

Crafts Council

**Craft FE and HE Partnerships:
22/23 Pilot**

Zoe Dennington & Joanne Haywood



Contents

1.	Introduction	4
2.	Context	6
3.	Project Model	7
4.	Pilot 2022-23	9
5.	Reflections	12
6.	Recommendations for further development	16
7.	Next Steps	19

1

Introduction

This report gives a summary of activity and outcomes for a pilot project delivered by Crafts Council, focusing on building collaborative relationships between craft Higher Education (HE) courses and their local Further Education (FE) providers.

The project launched in September 2022 and finished in September 2023.

Data presented here is from March 2023—mid-way through the project—and looks at activity and early indications of impact across three partnerships: London Metropolitan University and City and Islington College (London), East Sussex College Hastings, Bexhill College, and Hastings Museum and Arts Gallery (Hastings) and Swansea College of Art and Bishop Gore School (Swansea).

MichelleMcCormick
Gemmology and Jewellery Studies lecturer at Birmingham City University



2

Context

Through research with our partners and networks, Crafts Council has identified [a series of key challenges for craft Further and Higher Education \(FE and HE\)](#).

A central emerging issue is the lack of opportunity for collaboration across FE and HE. This is especially problematic when it comes to supporting underrepresented students from the craft sector as they transition to HE; FE staff have valuable knowledge about how to best support these students that could help HEIs build their pastoral care programmes.

A disconnect between Widening Participation teams and academic leaders in HE institutions mean that there are few opportunities to build partnerships with tutors at FE level. If this was put in place, it could support greater student recruitment onto craft courses.

FE tutors often have limited access to subject-specific professional development. They lack up-to-date knowledge about the craft courses on offer at their local HE provider and are unclear on the best way to prepare students to apply for these courses.

Both FE and HE struggle with forming connections with the industry, and there's a growing need in FE to offer students work experience, particularly with the upcoming launch of T Levels.

[More information on T Levels can be found here.](#)

3

Project Model

In response to these needs and drawing on our experience of building craft education regional hubs, Crafts Council designed a pilot project creating flexible, reciprocal relationships between FE and HE providers.

The model is based on:

- Crafts Council as trusted facilitator, bringing together geographically linked FE and HE institutions to identify strengths and areas of development that can be mutually supported.
- Microgrants to underpin engagement – covering costs such as teaching cover for FE staff, travel and materials.
- Crafts Council evaluative observation draws out the change and impact on tutors, students, other stakeholders.

The project's core aims are:

- To create sustainable local networks to support craft education, bringing together FE, HE, industry and cultural partners.
- To improve progression routes from FE to HE craft courses, supporting students from underrepresented backgrounds to access creative careers.



4

Pilot 2022-23

The 2022-23 Pilot Project established three partnerships between craft course leaders within FE and HE providers based on geographical location:

- London Metropolitan University and City and Islington College (London)
- Swansea College of Art and Bishop Gore School (Swansea)
- East Sussex College Hastings, Bexhill College, and Hastings Museum and Arts Gallery (Hastings).

The programme ran between September 2022 and September 2023.

The Crafts Council supported by brokering these new relationships and working with each partnership to identify their needs and help them define what in-kind support they could offer each other.

We offered each partnership a microgrant of £500 to cover the costs associated with the project.

Suggested forms of reciprocal support included the delivery of in-kind practical and knowledge-sharing CPD, access to equipment, mentoring and network building.

Partners were also encouraged to think of additional outcomes to support each other's work that might be naturally occurring in workstreams, e.g. invitations for tutors and learners to see degree shows, studio visits, careers fairs, developing links with widening participation teams, and discounted fees on short courses for staff and learners.

Photomicrograph of goethite in quartz
Photo: Michelle McCormick

This report summarises the activity delivered by these partnerships between September 2022 and March 2023, as well as planned work for the period March- September 2023. We present early indicators of the impact of this activity, and what we expect to see as these partnerships develop further:

London Metropolitan University (HE) and City and Islington College (FE)

Activity delivered up to March 2023:

- A ‘creative courses’ talk delivered by London Met in December 2022, available to 100 CANDI students.
- An open day for prospective students in February 2023, 100 CANDI students invited to attend along with other schools and colleges.

