

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:	Using creative arts and design practice to visualise the experience and needs of patients with head and neck cancer		
Project Summary: <i>(Maximum 100 words)</i>	Following treatment for head and neck cancer, evidence demonstrates this population has greater psychosocial dysfunction than other cancer survivors. Furthermore, global studies consistently highlight people with head and neck cancer are at greater risk of suicide ideation and death by suicide than any other tumour group. The World Health Organisation (2019) amongst other policymakers increasingly recognise the important role creativity, social interaction and learning new skills plays in wellbeing. This project presents a unique opportunity to explore the role of creative arts in helping to improve the wellbeing of head and neck cancer patients, particularly those suffering from suicidal ideation.		
Host University:	Ulster University		
Name of Non-HE Partner Organisation(s): <i>(Add more lines if needed)</i>			
1. Cancer Focus NI			
2.			
Contact(s) at Non-HE Partner Organisation(s): <i>(Add more lines if needed)</i>			
Name:	Mrs Pat McClelland	Email:	
Name:		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>	Applied Arts: History, Theory and Practice		
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 project will combine creative practice, in the form of the production and exhibition of research artefacts, with socially engaged research related to patients' experience of living with cancer. As such, it will draw on a range of practice-based approaches, as well as insights and methods adapted from third sector organisations, nursing and healthcare research and practice.

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)

This project will investigate how an engagement with making and creativity might play a role in helping to improve the wellbeing of head and neck cancer patients, particularly those suffering from suicidal ideation. The important role creativity, social interaction and learning new skills plays in wellbeing is increasingly recognised (e.g. World Health Organization 2019, All Party Parliamentary Group 2017 on Arts, Health and Wellbeing). This project will adopt the premise that making art can 'create a space for embodied, multilingual, marginalised experiences to be expressed in visual form' (Tolia-Kelly 2007: 133) and that such 'visual grammars' are not always expressible verbally (ibid: 135).

Globally, the incidence of suicide amongst people with head and neck cancer is up to three times that of the general population (Kam et al., 2015; Osazuwa-Peters et al., 2018; Choi and Park, 2021). While survival rates in head and neck cancer are improving (Jung et al, 2022), statistics highlight that the rate of suicide in people living with and beyond head and neck cancer is increasing (Ilic and Ilic, 2022; Jung et al., 2022), with death by suicide being the highest risk factor of death in this population up to five-years post diagnosis (Turner et al., 2023).

This research will focus on how suicidal ideation and feelings of hopelessness can be materialised and expressed in both verbal and non-verbal formats in order to empower patients and improve healthcare providers and familial understanding of these tendencies. The materiality of art and craft practices plays a significant role in fostering participation, where the 'messiness of interaction' (Askin and Pain 2011: 817) enables a more tactile form of engagement than is possible through verbal interaction alone. Previous research also suggests that the 'embodied experiences of making art and using art-related materials may prompt or enable new social relations, and these encounters are both remembered reflectively (discursively) and reflexively (through the body)' (Askin and Pain 2011: 817). This interdisciplinary approach of creative arts and healthcare research will explore methods of artist-led engagement, aiming to counter social isolation and develop innovative and creative models of practice to improve our understanding of these complex healthcare contexts.

Research questions:

1. How might creative methods be employed to engage patients living with and beyond head and neck cancer in creative practice, enabling them to communicate better their experience of illness through making?
2. How can these insights improve familial and health and social care providers' understanding of suicidal ideation within this context in order to enhance care?
3. How might an artist / maker co-design with patients, family members and health and social care providers a model of practice to improve the outcomes of people living with and beyond head and neck cancer with suicidal ideation?

Methods

1. Qualitative research. The researcher will gain insights into this problem by collaboratively working with leading clinical academic experts in the field (subject matter and methodologically) and a leading cancer charity. This will enable the development of PPI and focus groups, triangulating experiences and perspectives of patients, their families, and health and social care practitioners.
2. Creative practice will be used to both engage participants in making activities as well as and respond to these interactions through the production of research artefacts by the researcher.
3. A series of engagement activities with key stakeholders will be devised and delivered which will communicate insights and develop a model of practice for how creative practitioners may work with patients and health and social care professionals to improve wellbeing.

