

Project Proposal Application

To be completed by the lead proposed supervisor,
with input from the non-HE Partner Organisation(s).



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

SECTION 1: PROJECT SUMMARY AND APPLICANT DETAILS			
Proposed Project Title:	Arts and Creativity: Raising Attainment, Attendance and Aspiration in Young People Facing Disadvantage		
Project Summary: <i>(Maximum 100 words)</i>	While the benefits of high-quality arts education are frequently observed in practice, the evidence that support these benefits, across a young person's educational experience and attainment, is limited. Not only is arts learning insufficiently evaluated, but inequally distributed: young people facing disadvantage are less likely to receive the advantages it confers. By working with the educational charity Hand Of, the CDA researcher and project team will analyse, evaluate and, in due course, model a set of interventions that can raise attainment, attendance and aspiration in young people marginalised by mainstream education and make a significant intervention into policy and the research field.		
Host University:	Durham University		
Name of Non-HE Partner Organisation(s): <i>(Add more lines if needed)</i>			
1. Hand Of Ltd.			
2.			
Contact(s) at Non-HE Partner Organisation(s): <i>(Add more lines if needed)</i>			
Name:	Louise Snape	Email:	
Name:	Rob Hughes	Email:	
Primary AHRC Subject Area: <i>Select one subject area from the list here. Please do <u>not</u> add or amend subjects, as there will not be a corresponding Subject Area Review Panel to assess your nomination.</i>	Policy, Arts Management and Creative Industries		
Does the project include a Creative Practice component?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you consider the project to be interdisciplinary?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
If you consider the project to be interdisciplinary, please state why: <i>(Maximum 100 words. Please note that your application will be assessed by the relevant primary AHRC subject area review panel. However, in this space you should indicate which other subject areas your proposal covers and how your methodology is genuinely interdisciplinary.)</i>			
This is a truly interdisciplinary project, incorporating theatre, music, creative writing, film, making, youth work and education. The supervisory team includes scholars from Music, Education and English Studies. The project will draw on qualitative and quantitative data, as well as creative practice; the candidate will learn to deliver as well as assess cultural learning.			

SECTION 2: PROJECT PROPOSAL AND CASE FOR SUPPORT

Please provide full details of the proposal and make your case for support below:

(Maximum 750 words)

Practitioners have long believed that cultural and creative education is effective not only in raising children and young people's wellbeing, belonging, self-efficacy and agency, but that it also has the potential to raise attainment across the curriculum. Evidence for the latter is patchy – while arts education is a good in itself, research to support its benefits across a learner's educational experience has lacked clear data to support such wider claims, as asserted by Jindal-Snape et al. (2018).

Not only do young people facing disadvantage suffer from an attainment gap across their education, but high-quality arts learning is disproportionately delivered to more advantaged children (Ward et al, 2021). Hand Of is a charity that specifically gives disadvantaged children and young people unique creative opportunities. Projects harness the arts, heritage and education sectors to create an interdisciplinary cultural education, allowing children and young people to create artistic responses to their experiences and understanding of the places they call home. Children work as colleagues alongside professional musicians, artists and academics who use their skills to deliver on children's ideas. Whether a performance, film, sound walk, exhibition or music video, no project output is pre-created. Instead, participating children shape it, together with workshop leaders.

Through partnerships with schools and local authorities, Hand Of works with children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), issues with Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH), and children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Pupil Premium grant, PP), and Looked After Children (LAC). Hand Of also works with children in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), and young people not attending school. These are the young people who are most disadvantaged by inequalities in educational provision, and least likely to receive the benefits conferred by interdisciplinary arts learning.

