



CAMBRIDGE
SCHOOL OF
VISUAL &
PERFORMING
ARTS

CURRICULUM POLICY (INCLUDING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE)

Date of Policy	August 2025
Next Review Date	August 2026
Key Staff	Rector, Senior Deputy Head, Deputy Head – Performance & Outcomes, Dean of Student Experience
Lead for Review	Senior Deputy Head

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Course Delivery

Students' knowledge and understanding is developed through a blend of classroom lessons, coursework (assessed and non-assessed) and personal sessions. Emphasis is placed on developing the students as confident, independent learners able to reflect on their learning, recognise, and react appropriately to, their own strengths and weaknesses.

All teaching is conducted in English and students are encouraged to use English whenever possible on school premises. In relation to all programmes, we specify a minimum level of English language ability, usually expressed in terms of the IELTS score, that we believe is necessary for students to succeed on the course that the student is proposing to join. These minimum levels are published in the relevant prospectus which is available to download from the following websites:

CATS Cambridge: <https://www.catscambridge.com/prospectus/>

CSVPA: <https://www.csvpa.com/about/downloads.htm>

The priority for academic staff is to select and implement teaching methods that are most appropriate to each module and group, while preparing the students for the methodologies and techniques to which they will be exposed at university. Course delivery will include classroom and studio lessons, augmented with lectures, workshops, seminars and one to one sessions, group-work, discussions and self-study.

Ethos and Values

CSVPA and CATS Cambridge are dedicated to providing a transformative educational experience that empowers every student to achieve their full potential. Our curriculum is built upon the following core principles:

- **Inclusive Excellence and Holistic Wellbeing:** We are committed to ensuring all students, regardless of background or learning needs, achieve significant progress. We foster an inclusive and supportive environment that prioritises the holistic wellbeing of each student, addressing their emotional, social, and academic needs comprehensively.
- **Intellectual Curiosity and Academic Rigour:** We cultivate a culture that values intellectual curiosity, encourages academic risk-taking, and promotes rigorous scholarly inquiry. Students are empowered to explore new ideas and challenge assumptions.
- **Lifelong Learning and Responsible Citizenship:** We prepare students to be active, engaged, and responsible members of society. Our curriculum equips them with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning, enabling them to thrive in a dynamic world.

Our lessons promote respect for diverse cultures and individuals, aligning with the protected characteristics outlined in the 2010 Equalities Act. CSVPA and CATS Cambridge ensure

students are effectively prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of life in British society. We uphold fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of diverse faiths and beliefs.

Furthermore, in accordance with The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, we provide comprehensive Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), detailed in a separate RSE policy document.

Research Base

We recognise that a positive and supportive learning environment is essential for student success. We adhere to all relevant teaching standards and inspection frameworks, ensuring that our curriculum meets the highest quality standards and implement strategies to promote positive behaviours for learning, fostering a culture of respect, responsibility, and engagement. This curriculum policy is informed by robust educational research and best practices, including:

- **Systematic Review of Effective Teaching (Coe et al.):** We draw upon evidence-based strategies identified in systematic reviews of effective teaching practices, such as Barak Rosenshine's principals to optimise student learning.
- **Visible Learning (Hattie):** We integrate principles from John Hattie's Visible Learning research, prioritising teaching strategies with effect sizes greater than 0.6 to maximise student impact.
- **Education Endowment Foundation (EEF):** We use the EEF's best practice reviews to inform our pedagogical approaches and ensure that our teaching is grounded in evidence.

Teaching Environments

We strive to create teaching environments that are conducive to effective learning, characterised by:

- A calm and purposeful environment that is tailored to the specific stage and age of the students.
- An environment that challenges students intellectually and creatively while providing the necessary support to ensure their success.
- Strong, positive relationships between students and between students and adults.
- A mutually supportive and safe environment where students feel valued and respected.
- Effective exposition and modelling of new ideas and skills.

- Clear and consistent behavioural expectations that promote a positive learning environment.
- Functional and engaging learning spaces that support student learning and provide visual aids.
- Corridors which praise and display student work, celebrating their achievements and fostering a sense of pride.

