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<sup>\*</sup><sup>\*</sup>  
reach for the stars...



...with a fine art PhD

The practice-based PhD offers a relatively new context in which you can further develop your practice as an artist. This pamphlet outlines some of the key issues in the area, and attempts to dispel some of the common myths and misconceptions associated with this kind of research.



# What is a PhD?

*"I don't know what a PhD is. No-one says in stone what it's supposed to be, I suppose it's however you define it."*

The University of The Arts London produces a handbook explaining exactly what a PhD is. The first page of the handbook provides a definition in 5 points. You can access this at <http://www.arts.ac.uk/research/314.htm>.

However, extensive research shows that students don't read handbooks.

So here is our version: a PhD is shaped around your practice.\*

DISCLAIMER: you may need to seek agreement from your supervisors that your definition of a PhD meets theirs. If you produce a thesis analysing the bivalve mollusc in Southern Plateau prehistory they might suggest you go elsewhere.

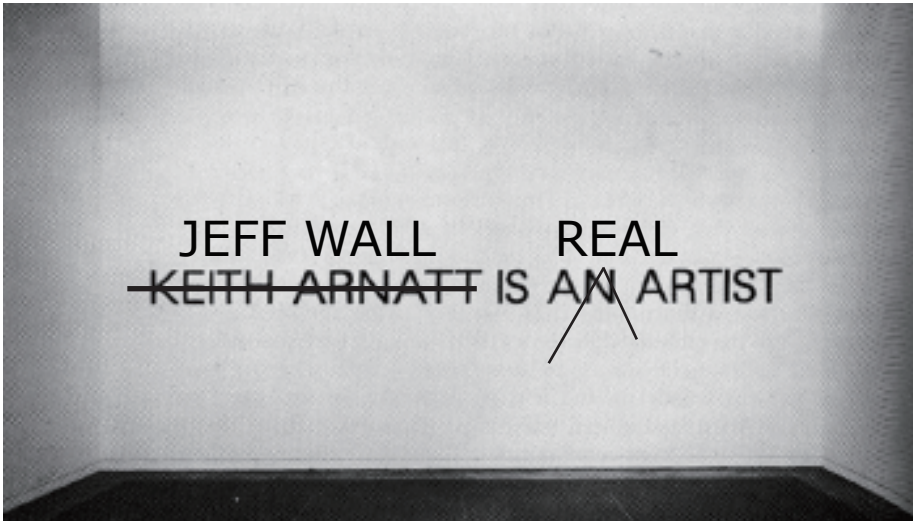
\* See for example Regulation 7.1: 'students may undertake a programme of research in which their own creative work forms, as a point of origin or reference, a significant part of the intellectual enquiry'.

[http://www.arts.ac.uk/docs/UAL\\_20092010\\_Regulations\\_Final\\_Dec09.pdf](http://www.arts.ac.uk/docs/UAL_20092010_Regulations_Final_Dec09.pdf)

# The role of writing in a PhD

*"If you get excited about writing, the PhD is for you."*

Yes, you have to write – but you also have to make art as part of a practice-based PhD. So if you get excited about making art, the PhD is for you as well.



- with apologies to Keith Arnatt.

# Research student lifestyle

*"I'll become sensible and wear... those kinda sweaters that have the diamond shapes on them ...and I'll be wearing lace-up shoes."*

Nice jumpers needn't be boring. See the first of our snappy models overleaf. A good jumper – or two! – will also keep you toasty when studying in an under-heated library or when you are deep in thought for long periods in your studio. All the time you will remain well presented and pleasing to the eye; a person to be taken seriously. If you really don't like jumpers, there are always other options – as our second model demonstrates.

You can also add your own twist to 'sensible'. The 'heritage' look, for example – tweed, brogues and Pringle jumpers – gets a makeover almost every autumn for both men and women. Sculptural tweed to forties-inspired style with added frippery can make a thoroughly modern look.







# Who is it for?

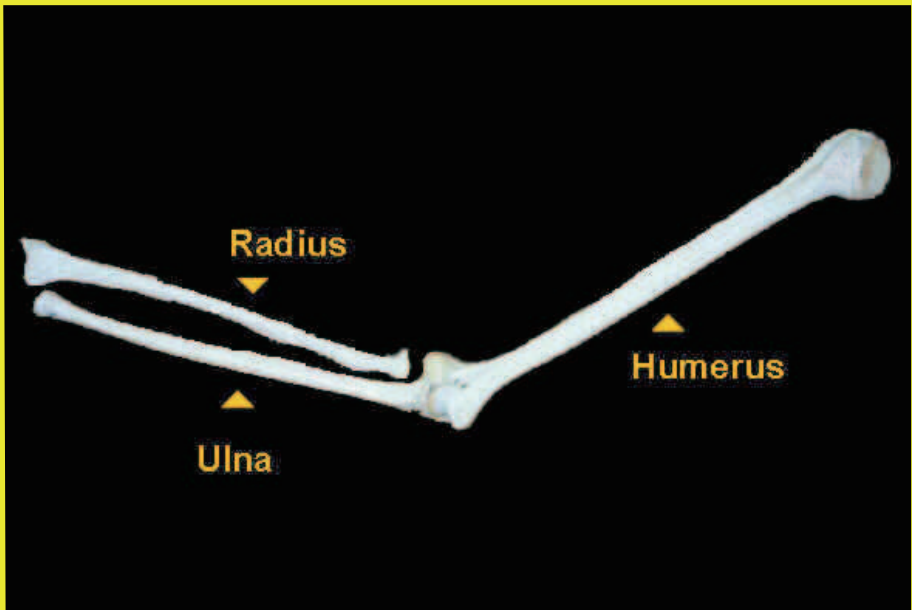
For some people the thought of doing a PhD is a fate worse than death. Christina Patterson, a journalist for *The Independent*, recently said 'If I were rewriting Dante's *Inferno*, I'd ensure that the catalogue of punishments included a PhD'.