Data from Hand Of's partners over the past four years suggests that this work is closing the gap between disadvantaged students and their non-disadvantaged peers. On some projects, disadvantaged participants have in the following academic year, equalled or even out-performed their non-disadvantaged peers, in terms of attendance, attainment, behaviour, and independent study skills. In one school with whom Hand Of have worked since 2019, GCSE results for PP students have continually improved, and the attainment gap with their non-disadvantaged peers has narrowed. Creative projects with PRUs and students not in mainstream education are leading students away from criminal activity and drug abuse, re-engaging them with education, and even on to further study.

However, the data supporting these findings has not been collected in a sufficiently consistent way. This research project will therefore help to understand the impact of the work, why it is having that impact, and how to develop it further, both in Hand Of's future work and for other cultural learning providers and education institutions looking to make similar efficacious interventions. This CDA will be informed, rigorous, and longitudinal: Hand Of's practice offers an exceptional opportunity for the researcher and the institution to make a well evidenced case for arts and creative education as means of addressing socio-cultural inequality.

Project Aims:

- To assess, measure, and model the impact that interdisciplinary cultural education has on attainment, attendance and aspiration for disadvantaged young people.
- To develop and deliver resources that can be implemented by education providers working with children and young people in a context of inequality.
- To fulfil and develop the current AHRC and Arts Council England strategies.

Research Questions:

- What impact does access to interdisciplinary cultural education have on attainment, attendance and aspiration?
- What aspects of this approach are efficacious in delivering positive change in children and young people's lives?
- What kind of framework and resources would be beneficial in empowering other cultural learning providers and education institutions to embed this approach in their offer?

Methods & Ethics:

- The project candidate will be fully integrated into Hand Of, understanding the operations of the charity, and delivering workshops to children and young people alongside artist workshop leaders.
- They will involve children and young people in shaping the way data is gathered through co-production, asking participants how they reflect on learning experiences, co-designing the longitudinal study to develop a meaningful structure for data

collection and evaluation.

- This project uses the principles of community-based participatory research (CBPR), a research methodology based on the co-production of knowledge for the purposes of social justice.

Outputs:

- Doctoral thesis.
- Handbook for cultural organisations and education providers working with disadvantaged children and young people nationally.
- Annual training day for cultural organisations and education providers in the North East.

Provide details of any resources and facilities, including equipment, fieldwork, training, etc., that will be required to complete the project successfully. NBC has limited Research Training Support Grant funding, which may affect the feasibility of high-cost projects. Please note where you might also secure additional funding, (e.g. partner organisations; department or school). Include estimated costs:

(Maximum 200 words)

Necessary resources and facilities include:

- Office space (provided in part by Hand Of).
- Access to Hand Of projects and teaching.
- Travel costs (provided in part by Hand Of).
- Safeguarding training (provided by Hand Of).
- Arts education training (provided by Hand Of).
- Computer equipment needed on Hand Of projects and teaching (provided by Hand Of).

These resources will total c. £2500 per year of the award, and so Hand Of will commit to contributing £7500 to the award.

Outline the arrangements for communication between the non-HE partner organisation and the academic host institution in regard to project management and monitoring academic progress:

(Maximum 200 words)

We will establish a Research Project Working Group (RPWG), which will meet quarterly to develop the research project and data collection framework, to manage the overall project, and to monitor progress. The RPWG will comprise a supervisory team of DU academics across, given the interdisciplinary nature of the research, across the Faculties of Social Science and Arts and Humanities, the industry partners from Hand Of and practitioners with appropriate expertise in the field.

What benefits will there be for the candidate and the non-HE partner organisation as a result of your collaboration?

(Maximum 200 words)

Hand Of will benefit by better understanding the impact of its work, and the mechanism by which they bring about that impact. This will enable informed decisions about how to deliver that work and what work to deliver. This research project will provide in-depth, rigorous, and high-quality input into the continuous development of the organisation's educational output.

This project could also lead to the establishing and funding of a longer-term position within Hand Of for the candidate. By the end of the project, the candidate will have received professional training over three years, in projects in which children and young people engage with:

- research, including geography, history, society, politics, science and culture
- script-writing
- music composition, performance and recording
- animation
- dubbing and voice-over
- prop and set design
- devising and performing theatre
- audio-visual and sound design
- visual art creation.