Programmes of Study

We offer the following programmes of study:

CATS Cambridge

- A Level
- University Foundation Programme
- Pre-A level Programmes
- GCSE

CSVPA:

- UAL Level 3 Extended Diploma in Creative Practice: Art, Design and Communication
- UAL Level 3 Extended Diploma in Performing and Production Arts
- UAL Level 3 Extended Diploma in Music Performance and Production
- UAL Level 3 Foundation Diploma in Art & Design
- UAL Level 4 Foundation Diploma in Art & Design
- UAL Level 4 Professional Diploma in Performance

The distribution of lessons for subjects with our various programmes of study is provided in Appendix A.

Provision for Students with English as a Second Language (ESL)

As an international school, ESL provision forms the cornerstone of all that we do. All students have their English level assessed using the CEPT upon arrival at the School. This assessment is then used to place each student in a class studying towards the most appropriate ESL qualification to support the student's general academic development, and/or meet the requirements of the undergraduate courses to which they aspire.

Students are expected to follow the relevant ESL course until they obtain a minimum IELTS result. At CATS this is 7.5 across all components of the ESL syllabus. At CSVPA it is 6.0 with nothing below 5.5 as this is the level required by most undergraduate degrees in creative and performing arts disciplines. This is in order to prepare them fully for the demands of further studies and to maximise their chances of securing a place on their

chosen university courses. Students may only stop studying English with permission from both the Head of Higher Education/Pathway Leader and the Head of Languages/Academic English Manager.

ESL staff also provide support in a number of subject classes across the School to assist students in their understanding of the complex demands of studying certain courses.

CSVPA also provides an Academic English Programme for students aiming to study on a Foundation or Extended Diploma programme. These students follow a rigorous programme of general English and IELTS preparation for 20 hours per week.

Students are enrolled in classes according to IELTS level, where they study general English and IELTS preparation. Students are enrolled in five hours of English classes each week until they reach at least IELTS 6.0, with no element below 5.5, as this is the level required by most undergraduate degrees in creative and performing arts disciplines. If they want to improve their English further, students can choose to remain in English classes after they reach the minimum required IELTS grade. The typical arrangements for ESL at CSVPA are as follows:

- AEM , 20 hours of English and IELTS preparation every week
- L3 Foundation Diploma , 5 hours of English and IELTS preparation every week
- L3 Extended Diploma , 5 hours of English and IELTS preparation every week
- L4 Foundation or Professional Diploma , 5 hours of English and IELTS preparation every week

The School will ensure that all employees and users of its facilities are made aware of the legal obligations and rights bestowed by the Equality Act 2010 legislation. All staff have a duty to observe the provisions of this Act. Teachers must ensure that they adjust their teaching strategies and that they differentiate sufficiently to provide equitable opportunities for learning to all students given the individuals' standards of English. Teachers must also systematically analyse a student's progress in the context of their standard of English to ensure that no student is being disadvantaged as a result.

Key Stage 4 Programmes

GCSE Programme

GCSEs programmes are six terms long during which students will complete 4 – 9 GCSEs.

Students must study English, Mathematics and the Sciences. The English qualification that Key Stage 4 students follow is determined by their IELTS level upon arrival:

- 7.0+ = English Language & Literature GCSE
- 4.5 – 6.5 = English as a Second Language iGCSE

- 4.0 or less = No GCSE. ESL support.

All students will study the three separate sciences (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) in Year 10. Those predicted less than 3 B grades will move to study combined Sciences in Year 11. Students also select an additional two subjects from: Art & Design, Business, Statistics, Geography, Computer Science and History.

Considering the importance of equipping students with language skills in order to take maximum advantage of the range of courses available to them at the school, there will inevitably be a strong focus on ESL. Students struggling to progress their English at a sufficient pace may be allowed to drop one of their option subjects and replace it with additional ESL study.

Students who are studying towards their GCSEs are exposed to a range of wider compulsory experiences including Study Skills, PE and PSHE in addition to the above. If a student has a first language in which there is a GCSE, they will also sit this. Extracurricular activities are provided for all students, including a range of sporting and social activities, and visits.

Rolling admissions enables students to be admitted during the course of the academic year subject to an appraisal of their academic levels and availability of seats on their chosen

Pre – A Level Programme – A course in preparation for A Levels or UFP

The Pre – A level 's duration ranges from two terms up to two years according to a student's needs. Students typically study 4 core subject areas, including mathematics and English, Business, Humanities (for those in the intensive English Pre-A Level, Humanities will be omitted) and the Sciences. The course may include taking key iGCSEs (in Maths and a home language) or other exams as appropriate, though public examinations will be limited. Students will take internal exams of a similar level to that articulated in GCSE specifications in order to enable an informed decision to be made regarding student progression to a Key Stage 5 programme.

