

Arts Award and Employability

How progressing onto Silver and Gold levels helps develop skills for education, work and life



How can this resource help you?

As well as being a nationally recognised qualification, Arts Award supports young people to develop valuable life skills in communication, creativity, team work and planning. Achieving Arts Award can help develop their confidence and self-esteem which is often key to re-entering education, training, employment or volunteering.

This resource is designed to support Arts Award advisers who are looking to make links between our qualifications and the development of employability skills among young people. Whilst these skills can be linked to all levels of Arts Award, this resource looks in particular at Silver

and Gold awards **and is designed to be used alongside the employability mapping tool.**

Advisers can use this information to confidently promote progression onto these levels among the young people they are working with, both in and out of formal education.

What does employability mean?

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) describes employability in terms of 'the skills almost everyone needs to do almost any job'. However, as well as being about skills, employability is also about capabilities: aptitude, attitude and behaviour.

Employability is not the same as subject knowledge, qualifications or specialist experience. So this is a good opportunity to think about the added personal attributes that young people gain when they take part in Arts Award – as well as the arts skills and knowledge that they are learning.

Take a look at our mapping tool to find out more.

Why is employability a hot topic right now?

With 40% of all unemployed people in the UK aged 16 to 24, youth unemployment remains a public concern. Changes in the UK labour market have impacted negatively on many young people's job prospects. The rise of the service sector means that employers are placing a stronger emphasis on employability and character skills. Building these skills in young people is moving up the political agenda, with politicians backing calls for schools and youth programmes to instill these important traits in young people.

In a recent survey on employability conducted by the Institute of Directors (IoD), directors who employed graduates were asked to rate the importance of employability skills against specific technical or academic knowledge. 36% said that employability skills are much more important.

'Employing young workers who have experience of Arts Award means that we know they have a strong foundation for self reflection and critical thinking skills as well as core competencies around leadership, organisation, communication and teamwork.'

Emrys Green, Upstart Projects

When applying for education, employment and training places, most young people are required to give evidence of their employability skills on application forms and then demonstrate their skills at assessment events and interviews. By using these resources, you will be able to help Arts Award participants to identify and understand the employability skills they are gaining and how they can describe these when applying for the position they want.

Employability skills include:

Communication, enterprise, leadership, numeracy, planning, problem solving, project management, self promotion and reflection. They also include personal attributes such as honesty, confidence, reliability, teamwork and flexibility.

Character skills include:

Application, self-direction, self regulation, self understanding, social skills and empathy.

'I have managed to get onto a higher level course at college due to my portfolio and the confidence I gained through this programme.'

**Andrew, Arts Award Future Steps project,
Future Creative**

Silver and Gold Arts Award – developing employability skills

Silver and Gold Arts Awards are structured to encourage young people to explore careers and pathways in the arts, and to develop project leadership skills. Our **mapping tool** presents a wide range of employability skills and personal attributes as highlighted by employers and researchers and demonstrates how they can be gained throughout these awards. It is designed for advisers to:

- Help young people to think about the skills they are gaining through taking part
- Promote participation and progression onto Silver And Gold Arts Award
- Support young people to include Arts Award activity on their CV
- Support young people preparing for interviews with active examples perfect for that 'tell us about a time when you...' question

In addition to the examples given in the **mapping tool**, as part of an employability focused Silver or Gold project you might consider supporting participants to create their own job description for their role in the leadership project. You could extend this activity by interviewing them for their positions. This will encourage them to develop their interview skills, adopt a positive attitude and begin to feel confident about self-promotion.



The pathway to Silver and Gold

Discover, Explore and Bronze Arts Award levels also provide opportunities for young people to look ahead to their future and gain skills for employment. You could make a point of holding a CV update session after completing these awards to ensure that young people remember and value the skills they have gained.

Arts Award Discover

Part B: Whilst researching the artist, young people can consider their own career options in the arts and develop a personal action plan

Part C: Developing presentation and reflection skills whilst sharing what they have enjoyed with others

Arts Award Explore

Part B: Whilst researching the artist and arts organisation, young people can consider their own career options in the arts and develop a personal action plan

Part C: Developing presentation and reflection skills whilst sharing what they have enjoyed and learnt with others

Bronze Arts Award

Part B: As well as attending an arts event, young people can plan the budget and risk assessment for the trip

Part C: Whilst researching their arts inspiration, young people can consider their own career options in the arts and develop a personal action plan

Part D: Developing confidence, communication and customer focus skills whilst sharing an arts skill, as well as showing they can be flexible and solve problems along the way



'We use visual arts to help young people to identify their key skills through 'self-discovery' focused activity and to work towards creating a CV. Drama is used to help them build their presentation and interview skills through 'self-delivery' focused activity which also helps to build confidence and self-esteem.'

The Lowry - Planning Arts Award for Employability - Good Practice Centre 2014/15

Volunteering and work experience

Younger people are naturally less likely to have as much real life work experience to talk about when competing for employment and training. By taking part in Silver and Gold Arts Awards they have the opportunity to research and seek out valuable work placements that will boost their range of experience. By working alongside experienced arts practitioners and taking part in other development opportunities such as workshops and volunteering, participants show they have a positive attitude, good time keeping and organisational skills, and that they are reliable, honest and willing to learn. Real life work experience in the creative industries raises young people's awareness of arts pathways as career options, helps them to understand what

professional creative people actually do and how income is generated in the sector. Take a look at our [mapping tool](#) for further details.

