

New Museum School Advanced Programme Prospectus

2026 - 2027



Photo Credit: Liz Isles

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Introduction

Culture&'s New Museum School Advanced Programme provides a pipeline of fresh, diverse talent to the arts and heritage sector. Over the past 12 years, New Museum School has provided accessible and flexible training to 164 young people from diverse backgrounds with around 74% finding full-time employment in the sector within six months of graduating.

Whilst we are proud of this achievement, we realise that this is only the start of our commitment. Having supported these young professionals to gain entry level access to employment we followed up with them to see how their careers were progressing. A survey conducted with them tells of their encounter with a 'glass ceiling' and the barriers that impede their career progression, experiences that reflect the findings of broader surveys into diversity in the museum workforce (Arts Council England 2019). When asked how New Museum School could continue to support their careers they asked for flexible professional development opportunities and specifically support in accessing postgraduate qualifications.

Culture& has now developed a new model - the New Museum School Advanced Programme - to take forward this work in response to the needs of our New Museum School alumni. The New Museum School Advanced Programme, a partnership with Museum Studies at the University of Leicester - launched in 2021 with support from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Marstine Family Foundation and the University of Leicester - not only offers a gold-standard postgraduate offer but also brings with it the opportunity to harness the arts and heritage sector in driving a movement of inclusive transformation.

We are now pleased to launch the next phase of the New Museum School Advanced Programme, funded by the Art Fund, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Marstine Family Foundation, the University of Leicester and an evolving group of cultural partners (see full list below). The programme will enable us to propel UK-based people from diverse backgrounds underrepresented in the sector and particularly those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and many of them New Museum School alumni, forward in their career development.

Our overall strategic aim is to enable the arts and heritage sector to support a more diverse range of arts professionals in achieving sustainable career progression and attaining leadership roles.

The New Museum School Advanced Programme will:

- Nurture the brightest, most promising diverse talent for the arts and heritage workforce by supporting them to further develop their creative and critical skills and experience;
- Allow professionals to continue full time employment within the arts and heritage sector whilst studying by providing access to distance, flexible and modular post-graduate qualifications
- Ensure an accessible recruitment process for learners with wide ranging backgrounds;
- Expand the expert knowledge of diverse arts and heritage professionals across a range of disciplines from museum studies, arts management and curatorial studies and across key aspects of professional practice by providing easy access to short courses and summer schools;
- Support participants to advance their careers;

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- Build a self-sustaining peer network by brokering one-to-one mentoring and networking opportunities that are matched to individuals' interests and career aspirations;
- Increase professional accreditation for New Museum School alumni through opening up routes to Associateship of the Museums Association;
- Diversify the arts and heritage workforce;
- Make real step changes in how heritage is interpreted and expand audiences by ensuring the perspectives of diverse professionals inform programmes that appeal to a wider cross section of our communities;
- Change and improve the UK's arts and heritage organisations in terms of workforce recruitment and retention of staff from diverse backgrounds.

Who we are



Culture& is an independent arts and education charity based at the University of Staffordshire. We have been working for over 35 years, in partnership with arts and heritage institutions and artists to develop programmes that promote diversity in the arts and heritage workforce and audiences. We aim to open up the arts and heritage workforce through our workforce training and aligned public programmes.



University of Leicester Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) Team

Museum Studies at the University of Leicester is amongst the best in the world and has a strong international reputation for equipping practitioners with the skills, experience and

knowledge to shape dynamic, socially relevant and inclusive museums. Museum Studies offers:

- Learning and development for culture professionals that engages with leading research and innovative thinking and practice in the sector;
- Accessible modular pathways to achieve internationally recognised postgraduate qualifications;
- Long-standing and evidenced commitment to inclusion and a diverse student cohort both of which Culture& can augment through this partnership;
- A team that is committed to accessible and inclusive learning, supporting students with diverse learning needs and active in shaping curricula and resources that draw on a rich mix of practitioners and research-based perspectives;
- Experienced and connected academics already engaged in collaborative projects with existing Culture& partners;
- A deep and mutual understanding of the need for greater diversity in the UK museum workforce.

New Museum School Advanced Programme – cultural partners



A dynamic group of cultural partners have partnered on the New Museum School Advanced Programme so far. They include:

- Amgueddfa Cymru, National Museums Wales
- Ashmolean Museum, (University of Oxford Gardens, Libraries and Museums)
- Barker Langham
- Bethlem Museum of the Mind
- Birmingham Museums Trust
- English Heritage
- Foundling Museum
- Guy's and St Thomas' Charity
- Historic Environment Scotland
- Hospital Rooms
- Kettle's Yard (University of Cambridge Museums)
- London Metropolitan Archives
- Manchester Museum (University of Manchester)
- Museum of Design and Architecture, Middlesex University
- Museums Galleries Scotland
- National Trust
- Norfolk Museums Service
- Pitt Rivers Museum (University of Oxford Gardens, Libraries and Museums)
- RAF Museum
- Royal Museums Greenwich
- Scarborough Museums and Galleries
- The Hunterian, University of Glasgow
- Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums
- University of Cambridge Museums
- Wellcome Collection

New Museum School Advanced Programme – what’s involved?