Planned activity March- September 2023

- A summer workshop for CANDI staff at the University, including metal work, furniture design and paper engineering.
- Staff and students at CANDI will be invited to the London Met graduate exhibitions in June 2023
- London Met are holding a Makers’ Symposium in June 2023 for CANDI staff/ students
- A bespoke taster day for CANDI students with a carousel of activity, both practical and specialist talks. (Postponed from February 2023 to September 2023)

Early indicators of impact/anticipated impact

- CANDI staff report an increased understanding of the challenges at FE, particularly a lack of time and flexibility when compared to HE
- From the initial stages of the project, CANDI staff intend to focus on developing closer relationships with staff rather than delivering activity with students as they feel this will make most difference to student uptake in the long-term
- We anticipate that these relationships will lead to an uplift in CANDI students applying for a range of undergraduate courses, in particular the Furniture and Product Design BA, by January 2024.

Swansea College of Art - University of Wales Trinity Saint David (HE) and Bishop Gore Comprehensive School (FE)

Activity delivered up to March 2023:

- An intensive CPD workshop for Bishop Gore school, delivered at Swansea College of Art in March 2023—‘Analogue digital design and making tactics’; it is envisaged that the teacher attending the training will cascade activities to students and other members of staff.
- Students at Bishop Gore school have also been attending outreach sessions at Swansea College of Art for other art and design courses, facilitated through the Widening Participation team developed separately from our project.

Planned activity March- September 2023

- Swansea College of Art will deliver further sessions for students at Bishop Gore School, in the classroom, focussing on professional practice.
- A Taster Day early in July will be delivered, for students to visit the foundation/3D design and crafts courses.
- CPD for teachers to support students with portfolio preparation and planning for interviews.

Early indicators of impact/anticipated impact

- The teacher from Bishop Gore reports that they feel more familiar with the HE offer at Swansea College of Art and that they will build confidence with advising students of the preparation of their portfolio and preparing for interviews as relationships with tutors at Swansea deepen.
- There is the potential to link existing relationships between Bishop Gore and Swansea’s Widening Participation team into the partnership, deepening the relationship.
- We anticipate that there will be an uplift in students enrolling oncourse at Swansea College of Art in UCAS applications by January 2024.

East Sussex College—University Centre Hastings (HE), Bexhill Sixth Form College (FE), Hastings Museum and Art Gallery (cultural sector)

Activity delivered up to March 2023:

- Attendance at a careers fair led by ESC Hasting, at Bexhill College for 1100 students, in December 2022.

Planned activity March- September 2023

- The BA Designer Maker course leader will present at a second careers fair in June 2023.
- Due to the success of the first careers fair they were able to build stronger links with the art and design team at Bexhill College and bring in a subject specialist teacher for the partnership, for the second half of the project. This will lead to more practical delivery of sessions in the college.
- ESC Hastings are planning a summer workshop / taster day for the art students at Bexhill.

Early indicators of impact/anticipated impact

- Following the careers fair, ESC Hastings have had ‘2 applicants for the BA (Hons) Designer maker course from Bexhill College and we have had a further 6 applicants for our other courses. This is a great improvement on years gone by’. Two of those learners have applied from Bexhill College. We expect to see a further uplift in students from Bexhill College applying to Foundation and BA Courses following the next careers fair.
- ESC Hastings have developed a good relationship with the careers lead at Bexhill College and we aim to create a stronger team with the introduction of a subject specialist lead.

5

Reflections

In some cases, we saw an immediate uplift in students applying from our FE partners to their HE partners courses and we anticipate seeing a further uplift in January for the next round of UCAS applications.

For our FE partners, especially those in schools, we saw a growing confidence in equipping their students to apply to HE courses and preparing them to develop the skills they need for portfolio and interview. Meeting HE staff, seeing the studio spaces and examples of work their students, they are able to offer their students a deeper understanding of the pathways on offer and where certain core skills might be applicable to different specialists' courses.