As young people progress through the Arts Award levels and gain a wider understanding of how each is designed, they become ideal Arts Award assistants. If your centre delivers Arts Award at a range of levels, this is a good opportunity for you to involve older young people in the delivery of activities to younger participants. [Our guide to integrated delivery](#) explains this in full. An example might be a Silver participant running a series of workshops as part of their Unit 2 leadership project aimed at those taking part in Discover, Explore or Bronze Part A.

Young people looking for a wider range of opportunities to develop their leadership skills and knowledge of the arts sector might find the following ideas useful:

- ▶ Volunteering at their local library, arranging a creative writing session for young visitors or taking part in the [Reading Hack](#) project
- ▶ Work experience at their local museum or archive, assisting and learning about curating or marketing
- ▶ Connecting the volunteering section of their [Duke of Edinburgh's Award](#) with volunteering in the arts sector during Arts Award Silver and Gold Unit 1, and so working towards two awards at the same time
- ▶ Designing a leadership project with social action benefits as part of the [National Citizen Service](#) (NCS) programme, or NCS graduate scheme. Take a look at our [Creative Campaigning resource](#) for more information

For more inspiration about embedding Arts Award into existing programmes for employability visit our [employability webpage](#).

Employability ABC - 'A' to 'N'

A is for Attitude

Young people take ownership of their Arts Award journey, showing a positive attitude and willingness to learn

B is for Building character skills

Communication and reflection built into Arts Award encourage a full range of character skills to develop, including self-understanding confidence, and social skills

C is for Communication

From reviewing an arts event to presenting a convincing argument about an arts issue – young people will certainly increase their communication skills

D is for Demonstrable

Employability skills gained through Arts Award will be true to life and easily explained at an interview – use our [mapping tool](#) for more hints

E is for Evidence

The process of building evidence during the Arts Award journey will help young people to recall the employability skills that they have gained and provide an excellent interview prop!

F is for Feedback

By taking feedback from team members and the wider public and by reviewing their own skills development, young people will learn the importance of reflection, and why employers value this

G is for Go for Gold!

By supporting young people to progress through the Arts Award levels onto Silver and Gold, they will gain increased employability skills to offer to potential employers

H is for Help

Click on the links provided in this resource to read further case studies and examples that illustrate the case for employability. Visit our [adviser hub](#) for more inspiration and support

I is for Interview

For all those dreading those competency based questions like 'tell us about a time when you have used your leadership skills to make a difference', check out our [mapping tool](#) to help make direct links with Arts Award activity

J is for Job application

The skills and experience young people are asked about on application forms will match those we have described in our [mapping tool](#). Advisers can use this to support them to think of examples

K is for Keep up the good work

By taking time to read this resource and consider Silver and Gold Arts Award, you're thinking about progression routes for young people. A big thank you from Arts Award for all your hard work as an adviser!

L is for Leadership

Taking part in Silver and Gold activities, young people will gain first hand experience of leading within the arts, from thinking about project resources to managing others – just what employers love to hear about!

M is for Maths

Arts Award helps to develop numeracy skills! From helping to plan the budget for a trip out, to managing all aspects of spending on a leadership project

N is for NEET

If you are working with young people not in education, employment or training, Arts Award will provide the perfect framework for enabling them to gain arts and leadership skills whilst gathering valuable experience to tell potential employers about

Employability ABC - 'O' to 'Z'

O is for Organisation

The Silver and Gold Awards are full of opportunities for young people to take ownership of their work. They will develop organisational skills through managing a personal challenge and a leadership project, including good time keeping and reliability

P is for Project manager

Young people will take responsibility for planning and delivering their own project, gaining valuable project and event management skills

Q is for Qualifications

Arts Award is a nationally recognised qualification. Silver and Gold levels are recognised as Levels 2 + 3 on the [Regulated Qualifications Framework](#). Gold Arts Award carries 16 UCAS points

R is for Risk assessment

Participants will manage all the practical aspects of their projects and public events. This includes planning for any risks and responding to unexpected situations

S is for Soft skills

Whilst gaining arts and leadership skills, young people taking part will also pick up essential 'softer skills' required by employers such as creativity, flexibility and rapport and relationship building and problem solving

T is for Teamwork

Arts Award is an ideal framework for advisers to support young people to work together in teams, collaborating and learning from each other's feedback

U is for Unemployment

Youth people aged 16 to 24 are now three times more likely to be unemployed than the rest of the population. Arts Award provides participants with a qualification and definitive employability skills to put them ahead of the competition

V is for Volunteering

During the Silver and Gold journeys, young people will have opportunities to gain first hand experience of the arts sector, volunteering alongside practitioners and delivering workshops for others whilst demonstrating they are reliable and willing to learn

W is for Work experience

Silver and Gold levels offer young people wider opportunities to get involved in meaningful development opportunities in the arts that they are genuinely passionate about, including work placements and training.

X is for Xamples - case studies

There are lots of great examples of how other Arts Award centres have approached employability. Just click on the links to those mentioned in this resource, or visit our [adviser hub](#) for more.

Y is for Young person led

Arts Award supports young people to be proactive, independent learners. The Silver and Gold Awards allow participants to take responsibility for their leadership role, shaping their own decisions and finding their individual pathways in the arts, gaining confidence to promote themselves along the way

Z is for Zzzz

Not for you? If you feel that employability isn't important, take a look back at 'U' and then see our mapping tool. Let us challenge your opinion!