As part of the NMS Advanced Programme, you will combine postgraduate study with tailored mentoring and networking opportunities. At the core of the Advanced Programme sits the Postgraduate Diploma/MA/MSc in Museum Studies and the Postgraduate Diploma/MA/MSc in Socially Engaged Practice in Museums and Galleries, distance learning programmes that enable you to join a cohort of students and study around your work and family commitments. Demanding 19 hours a week of study time, you will work with a team of dedicated Tutors through a series of modules – see course descriptions and structure below – have the opportunity to attend the annual summer school, work with one of our Advanced Programme cultural partners, and participate in a Practice Module, working with one of the programme’s cultural partners. In addition to support from tutors in Museum Studies, you will receive tailored mentoring and take part in an annual sharing of learning around inclusive transformation with our University and cultural partners

Course descriptions

The Postgraduate Diploma/MA/MSc pathways in Museum Studies and the Postgraduate Diploma/MA/MSc in Socially Engaged Practice in Museums and Galleries will provide you with the practical and theoretical experience needed to become a creative and effective museum and gallery professional and to further advance your career in the sector. These Distance Learning courses are delivered in a variety of ways, including, carefully tailored Module materials that you can work through at your own pace and which include online lectures and activities and online seminars and tutorials. The programme is designed to fit around your existing commitments, and is sympathetically structured to allow you to break up the work into manageable chunks and focus on one assignment at a time.

By taking a distance learning course, you have the flexibility to fit studying around your existing work and family commitments. The distance learning course offers the same subject coverage and leads to the same qualification as our campus-based course. You will be taught by experts in the field, who have been involved in expanding the academic discipline of museum studies over many years and will be supported by a team of highly skilled Tutors, all of whom are highly experienced museum and heritage professionals.

Postgraduate Diploma/MA/MSc in Museum Studies



The course will equip you with a thorough knowledge and critical understanding of current principles, practice, and contemporary debates in Museum Studies. Over the course you will explore areas such as:

- The social role of museums and art galleries
- Activist practice in museums and galleries
- Collections care and management
- Exhibitions strategies
- Museum design
- Museum ethics and interpretation

To complete the **Postgraduate Diploma**, you will take four core modules, plus the project in practice, followed by three option modules, giving you the opportunity to delve into your particular interests and to develop your expertise in the field of your choice.

Core modules:

- The Museum and Change
- Designing for Creative Lives
- Objects and Collections: Care, Management and Curation
- Engaging Audiences

Plus:

- Project in Practice

Choose **three option modules** (subject to availability) from:

- Lifelong Learning
- Museums and the Natural Environment
- Heritage
- Digital
- Museums and Contemporary Issues

If you are taking the **MA** or **MSc**, you will also complete a **Research Project** on the topic of your choice. For many, it is the most exciting part of the course, as a self-directed opportunity to contribute new ideas, knowledge, or critique existing scholarship or practice at an advanced academic level. You might choose to write this up as a dissertation, but you could also consider writing a paper, a professional report, or perhaps even producing a film. If your Research project concerns a science collection or museum, or if the nature of your investigation is 'scientific', you can receive a Master of Science (MSc) degree instead of a Master of Arts (MA) degree.

Modules shown represent choices available to current students. The range of modules available and the content of any individual module may change in future years. For a full description of each Module, learning hours and outcomes, please visit <https://le.ac.uk/courses/museum-studies-ma-msc-dl/2025>

Postgraduate Diploma/MA/MSc in Socially Engaged Practice in Museums and Galleries

This course will examine the role of museums and practitioners in shaping society's understandings of contemporary issues, upholding antiracist and anti-oppression values of inclusivity and accessibility, and ensuring that museums benefit their communities. Choosing to study Socially Engaged Practice in Museums and Galleries will give you access to leading research and practice on the impact that museums and galleries can have on advocating for social justice and human rights, and how they might better explore and address the contemporary issues that face our societies.

This course brings together cutting-edge examples of socially driven professional practice in dialogue with research undertaken by academics within Museum Studies. It draws on broader global shifts in practice and will challenge you to think deeply about the role of culture in society and the characteristics of socially purposeful museums and galleries.