They will have developed a suite of transferable skills in research methods, reading and analysing data, and delivery of rigorous, high-quality cultural and creative education, as well as academic writing and research. They will be exceptionally well placed to develop a future career in cultural policy, arts learning or in academia.

State what financial (if any) or in-kind contribution the non-HE partner organisation will be making over the duration of the award:

(Maximum 200 words. A financial contribution is not a requirement. However, the AHRC expect that non-HE partners based overseas will make a financial contribution to the costs of the student's return travel and accommodation when visiting.)

Hand Of will make a financial contribution to the research project of up to £2500 p.a., as well as working space in their office in Newcastle, IT equipment and other materials as necessary. This will enable the candidate to work alongside Hand Of's team of educators, in our office, in our learning space, and alongside us in schools, heritage organisations, and other settings. They will possess developed and high-level knowledge of the operation of NGOs, the pedagogy of working with children and young people, especially those marginalised by mainstream education, and of debates around the efficacy of interdisciplinary cultural learning.

Describe the nature of the collaborative arrangement and the activities the candidate will be undertaking with the non-HE partner organisation:

(Maximum 200 words)

The candidate will be working together with Hand Of's Senior Leadership Team and Artist Workshop Leaders to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework, which will then be implemented across Hand Of's work.

This will mean that the candidate will attend projects and sessions with Hand Of, observing teaching and learning, as well as delivering some aspects of projects. They will be actively engaging with, participating in and delivering Hand Of's pedagogy in order to understand and evaluate it in a meaningful way. The project thus delivers full integration between the practice and the research, ensuring both are rigorous, evidence-based and effective.

SECTION 3: SUPERVISION AND EXTERNAL ADVISORS

Primary (or Co-) Supervisor:	Dr Sophie Ward
School or Department:	Education
Email Address:	
Secondary (or Co-) Supervisor:	Prof. Simon J. James
School or Department:	English Studies
Email Address:	
Advisor based at the Non-HE Partner Organisation:	Louise Snape
Organisation/Institution:	Hand Of
Email Address:	
Advisor based at the Non-HE Partner Organisation:	Rob Hughes
Organisation/Institution:	Hand Of
Email Address:	

Additional Internal or External Advisors or Academic Supervisors, if any:

Name:	Robert Gardiner
Organisation/Institution:	Royal Northern College of Music
Email Address:	

Explain how the expertise of the supervisory team and external advisor(s) will allow them to support the proposed project and the selected candidate:

(Maximum 500 words)

Louise Snape and Rob Hughes have 10+ years teaching experience in the UK & EU, in mainstream education & museum settings, and have delivered projects and managed budgets over £200,000, ranging from touring orchestras to the revival of a heritage building. Between them they hold degrees in German with Dutch, Philosophy, and Global Politics and Law. They have worked as teaching assistants in SEN departments in secondary schools.

Sophie Ward is an Associate Professor of Education and Director of Postgraduate Research in the School of Education. Her research interests include the arts in education, creativity, and education policy. She is a Fellow of the RSA and her research contributes to our understanding of the role of the arts in society. Sophie lectures on the use of the arts with young offenders as part of her BA Education Studies module, Understanding the Arts in Education. She has completed supervisions for ten PhD students. Sophie's research is strongly aligned with the student's project, e.g.:

- Ward, S., James, S., James, K., Brown, C., Kotosaki, D. & Wigham, J. (2021) The benefits of music workshop participation for pupils' wellbeing and social capital: the In2 music project evaluation. Available online at: [Full article: The benefits of music workshop participation for pupils' wellbeing and social capital: the In2 music project evaluation \(tandfonline.com\)](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14682761.2021.1911111)
- Ward, S. & Connolly, R. (2018) The play is a prison: the discourse of Prison Shakespeare. *Studies in Theatre and Performance*. Available online at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14682761.2018.1560999>

