set out in this document and, as a consequence of provision for reasonable adjustments, very few learners will encounter a complete barrier to any part of the assessment.

2 SUBJECT CONTENT

The subject content in 1.1 and 1.2 must be delivered through the chosen pathway in contexts that:

- develop **ambitious and creative learners** who are aware of the importance of taking creative risks to:
 - support their creative thinking
 - encourage exploration of materials and techniques
 - analyse their own work and the work of others.
- develop the learner's role as **ethical and informed** citizens throughout the qualification. Learners should:
 - explore diversity in Welsh and global art, craft, and design, including the work of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic people
 - develop understanding and appreciating the unique and diverse traditions, history, and culture of these artistic practices
 - consider how this work is presented in different ways to communicate with the intended audience
 - consider the impact of the materials and practices they use
 - be encouraged to use sustainable materials and adopt eco-friendly practices in their creative processes
 - understand the importance of minimising the environmental impact of their work.

How to read the amplification

The amplification provided below uses the following two stems:

- 'Learners should know and understand' is used when learners are required to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in familiar and unfamiliar contexts.
- 'Learners should be able to' is used when learners need to apply their knowledge and understanding to situations or demonstrate application of practical skills and techniques.

The subject content must be delivered through the chosen pathway.

1.1

Learners should know and understand:

- 1.1.1 the creative process through exploring ideas and experimenting with a range of media, techniques, tools, digital technologies, and processes appropriate to their own, individual intentions
- 1.1.2 how art, craft, and design from a range of diverse cultures, societies, and times:
 - reflects the context within which it was created
 - influences present cultures and societies
 - influences learners' responses.
- 1.1.3 how meaning is communicated through a broad range of creative work and how it influences their own work and creative intentions
- 1.1.4 how to critically analyse and reflect on their own and others work.

1.2

Learners should be able to:

- 1.2.1 develop and research, using explorative and analytical skills to support sustained investigative curiosity
- 1.2.2 develop and refine practical and technical skills, communicating artistic intent with purpose
- 1.2.3 use and adapt drawing skills for different needs and purposes
- 1.2.4 develop imaginative and intuitive personal creative responses to stimuli
- 1.2.5 use creative thinking when using tools, materials, and techniques to create, refine and realise outcomes which exhibit clear purpose and intent and demonstrate understanding of visual language
- 1.2.6 apply critical thinking to a wide variety of art, craft, and design from diverse contexts, including sources influenced by other people, from different places and different times
- 1.2.7 consider their own creative intentions and how to convey these to an audience through effective and appropriate presentation, exhibition and/or sharing of own creative work
- 1.2.8 reflect on, refine, and evaluate their own work
- 1.2.9 acknowledge how work can be interpreted and responded to by an audience
- 1.2.10 critically analyse and reflect on their own and others work to:
 - inform the development of ideas
 - evaluate the effectiveness of the processes and outcomes of creative work
 - consider if it effectively communicates the intended meaning and purpose
 - review how work can be interpreted by and responded to by an audience.

Unit 1

Portfolio

Assessment Type: Non-examination assessment
60% of qualification
120 marks

Overview of unit

This unit is designed to enable learners to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills within the creative process. Learners should be encouraged to make personal discoveries and take creative risks through their own investigations.

Learners will be required to produce a portfolio:

- through a sustained project demonstrating development, refinement, reflection and presentation
- that is internally set, in consultation with the teacher from personal and/or given starting point
- based on a theme, concept or specific design brief.

Unit 2

Externally Set Assignment

Assessment Type: Non-examination assessment
40% of qualification
80 marks

Overview of unit

The purpose of this unit is to undertake contextual and practical research and supporting studies during a preparatory period. This will inform the learner's response during a 10-hour period of sustained focus.

The Externally Set Assignment contains five overarching big ideas. Learners must choose one big idea only and use any of the stimuli from the big idea as a starting point to inform their work.

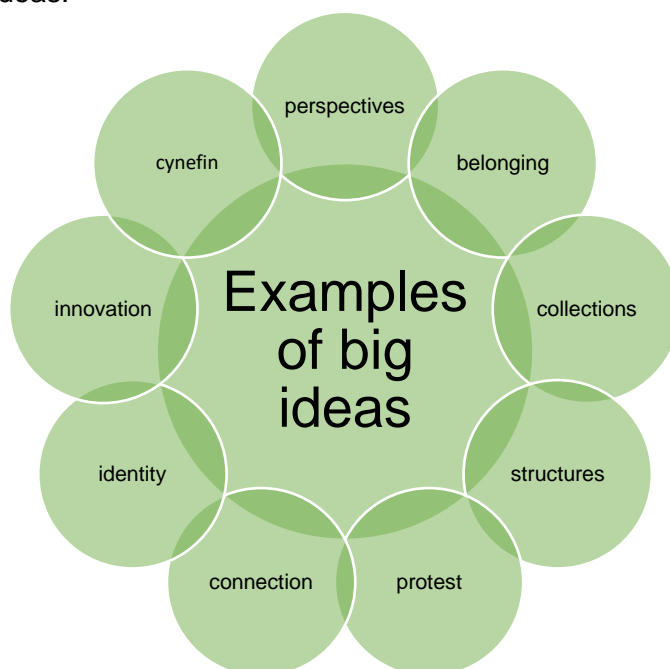
Learners will be required to produce a response:

- demonstrating development, refinement, reflection and presentation
- that is based on one of the big ideas.