Aside from seeing an increase in student applications, we started to see the impact of teachers from FE and HE spending time together to appreciate each other's expertise and understand each other's challenges and limitations. With such limited access to CPD there is anecdotal evidence that having the opportunity to spend time with peers and develop skills outside of teaching and learning has a positive impact on wellbeing and feeling appreciated in their careers. This then filters down into their students learning.

Our partnerships are geographically close. Post pandemic, anecdotally, we are seeing a trend in school leavers wanting to stay closer to home to study. Our model supports this progression trend and provides stronger access points for FE learners.

“Having a visit from course leaders and students to discuss the variety of courses is a fantastic opportunity to see and hear first hand the opportunities available within the field of Art, Craft and Design. Seeing portfolios of work is inspirational for pupils' current projects. Potential visits to the Art College will introduce the pupils to university life and is a great enabler in making them feel comfortable with the environment. If staff learn more about the portfolio and interview process we will be able to advise our students accordingly with regard to their application for courses”.

- FE course leader

Tom Sutton
Designer Maker and Assistant Teaching Professor within the
School of the Arts & Creative Technologies at the University of Bolton





Whilst the landscape for everyone working in education is a challenge and undoubtedly we will face further cuts and closures – there is an appetite and appreciation for partnership working and pooling knowledge and experience together to benefit students and their progression.

One of the key strengths of the project, so far, is our willingness to be flexible and co-create projects within each partnership in a way that suits their cohorts and ambitions. Being able to bring in new partners and leads in at different stages of the project has given us the opportunity to keep the momentum going and offer multiple outcomes we had not anticipated.

Where some partners are not able to fully commit to all areas of the project, bringing in further co-partners or being flexible on timeframes has created more sustainable relationships, especially where some feel under pressure and we may have risked them dropping out completely.

Having Crafts Council as a neutral guiding presence for all partners and underpinning the work with creative solutions and ongoing 1:1 support has seen our partnerships flourish.

Tom Sutton, Ultra Glow Lamp
Photo: Joel Chester Fildes

6

Recommendations for further development

The pilot project shows us that there is appetite for a national project and we have seen the impact of the partnerships and delivered sessions already – with an uplift in applications from FE to HE and a growing confidence in understanding each other’s roles, strengths and limitations.

Further work would consider the following points:

- The recruitment phase should be extended from 6 months – allowing for a much longer lead time and flexible delivery across the year – this approach will be pivotal in the success of a national project. Finding partners that are fully committed with aligning priorities is crucial.
- The “Getting to know you” sessions should be delivered in the summer term before the start of direct delivery to allow for optimum planning time, before the summer break.
- The first sessions for students in FE should be delivered in early September, to allow for a greater impact before UCAS application are made.
- FE partners should be identified first, as it is easier to recruit HE partners. We had significantly more interest from HE’s in our network. FE’s were often keen to join us but did not have the capacity in their role to commit to the project. This should be in addition to microgrants which enable activity.
- To make it more accessible for schools and colleges, a budget would be needed to cover costs for teacher and tutor time to attend CPD, as well as some additional admin time. Without this we create a barrier for many schools and colleges.

- It is becoming increasingly hard for teachers to take part in any additional projects. Ensure activities and partnerships meet their school's priorities to secure commitment.
- Deepening these localised relationships by drawing in local industry partners, cultural organisations and further connecting to local development strategy priorities. Broadening the number of partnerships to work in other priority places, plus introducing ways to share and network across partnerships.



Lisa McGovern, woodland rings series



7

Next Steps

We see potential for this pilot to be developed into a national programme that could have considerable impact on the quality of experience offered to craft FE and HE students, particularly those who face barriers to progression to HE.

This low-cost intervention could support recruitment onto HE courses, increasing uptake and improving the diversity of students choosing to continue studying craft.

We will continue to work with partners from the pilot programme to gather insight into the further activity they have delivered and the impact of this for students, using this information to develop a revised project framework for a national scheme.

Lisa McGovern
Jeweller, Researcher and Curriculum Head of Craft and Design at the City of Glasgow College
Photo: David Finlay

Registered Charity Number 280956

The Crafts Council is supported using
public funding by Arts Council England.
www.artscouncil.org.uk



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**