Simon J. James is Professor of English Studies. In 2017, he was appointed Principal Investigator for the Durham Commission on Creativity and Education, in partnership with Arts Council England, which investigated teaching for creativity and creativity thinking in Early Years settings, schools and Further Education. The Durham Commission published its first report in 2019, with a further report evaluating the impact of the commission's recommendations in 92 schools in England, to follow in 2025. He is currently leading on a report for the Child of the North (N8/NHS/Centre for Young Lives) on the role of Arts and Creativity in addressing social and educational inequality. He has completed supervisions for fourteen students.

External Advisor Robert Gardiner is Senior Lecturer and Programme Lead in Music Education (Royal Northern College of Music)

Robert is a professional educator specialising in whole-class music pedagogies and the combination of instrumental and curricular music education. He studied for his Bachelor degree at the RNCM, completed his PGCE at Manchester Metropolitan University and the RNCM, and then his Master of Arts degree at Zurich University of the Arts. He completed his EdD in 2022, exploring student teacher development throughout their Initial Teacher Education year.

Robert is an active researcher with a particular interest in music education, teacher education and educational policy. Recent publications have explored the connections between socio-cultural context and teachers' identities, values and aspirations. This has focussed on various theoretical conceptualisations of teacher subjectivity and the interplay between discourse, culture, society, ideology and music education.

SECTION 4: RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

Please provide details about the research environment the selected candidate will be joining and its suitability:

(Maximum 500 words)

Hand Of has an office in central Newcastle (9 Akenside Hill, NE1 3XP), and we are able to embed the student by offering work space in this office when appropriate. The office also contains our learning space, where we deliver sessions with students from a variety of disadvantaged backgrounds. These sessions are 1-to-1 or in small groups, and are predominantly run for students between the ages of 13 and 18, who are not currently attending school, and are Looked After Children (LAC), who are living in or have previously lived in residential care homes. On Hand Of projects, we also deliver work in schools, and in a variety of heritage sites, museums, archives, observatories and laboratories.

Hand Of will be able to offer access to non-HE networks with whom we have established relationships, including:

- Youth Music Impact Network North East
- Local Cultural Education Partnerships (GLOW Newcastle)
- North Tyneside Student Development Programme

The School of Education is committed to providing both a stimulating and supportive environment for research postgraduates. What differentiates the School of Education from other providers is the growing focus of many of our researchers on quantitative methodologies (random controlled trials, impact studies, etc.), intercultural education, the arts in education and the psychology of education. Postgraduate students are a key part of the School of Education's vibrant community of world leading researchers and are valued members of the department's Research Clusters. The student will be encouraged to join one or more of our Research Clusters to benefit from the dynamic collective research activity undertaken by researchers in the School of Education. For example, the DECE Research Cluster (Durham University Evidence Centre for Education) promotes, evaluates, and monitors the impact of high-quality education research, and is a strong fit for the student's evaluation of Hand Of. The Pedagogy and Curriculum Research Cluster is also a strong fit for the student, as members of this cluster are currently evaluating the Arts Council England's £2.7m national pilot Creativity Collaboratives Programme. The aim of the Creativity Collaboratives is to build networks of schools that will test a range of innovative practices in teaching for creativity. The student will benefit from engaging with colleagues in the Research Clusters who, along with the student's supervisors, will guide them to develop research skills directly relevant to the Hands Of research project. The student will also be

encouraged to complete a Development Needs Analysis to get personalised recommendations for activities that meet their development needs. The student will be encouraged to present their work at the PGR Seminar Series to receive peer feedback from fellow postgraduate students and will be invited to give a presentation at the School of Education's annual student-led PGR Conference, Imagining Better Education. All research and methods for the project will be overseen by the School of Education's Ethics Committee. The School of Education is ranked 1st for Education in the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2025.