There will inevitably be a strong focus on ESL bearing in mind the vital importance of equipping students with language skills in order to take maximum advantage of the range of courses available to them at the School. Students on the intensive English Pre-A Level Programme have double the allocation of ESL.

As on the GCSE programme, students who are taking this course and are exposed are exposed to a range of wider compulsory experiences including Engaging with Technology, Study Skills, PE and PSHE. If a student has a first language in which there is a GCSE, they will also sit this. Extracurricular activities are provided for all students, including a range of sporting and social activities, and visits.

This is a rolling programme and students can be admitted at any point during the year if they reach the appropriate academic level and subject to availability.

Key Stage 5 Programmes

A Levels

In 2025-26, A levels are offered as a 6 term programme commencing in September, with rolling admissions accepted until the end of January. A wide variety of subjects can be studied at A Level including mathematics, sciences, economics, languages, humanities and arts (see Appendices).

At the end of the first year of A Levels, student sit their AS Levels.

Students typically study three subjects plus English as a Second Language and the School strongly advises students to follow this recommendation. However, there are exceptions:

- Students will occasionally start four subjects before making a decision about the three upon which they wish to focus. This decision is encouraged to be made by half-term of the first term of the student's programme.
- By exception, students are permitted to continue with their study of a fourth subject, but only where they demonstrate that they have the capability and capacity to achieve excellent outcomes in all four subjects, and that the fourth subject will in no way impact on their chances of securing top grades in the other three subjects.
- Talented mathematicians are offered the opportunity to study A Level Mathematics in one year with a view to completing A Level Further Mathematics in year 2 of the A level programme.
- Where an A Level exists in a student's first language, they will sit this during A Level Year 1.

University Foundation Programme (UFP)

The University Foundation Programme, or UFP, is a one-year programme designed for learners of other languages. It enables students to gain skills and knowledge to progress onto university.

In 2025-26 we are offering the UFP as a both a 2 and 3 term course starting in either September or January. Students are required to take three subjects (see Appendices) and ESL. The subject offering is more limited for the January start programme as some subjects are full at the start of the academic year.

CSVPA Extended Diploma and Foundation Pathways

CSVPA offers a range of L3 Extended Diplomas and Foundation Diplomas, and Level 4 Diplomas in Art & Design and Performing Arts. Primarily these courses are delivered from September to June; January start options are available in a number of Art & Design subjects. The L3 and L4 Foundation Diplomas, and L4 Professional Diplomas in Performance provide 1-year learning experiences that develop specialist subject knowledge and skills, an

understanding of the contexts of practice and an appreciation of different audiences. L3 Extended Diplomas provide a 2-year structure which builds on core skills and provides a focus for the development of specialist knowledge and attributes to facilitate progression to higher levels of study and creative practice. Some students decide to undertake these qualifications in place of A-levels or completion of secondary school in their home country. The programmes are foundation experiences which enable students to develop the skills and knowledge required to gain entry to specialist arts undergraduate courses at university, drama school or conservatoire.

Students needing Additional Learning Support

Students with additional learning needs are identified through a variety of means – see the SEND Policy and Learning Support Policy for further details. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) at CATS or Individual Learning Plan (ILP) at CSVPA are then created in conjunction with students' key staff detailing the adaptations to teaching strategies, access requirements and pastoral provision needed for these students to thrive. Individual sessions may be timetabled with the SENCo/Learning Support Coordinator as necessary. A central register is maintained with the list of students, their specific needs, and the support/reasonable adjustments required.

Key Professions Programme

CATS Cambridge is committed to the provision of additional activities to stretch and challenge our most able students and provide them with suitable extra challenges.

Our Key Professions Programme (KPP) is open to everyone though it is focused on providing support to those students applying to some of the most competitive undergraduate courses in the world. The purpose of the KPP is to ensure that our students choose the right course at the right university for them, and to give them the best chance of winning a place at their preferred university.

Our Higher Education and Careers Advisor, under the leadership of the Head of Higher Education, coordinates this programme and works with a team of staff to provide additional activities and support for those students who have the potential to access the most challenging university courses and destinations.