Over the course, you will engage critically and creatively with areas such as:

- Partnership working
- Participatory practices
- Anti-racism and anti-oppression work
- Ethical frameworks for practice
- Accessibility and audience-centred practices
- Visitor studies and audience research
- Leadership at all levels of an organization
- How socially engaged practice can be embedded into the work of museums and galleries



You will gain a deeper understanding of the historical, current and emerging debates, theories, issues, techniques and practice in order to effectively develop and advocate for socially engaged practice in museums, galleries, and similar organisations. The course offers a platform to explore and experiment with ways of maximising the impact that museums and galleries can have on the wellbeing of communities, on civil debates around controversial topics, and on the building of fairer and more equal societies.

To complete the **Postgraduate Diploma**, you will take four core modules, plus the Project in Practice, followed by three option modules, giving you the opportunity to delve into your particular interests and to develop your expertise in the field of your choice.

Core modules

- Exploring Socially Engaged Practice in Museums and Galleries
- Ethical Practice: Access, Liberation, and Organisational Change
- Activist Practice: Methods of Empowerment
- Museums and Transformation: Evidencing Need and Assessing the Impact of Socially Engaged Practice

Plus:

- Project in Practice

Choose **three option modules** (subject to availability) from:

- Objects and Collections: care, management, curation
- Lifelong Learning
- Museums and the Natural Environment
- Heritage
- Digital

If you are taking the **MA** or **MSc**, you will also complete a **Research Project** on the topic of your choice. For many, it is the most exciting part of the course, as a self-directed opportunity to contribute new ideas, knowledge, or critique existing scholarship or practice at an advanced academic level. You might choose to write this up as a dissertation, but you could also consider writing a paper, a professional report, or perhaps even producing a film. If your Research project concerns a science collection or museum, or if the nature of your investigation is 'scientific', you can receive a Master of Science (MSc) degree instead of a Master of Arts (MA) degree.

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A step-by-step guide to your application

Who can apply?

In order to be eligible to apply you must:

- Be domiciled in the UK
- Meet at least one of the criteria set out below

You are eligible to apply for the New Museum School Advanced Programme if you meet any of the following criteria:

- You are from a Black and minority ethnic group. For the purposes of this scholarship opportunity, this is defined as Arab; Asian or Asian British; Black or Black British; Chinese; Romany or Traveller; Irish Traveller; Mixed White and Asian; Mixed White and Black African; Mixed White and Black Caribbean; Other Asian background; Other Black background; Other Ethnic background; Other Mixed background; and Other White background.
- You have a disability as defined in the Equality Act 2010.
- You have been in care as a looked-after child for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14
- You are a carer for an ill or disabled family member.
- You come from one of the most deprived areas of the country as defined by the government's IMD (Indices of Multiple Deprivation) database. If your postcode IMD value is 16,250 or less, you meet this criterion. You can check your postcode using the [IMD search tool](#). Please note this map only covers England and the postcode we will use is that of your home address in your last year of school or college, or your current home postcode if you have been independent from your parents/guardians for at least 3 years.
- You come from an area where it is unusual for people to go to university. This is defined by the government's classification called Polar 3. To meet this criteria your home address in the last year of school or college, or your current home address if you have been independent from your parents/guardians for at least 3 years, must fall into quintile 1 or 2. Check your address area using the [Participation of Local Areas \(POLAR\) search tool](#). Please note this information only covers the UK.
- You were in receipt of a Maintenance Grant as an undergraduate.
- In recognition of the diverse employment needs of the culture sector, we recognise and credit a range of prior qualifications and experiences. Eligible applicants also need to be able to meet the following criteria:
 - Either a first class or second-class degree, which can be in any subject area.
 - Or be able to demonstrate equivalent skills and aptitudes through the possession of a professional or vocational qualification and/or the accrual of relevant work experiences. Relevant experience can come from a wide spectrum of work or voluntary environments but clear evidence of this experience must be provided.

You should be able to demonstrate a commitment to, or strong interest in, museums, galleries, or other kinds of heritage or cultural organisation.

If you do not have a degree, you will be asked complete an assessment, such as an essay, so as to demonstrate your readiness for postgraduate study. Clear guidance will be provided on assessment criteria. You may also be required to attend an interview.

English Language Requirements

IELTS 6.5 or equivalent. If your first language is not English, you may need to provide evidence of your English language ability.

How to apply



The application process consists of 2 parts: 1. a process to identify nominees and 2. A formal application process.

Applications for nomination are invited by 29 May 2026. Please attach your CV and a 1000-word personal statement to info@cultureand.org that tells us:

- Why you want to be part of the New Museum School Advanced Programme
- Which course of study you are interested in – Museum Studies or Socially Engaged Practice in Museums and Galleries
- How taking this course will support your personal and/or professional development plans
- How your previous academic and/ or professional experience has given you the skills needed to study at postgraduate level.

Photo Credit: Natalia Janula