



Economic
and Social
Research Council



Culture-led wellbeing: investigating the changing skills of the cultural workforce

ESRC DTP Collaborative Studentship

University of Leicester and University of Oxford Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM)

Further Particulars

The Project

Discussion of culture's contribution to wellbeing has gained rapid prominence and policy focus in the UK. Practice is supported by a growing body of evidence that demonstrates the benefits of participation in cultural activities in the areas of mental health, dementia, cancer and physical recovery, and the potential for culture-led public health interventions, including social prescription models of delivery. As this area continues to develop, cultural workers are adapting their engagement practices to the health and social care sector.

This research project will examine the emerging practice of a culture-led wellbeing through practical action research with the University of Oxford's Gardens, Libraries and Museum (GLAM) venues (Bodleian Libraries, Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum, Ashmolean Museum, History of Science Museum, Museum of Natural History and Pitt Rivers Museum). GLAM contains some of the world's oldest and most significant cultural collections and has an established portfolio of innovative health and wellbeing programmes embedded in strategic plans. The collaboration provides a unique opportunity for an in-depth, multi-sited research project to explore culture-led wellbeing work across different types of venues in terms of size, audiences and collections.

The research aims to explore the following questions:

- 1) How do cultural and heritage sector professionals view their emerging roles in relation to health and wellbeing activity?
- 2a) What knowledge, skills and competencies are viewed as critical for this practice?
- 2b) How can theories from professional social care and healthcare (or other disciplines) help to define this practice?
- 3) How do these skills map onto engagement with different types of collections?
- 4) What organisational structures are required to support this work?
- 5) What are the wider implications for organisational change in the cultural sector?

The research will develop a qualitative action-research methodology, including a multi-sited organisational ethnography across a small number of GLAM case studies; in-depth interviews and

action learning sets with GLAM professionals; and possible supplementary interviews with health/social care professionals.

The first year of the PhD will focus on literature review, development of conceptual framework, qualitative methods training, and planning for fieldwork – the student will have flexibility to spend time in both Leicester and Oxford and develop their interests within the project brief. In the second year, it is anticipated that the researcher will be based at GLAM over a period of up to 9 months to conduct organisational ethnography (including participant observation of wellbeing programmes) and interviews with GLAM staff. Analysis of qualitative data (interviews and fieldnotes) is expected to take a sociomaterial approach to museum engagement practice, while applied analysis of the organisational structures of the case studies will focus on developing a logic model for organisational change. Through this methodology, the research will highlight 1) the distinct professional qualities of wellbeing-focused cultural practice and 2) the organisational structures required to support a caring cultural and heritage sector.

The studentship will contribute to a deeper understanding of the implication of GLAM's work in terms of staff development, workforce training and recruitment; and the organisational change needed to support culture-led wellbeing. Collaborative outputs will include writing an executive summary and a staff 'away day', and external recommendations for sector-wide change. It is anticipated that the student will also develop a training programme/webinar series for the cultural, heritage and healthcare sectors with support from GLAM and the School of Museum Studies.

Supervision and Training

The holder of the studentship will be registered as a doctoral candidate in the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester, and will fulfil all the requirements of the PhD degree there under the supervision of **Professor Richard Sandell** and **Dr Nuala Morse**. In addition, the student will benefit from joint-supervision at GLAM with supervision from **Lucy Shaw**, Head of Partnerships and Programmes, and **Susan McCormack**, Director of Public Engagement, Ashmolean Museum.

The successful applicant will have access to academic development activities and research methods training at the University of Leicester and the Midlands Graduate School DTP. In the School of Museum Studies, the student will be part of a vibrant postgraduate research community, and be associated with the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries.

This collaborative award is strategically aligned to GLAM priorities. The student will have access to GLAM resources, including desk-space and staff training. GLAM will provide research-related expenses of up to £2,000 for approved travel between Leicester and Oxford. There will also be opportunities for the student to plan and develop their own innovative engagement practice with supported access to the collections from the GLAM engagement team, following their own interests.

Midlands Graduate School ESRC DTP

The ESRC studentships cover fees at the home rate, a maintenance stipend, and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants. Support is available to both home and international applicants. For further details, visit: www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/.

Eligibility

We are looking for a promising candidate who is motivated to bring the spheres of practice and theory together for this project. We want to encourage the widest range of potential students to study for this doctoral training grant and are committed to welcoming applicants from different backgrounds.

Applicants may come from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (e.g. museum studies, anthropology, heritage studies, geography, organisational studies, social work, or healthcare). The project will particularly suit a student or a culture/healthcare practitioner who is interested in creative practice at the crossover between health, social care, and culture, and its strategic implementation within organisations.

Applicants must usually have qualifications of the standard of a good honours degree at first or upper second class level or equivalent professional experience.

Full details about eligibility are available at: www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/.

Application Process

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Collaborative Studentship application form [available online here](#) and a CV, and email this to Christine Cheesman, Postgraduate Administrator, cmc17@leicester.ac.uk. Shortlisted applicants will also be required to provide two references and a sample of writing.

Application deadline: Friday 5th March, noon.

Online interviews with shortlisted candidates will take place on the 15th March

Please refer to the [Guidance Notes](#) before completing an application form.

Further Information:

For more information on the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, see here <https://le.ac.uk/museum-studies>

For more information on the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, see <https://le.ac.uk/rcmg>

For more information about the health and wellbeing partnerships at GLAM, see <https://www.glam.ox.ac.uk/wellbeing-social-prescribing>

Informal enquiries about the research or the School of Museum Studies prior to application can be directed to **Dr Nuala Morse**, nuala.morse@leicester.ac.uk