Students not Meeting Targets

Progress and attainment data is analysed regularly by teachers, middle and senior leaders. Students who are underachieving are identified and provided with bespoke support, starting with support from individual subject teachers and Pathway Leaders. Senior staff address the issues with students who do not engage with subject level support and both academic and pastoral intervention is initiated. Parents / primary contacts are notified of any

major concerns affecting progress. Students may be referred to the SENCo/Learning Support Coordinator for internal assessments, to determine whether there is an underlying learning difficulty.

Careers Guidance

Our Careers Guidance is laid out in the School's Information Advice and Guidance Policy. Careers education also forms part of the PSHE provision for all students at CATS, and PT Sessions at CSVPA. This includes advice and sessions for students progressing from GCSEs and the Pre-Programme to assist them in making well informed decisions about the choice between A level or UFP, and ultimately, about their pathways after they have completed their studies with us.

At CATS, appropriate careers guidance is provided through both the PSHE curriculum academic counselling which is run by the Higher Education Team (the Higher Education and Careers Advisor and the Head of Higher Education), bearing in mind that almost all students come to us wishing to attend a UK or other global university. Representatives from a range of universities come into the School to provide individual one-to-one independent advice and general advice on applying to university as well as running sessions on the key professions (KPP) in which our students are interested, these include Engineering, Law, Medicine, Computer Science and Finance and Economics.

CSVPA students are given particular guidance from specialist tutors about progression routes and appropriate course choices at the time of University, Conservatoire, or Drama School application preparation, based on the student's skills, aptitude, and career goals. Portfolio and audition preparation play a significant part in the curriculum at the College, and students receive weekly 1:1 support throughout their time at CSVPA. Portfolio Preparation classes are included in curriculum for Art & Design students, to ensure they have proper knowledge of necessary software and portfolio theory.

Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Education

The delivery of PSHE (including relationships and sex education (RSE)), is covered in separate policy documents.

At CATS Cambridge the school is in the process of reviewing the nature of the curriculum to both embed and reward personal development in the CATS Cambridge Future Skills Framework (CATS FSF). This focuses on structuring opportunities both beyond and in lessons to develop scholarship and curiosity, innovation and creativity, tolerance and collaboration, independence and resilience, and reflection and responsibility. As a work in progress, each term over the next two years will focus on one of these traits until these values pervade all that we do.

In CSVPA, Students under the age of 18 on Extended Diploma have a discrete PSHE syllabus. This is led by Head of Welfare (DSL), which covers topics such as British values, sex education, healthy lifestyles, drugs and a range of other key areas. Please refer to the CSVPA PSHE Policy.

Request by A Student to Move from One Course to Another

On occasion, a student, parent or agent will request a transfer from one course to another. This can be done provided that there are reasonable grounds for the request and that it is possible with the constraints of the School's timetable and UKVI regulations, and that all of those concerned agree with the proposed change.

Changes after the first two weeks of the commencement of the course are usually discouraged. As of 26 September 2025, registration on courses is finalised, as the impacts on student learning and attainment are too high. On Art and Design foundation courses, students may request to change pathway at any point in the course, though they are discouraged after the first unit. Requests are reviewed by senior staff and are decided based on available space, aptitude and progression intentions.

It is important to note that if changing courses affects a student's visa, they may be required to return to their home country and apply for a new visa with the appropriate course title.

Progression Policy

CATS Cambridge Students who do not maintain an attendance level of 95% (at the discretion of the Headteacher) may not be guaranteed entry to the next public examination session and may be removed from their course.

There is no concrete progression criteria for students wishing to pursue their A Levels beyond a 6.0 IELTS grade. However, given our mission to ensure that all of our student will progress to a Russell Group or QS100 university, those who are predicted less than 3 B grades at the end of the Spring term of their AS Levels are advised to transfer to the UFP.