In this unit, learners will apply the knowledge, understanding and skills developed during Unit 1 in response to the big ideas set by WJEC.

The Externally Set Assignment will be released to centres prior to the end of the autumn term in the final year of the course to allow for planning and preparation of supporting materials. The Externally Set Assignment should be released to learners during the spring term in the final year of study.

Examples of Big Ideas:



These are examples of big ideas that could be included in the Externally Set Assignment.

Opportunities for integration of learning experiences

GCSE Art and Design generates opportunities for the following learning experiences to be developed (the experiences will not be directly assessed):

- experience a variety of professional works through workshops and gallery/exhibitions/museum visits either in person or on-screen
- develop confidence in giving and receiving feedback, promoting independent thinking, originality and creative resilience
- opportunities to investigate, take risks and overcome creative challenges
- gain an awareness of the different careers, roles and individual work practices associated with the production of art, craft, and design in the creative and cultural industries
- use of digital technology as appropriate to the chosen pathway
- gain a basic awareness of ethical and legal considerations as appropriate.

The Guidance for Teaching will include further information on the opportunities provided by the qualification for teachers/centres to integrate these learning experiences into the delivery of the qualification.

For opportunities to develop cross-cutting themes, cross-curricular skills and integral skills please see Appendix A.

3 ASSESSMENT

3.1 Assessment objectives and weightings

The Assessment Pack will include all detailed information relating to assessment.

Below are the assessment objectives for this specification. Learners must:

AO1

Develop ideas and demonstrate critical and contextual understanding of sources

AO2

Refine work by exploring ideas, selecting and experimenting with appropriate media, techniques, tools, digital technologies, and processes

AO3

Reflect on own work, and record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses

AO4

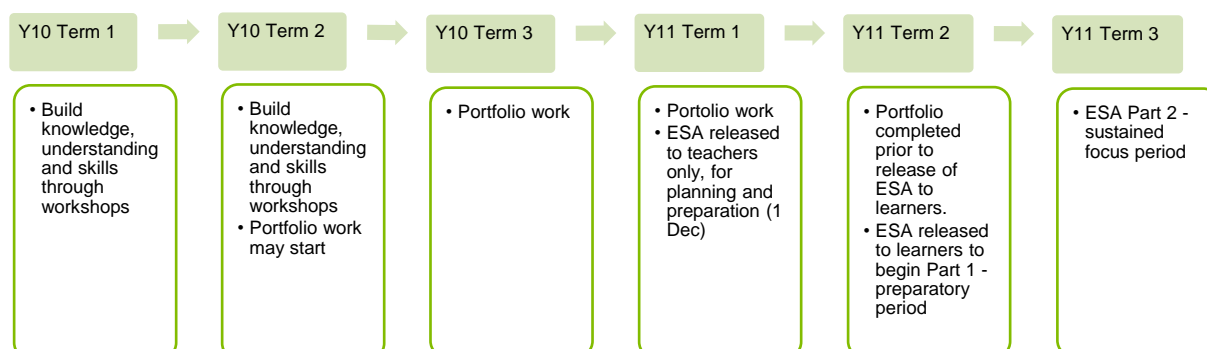
Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and demonstrates understanding of visual language

The table below shows the weighting of each assessment objective for each unit and for the qualification as a whole.

	AO1	AO2	AO3	AO4	Total
Unit 1	15%	15%	15%	15%	60%
Unit 2	10%	10%	10%	10%	40%
Overall weighting	25%	25%	25%	25%	100%

3.2 Overview of arrangements for non-examination assessment

The framework below is the suggested schedule for centres.



There is no restriction on content, format or scale of work or the amount of evidence to be selected and presented, although emphasis should be on quality rather than quantity.

Units could be presented in any appropriate format(s) such as:

- display sheets
- visual diaries
- sketchbook(s)/workbook(s)
- a digital portfolio
- mounted exhibitions
- installations
- digital presentation.

Unit 1: Overview

Learners should start developing their portfolio after they have been introduced to the knowledge, understanding and skills outlined in the subject content. Learners should be provided with opportunities to develop and expand practical knowledge and understanding through workshops in the chosen pathway.

Teachers can review learners' work and provide oral and written advice at a general level in order to secure a functional outcome.

The centre must ensure that the work an individual learner submits for assessment is their own.

Learners can have access to resources and/preparatory notes.