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)

The researcher will be able to avail of studio space and a range of specialist technical areas and workshops at Belfast School of Art. Related training in creative processes will be offered if necessary. The candidate will also be required to undertake training delivered by Ulster University Doctoral College in qualitative research, including the conducting of focus and PPI groups, NVivo, data analysis, etc. Both co-supervisors, CS and JF have extensive experience in conducting qualitative research. The identified leading cancer charity, Cancer Focus NI, provides a range of services and activities for this patient population, including a 'Next steps' programme, support group, patient and carer conference and 1-1 counselling; enabling access sample populations to co-design and deliver this project. It will be necessary to attend/organise research events and the supervisory team will be able to able for strategic support via the UoA32 fund to support the candidate's conference travel and publications.

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)

The UU supervisory team will work closely with Cancer Focus NI (CFNI) to manage the PGR student's engagement with the charity and academic progression. Initial meetings with the entire supervisory team will determine the nature of the relationship and the frequency of interactions with CFNI. In addition to monthly UU supervision meetings, whole team meetings, including CFNI, will be held at 3 monthly intervals, with the PGR student providing a short written update. This will augment records kept on the Doctoral College's PhD Manager. The initial and confirmation assessments (3 months and 10 months after commencement) are standard points of PHD progression. A project plan will be devised, detailing a timeline for proposed workshops, focus and PPI groups, and creative outputs. The PGR student will play a key role as intermediary between UU and CFNI, gradually taking ownership of the project.

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

(Maximum 200 words)

The candidate will gain an unparalleled opportunity to help shape the work of NI's leading cancer charity. The project will result in the development of a series of transferable services and models of practice which will guide and influence arts and health/ creative health approaches within the cancer treatment context. This will make a contribution to knowledge at the national and international level, potentially influencing policy. The collaboration will enable the candidate to make lasting academic and professional relationships, resulting in future leverage and currency. The candidate will develop a new body of research artefacts (artworks and exhibitions) which will enhance their research and professional practice. CFNI will benefit from the candidate's insights and creative approaches to designing and delivering new forms of interaction with clients and stakeholders. This will enhance CFNI's suite of service offerings. The project will facilitate increased knowledge transfer between CFNI, BSoA, UU's School of Nursing and Paramedic Science, and a range of NI health care trusts, potentially leading to mutually beneficial research and funding outcomes.

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.)

CFNI will provide a range of in-kind support. This will include sharing subject expertise and training opportunities, and facilitating attendance at head and neck cancer programmes and events organised by the charity. CFNI will also provide access to people impacted by cancer and their family members, as well as advise on recruitment strategies and the co-design and delivery this project. CFNI will also provide a hot desking space for the candidate and premises where research events, focus and PPI groups can be delivered. Creative practice elements will be undertaken in the studios of BSoA.

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

(Maximum 200 words)

CFNI is Northern Ireland's leading local cancer charity, providing care and support services for cancer patients and their families. CFNI has a track record of providing art therapy services for cancer patients and the candidate, although not necessarily an art therapist, will contribute to this strand through the development of creative health approaches. It is envisioned that the PGR student will be 'embedded' within the organisation, avail of a range of training opportunities, and contribute to its client and stakeholder work. This placement may take the form of a combination of weekly or monthly engagements, as well as more intense, or protracted, periods of interaction. The candidate will work creatively with the CFNI team, its clients and medical stakeholders, to design and implement new services and novel forms of interaction to support cancer patients, their families, and medical professionals, to understand better suicidal ideation. It is anticipated that the project will result in a range of research artefacts and public exhibitions, as well as the development of creative models of practice and resources that can be used by CFNI, its clients and stakeholders.

SECTION 3: SUPERVISION AND EXTERNAL ADVISORS

Primary (or Co-) Supervisor:	Dr Christopher McHugh
School or Department:	Belfast School of Art, Ulster University
Email Address:	
Secondary (or Co-) Supervisor:	Prof Cherith Semple and Dr Jeff Hanna
School or Department:	Institute of Nursing & Health Research, School of Nursing and Paramedic Science
Email Address:	_____
Advisor based at the Non-HE Partner Organisation:	Mrs Pat McClelland, Director of Services
Organisation/Institution:	Cancer Focus Northern Ireland, 40-44 Eglantine Ave, Belfast, BT9 6DX
Email Address:	
Advisor based at the Non-HE Partner Organisation:	
Organisation/Institution:	
Email Address:	
Additional Internal or External Advisors or Academic Supervisors, if any:	
Name:	
Organisation/Institution:	
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)