At CSVPA, as per UAL awarding body guidance, students may only progress to subsequent units if they pass their current unit(s) of study. Students that don't attain a minimum Pass level at summative assessment are issued a Referral and given a fixed period of time, 1 or 2 weeks in which to meet the minimum standard required. At the end of the referral period the work is reassessed and if it does not meet the required minimum standard, the work is awarded a Fail. Students that received FAIL grades cannot continue to progress within the cohort and must leave the program. Students may (at the Rector's discretion) be offered the opportunity to restart the program with a different cohort.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The School will review this policy and evaluate its effectiveness annually. This policy takes account any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation of the policy include:

- Assessment and examination results are analysed by the Senior Deputy Head and Deputy Head – Performance & Outcomes, with the Middle Leadership Team and Deputy Head – Teaching & Learning, Provost, Dean, and Pathway Leaders.
- Students with SEN/D are tracked through the IEP/ILP as well as academic results.
- Triangulation meetings are held once per term to ensure that interventions are coordinated.
- Feedback from students is gained from cognitive wrappers and reflection upon reports every term.
- Parents and staff feedback surveys are conducted by on an annual basis. Heads of Department survey students in each subject area during the year.
- Schemes of work are regularly updated and monitored by the Deputy Head – Performance & Outcomes and the Heads of Department and Pathway Leaders. These are designed for progression across the subject and are specified for the particular age group / student cohort.
- Work scrutiny is undertaken by the Senior Deputy Head, Deputy Head – Performance & Outcomes and Deputy Head – Teaching & Learning, Provost, Dean on a termly basis.

APPENDIX A Lesson Distribution

CATS CAMBRIDGE WEEKLY LESSONS

Subject Name	Year 10 / GCSE Y1	Year 11 / GCSE Y2	Pre A Level	Pre A Level (Int ESL)	UFP	UFP (Jan)	Year 12 / A Level 1	Year 13 / A Level 2
English as a Second Language	5	5	5	10	5	4	5	5
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5	8	5	5
Further Maths							8	8
Statistics	3	3						
Computer Science	3	3					5	5
Engaging with Technology			1	1				
Biology	3	3			5		5	5
Chemistry	3	3			5	8	5	5
Physics	3	3			5	8	5	5
Combined science	9	9	6	6				
Business	3	3	5	5	5	8	5	5
Economics					5	8	5	5
Geography	3	3						
History	3	3					5	5
Psychology					5		5	5
Sociology					5		5	5
Humanities			5					
Art and Design	3	3					5	5
Chinese	2*						3*	
Turkish	2*						3*	
Russian	2*						3*	
French	2*						3*	
Spanish	2*						3*	
Portuguese	2*						3*	
Study Skills	1	1	1	1				
Physical Education	1	1	1	1				
PSHE	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

MFLs offered to native speakers at no extra cost*

CSVPA WEEKLY LESSONS

	Ext Dip Perf Arts Drama Year 1	Ext Dip Perf Arts Acting Year 2 L4 Prof Dip Acting	Ext Dip Perf Arts MT Year 2 L4 Prof Dip MT	Ext Dip Perf Arts Music Year 1	Ext Dip Perf Arts Music Year 2 L4 Prof Dip Music	Ext Dip Creat ive Practi ce Year 1	Ext Dip Creati ve Practi ce Year 2	Level 3 FAD	Level 4 FAD
Art & Design									
Contextual & Thematic Studies						3	3	3	3
Art & Design Practical Workshops						12			
Reflective Studies						2	3	3	3
Experimental Studies						2	2	2	2
Pathway- Animation & Film*							9	9	9
Pathway Fine Art & Photography *							9	9	9
Pathway 3D Design *							9	9	9
Pathway- Architecture & Interior *							9	9	9
Pathway- Fashion Communication *							9	9	9
Pathway- Fashion Design*							9	9	9
Pathway- Games Art & Design*							9	9	9
Pathway- Graphics & Illustration*							9	9	9
Performing Arts									
Acting	8	8.5	6						
Aural Skills				1	1				
Composition				1	1				
Dance	3-7	3-4	8						
Developmental Play	1.5	1.5	1.5						
Ensemble	4.5	4.5	4.5	5-6	5-6				

History	1.5	1.5	1.5	2.5	2.5				
Individual Lessons	1	1	1	1.5	1.5				
Movement	1.5	1.5	1.5						
Physical Warm Up	3.5	3.5	3.5						
Project Research	1.5	1.5	1.5	1	1				
Recording / Sequencing				2.5	2.5				
Singing/Voice for the Actor	2	2	3.5						
Text	1.5	1.5	1.5						
Theoretical Study	1.5	1.5	1.5	6	6				
All Students who have not met university IELTS entry requirements									
ESL	5	5	5	5	5	5	5		

* Students following Level 3, 4 Foundation in Art & Design or Extended Diploma in Art & Design Year 2 follow 9 hours per week of one chosen pathway workshops only.