It is recommended that portfolio work should begin during the spring or summer term in the first year of study. The portfolio must be completed before Unit 2 (Externally Set Assignment) is presented to learners in the spring term of the final year of study. Candidates work should be stored securely after submission and during the marking, moderation and review periods. Candidates work should not be released until the Review of Marking and Moderation period has expired.

Unit 2: Overview

The Externally Set Assignment will be released on the WJEC Portal on December 1st in the final year of each series. This is strictly for teachers only, to prepare resources for learners.

The Externally Set Assignment should be introduced to learners after the submission of the portfolio, during the second term of the final year of study.

Learners are required to select one of the big ideas and develop it in the form of:

- a personal response
- a specific design brief
- or another suitable approach.

PART 1: preparatory study period

Learners will develop their response over a preparatory study period. The amount of time allocated to this is determined by the centre.

Responses will be researched, developed and refined during the preparatory study period. They should take the form of practical, critical and contextual preparatory work/supporting studies along with reflections on the process. Only work produced during the preparatory period can be used and taken forward to Part 2.

Part 1 of Unit 2 has the same controls as Unit 1 as stated in the Assessment Pack.

PART 2: sustained focus period

This must be undertaken with direct supervision.

The teacher cannot provide any advice or feedback on learners' work.

Learners can have access to resources and/preparatory notes produced in Part 1 only.

Learners have a maximum of 10 hours to produce their outcome, which must begin with a minimum 2-hour session.

Submission of marks

Centres are required to submit marks for both internally assessed units online during the summer term of the final year of study in preparation for moderation.

When marks have been submitted to WJEC, the online system will apply the sample formula based on the overall rank order for the total entry and immediately identify the sample of candidates whose work is selected for moderation.

4 MALPRACTICE

Before the course starts, the teacher is responsible for informing candidates of WJEC's regulations concerning malpractice. Candidates must not take part in any unfair practice in the preparation of work for GCSE Art and Design.

Information regarding malpractice is available in our [Guide to preventing, reporting and investigating malpractice](#).

All cases of suspected or actual malpractice must be reported immediately to WJEC (malpractice@wjec.co.uk). If candidates commit malpractice, they may be penalised or disqualified from the examinations.

In all cases of malpractice, centres are advised to consult the JCQ booklet [Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures](#).

5 TECHNICAL INFORMATION

5.1 Making entries

This is a linear qualification in which all assessments must be taken at the end of the course.

Assessment opportunities will be available in the summer series until the end of the life of this specification. Summer 2027 will be the first assessment opportunity.

A qualification may be taken more than once.

Marks for non-examination assessment (NEA) may be carried forward for the life of the specification. If a candidate resits a unit (rather than carrying forward the previous NEA mark), it is the new mark that will count towards the overall grade, even if it is lower than a previous attempt (unless the mark is absent).

The entry code appears below.

	Entry code	
	English medium	Welsh medium
WJEC GCSE Art and Design (Art, Craft and Design)	3610QS	3610CS
WJEC GCSE Art and Design (Fine Art)	3611QS	3611CS
WJEC GCSE Art and Design (Textile Design)	3612QS	3612CS
WJEC GCSE Art and Design (Graphic Communication)	3613QS	3613CS
WJEC GCSE Art and Design (Three-Dimensional Design)	3614QS	3614CS
WJEC GCSE Art and Design (Photography)	3615QS	3615CS

The current edition of our Entry Procedures and Coding Information gives up-to-date entry procedures.

5.2 Grading, awarding and reporting

GCSE qualifications are reported on an eight point scale from A*-G, where A* is the highest grade. Results not attaining the minimum standard for the award will be reported as U (unclassified).

Appendix A: Opportunities for embedding elements of the Curriculum for Wales

Curriculum for Wales Strands	Unit 1	Unit 2
Local, National & International Contexts	✓	✓
Sustainability aspect of Local, National and International Contexts	✓	✓
Relationships and Sexuality Education	✓	✓
Human Rights	✓	✓
Diversity	✓	✓
Careers and Work-Related Experiences	✓	✓
Listening	✓	✓
Reading	✓	✓
Speaking	✓	✓
Writing	✓	✓
Developing Mathematical Proficiency	Pathway dependent	Pathway dependent
Understanding the number system helps us to represent and compare relationships between numbers and quantities	Pathway dependent	Pathway dependent
Learning about geometry helps us understand shape, space and position and learning about measurement helps us quantify in the real world	Pathway dependent	Pathway dependent
Learning that statistics represent data and that probability models chance help us make informed inferences and decisions	Pathway dependent	Pathway dependent
Citizenship	✓	✓
Interacting and Collaborating	✓	✓
Producing	✓	✓
Data and Computational Thinking	Pathway dependent	Pathway dependent

Curriculum for Wales Strands	Unit 1	Unit 2
Creativity and Innovation	✓	✓
Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	✓	✓
Planning and Organisation	✓	✓
Personal Effectiveness	✓	✓