Dr Christopher McHugh (CM) (<https://pure.ulster.ac.uk/en/persons/christopher-mc-hugh>) is Lecturer in Ceramics and Course Director of BA Hons Fine Art at Belfast School of Art (BSoA). CM supervises 7 PhD researchers (2 NBC-funded, 5 DfE-funded). He is NBC Subject Lead for Visual Arts at BSoA and serves on the UOA32 University Research Ethics Filter Committee. He has a long-standing interest in arts and health which will enable him to support the project, having devised and delivered research and impact

projects exploring the role of creative practice in promoting veteran health in Belfast and NE England. He was Visiting Research Fellow in the faculties of Health Sciences and Wellbeing, and Arts and Creative Industries at the University of Sunderland (UoS 2021-2024), where he worked with the Helen McArdle Nursing and Care Research Institute to develop collaborative research on arts and health and social prescribing.

Prof Cherith Semple (CS) (<https://pure.ulster.ac.uk/en/persons/cherith-semple>) is a Professor of Clinical Cancer Nursing which is a joint clinical academic appointment between Ulster University and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. An internationally recognised leader in cancer nursing, she has over twenty years' experience in clinical practice, education and research. CS leads on two research programmes of work, namely, "Family-centred cancer care: Promoting positive coping when a parent of dependent children has cancer" and "Post-treatment quality of life issues for patients with head and neck cancer". She also leads Ulster University's INHR Cancer Care Research Group. CS has over 60 peer-reviewed publications (1400+ Scopus citations) in a range of academic journals, two Cochrane reviews, three book chapters and three commissioned reports. She has a successful history of grant acquisition, embodying collaborative working across institutional boundaries, to include healthcare trusts and Cancer Charities.

Dr Jeff Hanna (JH) (<https://pure.ulster.ac.uk/en/persons/jeffrey-hanna>) is a Lecturer in Clinical Cancer Nursing. This is a joint clinical-academic appointment between Ulster University and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. Jeff's research interests span across end of life, cancer and bereavement care. Jeff was previously employed at University of Strathclyde where he led a national study exploring the support needs of older people bereaved by suicide. Alongside this, he co-developed a screening tool used to identify suicide ideation in older people. JH was employed by the Department of Psychiatry at University of Oxford where he was first author of the first national studies on experiences of end of life, bereavement and mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Jeff is currently leading a review and meta-analysis of the experiences, needs and challenges of people impacted by head and neck cancer who have experienced suicide ideation and completion.

Mrs Pat McClelland (PC) (BSc, RN), Director of Services of the charity Cancer Focus NI (CFNI), has been a registered General Nurse since October 1982 and was General Manager of Cancer Services in the Northern Trust. PC will be the direct point of contact at CFNI and will support the project by helping to manage the collaborative relationship and brokering training and access to clients in an ethically informed manner.

SECTION 4: RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

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

(Maximum 500 words)

Ulster University has a multidisciplinary research ecosystem which will support this collaborative doctoral project. The Art & Design research environment was judged to be 4* (72.5%) and 3*(22.5%), 16th in Rank (7th highest score) in REF2021. The University's Doctoral College (DC) (>800 PhDs) was ranked 2nd in the UK for PRES2021. The DC offers a suite of training materials, resources and expertise, including bespoke training support and a PhD Festival of events, including practice-based exhibitions. Emerging from the Art & Design PhD community (c.60 PhDs) and the Faculty PhD community (c.240 PhDs), is *Intersections*, a journal providing an interdisciplinary environment for exchange. Specifically for this research, Belfast School of Art provides an Additive Manufacture Lab, including Alevi Bioprinting facilities, ceramics printing technologies and support for the full range of sculptural and ceramic processes. Ulster's Creative Industries Institute (CII) involves the convergence of creative economy subjects from crafts to digital industries. The AHRC IAA has established four Special Interest Groups (SIGs), one of which is related to Design for Health, which the successful candidate can engage with. Furthermore, development and collaborative opportunities will be enabled via the Ulster University's Cancer Care Research Group, which is part of the Institute of Nursing and Health Research, which has an internationally excellent and world-leading research reputation, awarded 100% in research environment, defined as world-leading in REF 2021.