Although the life of the scholar is not for everyone, Patterson recognises that, for some, doing a PhD may be paradise and in her article defends the position of Mary Beard, a Classics tutor who argues that 'research contributes to human civilisation and happiness and almost everything that makes life worth living'.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/christina-patterson/christina-patterson-lets-preserve-the-dotty-dying-don-1799227.html>

# Does background matter?

*"If you've got doctors in your family, you might be more inclined to do research."*



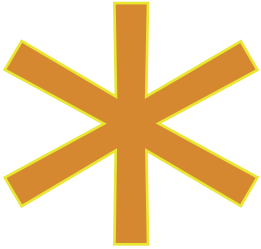
Q: What part of the human body does this image represent?

If you can answer this then you may be eligible for PhD study at UAL. You may find a few doctors who do not know the answer to this question at: [http://www.chelsea.arts.ac.uk/research\\_staff\\_profiles.htm](http://www.chelsea.arts.ac.uk/research_staff_profiles.htm)





# \* Money matters



*"It's being able to afford to do it, isn't it?"*



Well, someone has to meet the costs – but not necessarily you.

There are a number of sources of funding that you might be able to access via UAL – and a guide to these can be found at: <http://www.arts.ac.uk/research-degree-funding.htm>

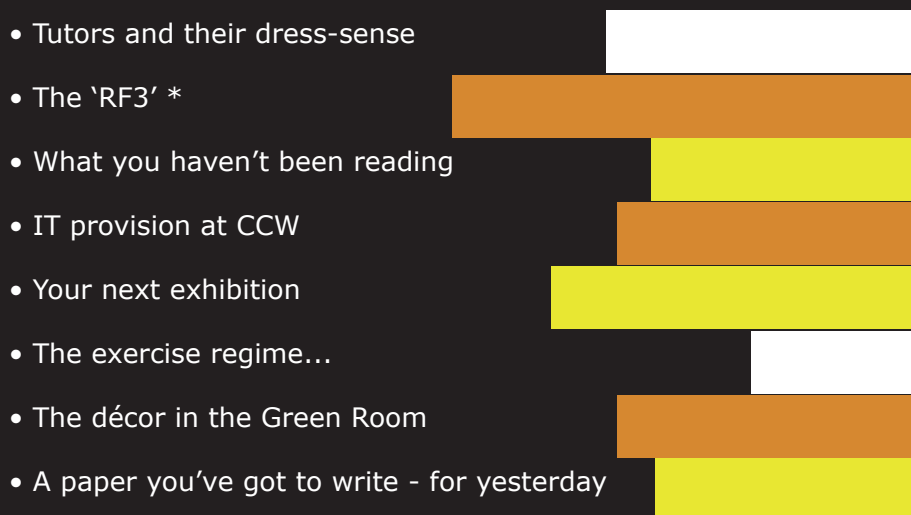
General advice about student finances can be found at <http://www.arts.ac.uk/money-matters.htm>, which also has a section on Foundations, Trusts and Charities that support further study - <http://www.arts.ac.uk/student/money/1730.htm>

A PhD may not make you rich but it will enrich you.

# At home with the PhD

*"I mean the kind of things you'd discuss over coffee and biscuits at a post-graduate event, certainly aren't from the tabloid reading, football-attending groups of society."*

The bar-chart below summarises in-depth fieldwork on topics of CCW research student conversation:



\* This acronym refers to an important rite of passage in research student culture: the Research Form 3 – the application to register for a Research Degree which takes place soon after you've enrolled as a research student.

# No more lonely

Are you worried that doing a PhD might simply swap the solitary confinement of the studio for the loneliness of the long-haul scholar? If so, fear not.

It's not just because, as one student put it, you might be 'too busy to be lonely'. It's more that the myth of the lone researcher is rapidly becoming a thing of the past, and the PhD is becoming a more social - and even sociable - experience. See the interesting article on this in *The Independent* <http://www.independent.co.uk/student/student-life/learning-to-collaborate-no-more-lonely-scholars-394217.html>

And with the launch of the Graduate School, there's a thriving research student scene across the colleges with a packed programme of seminars, workshops, presentations and convivial events run by staff and students. As well as bringing everyone together to consider generic issues (for example, 'writing', research ethics) and to work on joint exhibitions, these also include project-specific events organised by the constellation of CCW Research Centres and Research Groups.



# After the PhD a case-study

Name: **Constance Sweat**

Degree: **Practice-based Fine Art PhD**

Year of graduation: **2006**

Place of study: **University of the Arts London**

Current employer: **Dulwich Secondary School**

Current position/job title: **Secondary School Art Teacher**

The practice-based PhD is a gateway to various careers in addition to that of an artist. These include teaching, with many PhD graduates finding positions in secondary schools, colleges, universities and on gallery-education programmes. Recent graduate Constance, 43, has been teaching in South London for the last two years.

'Becoming a teacher is the greatest thing that's ever happened to me,' enthused Constance over a steaming cup of tea as she marks assignments. 'It was never my plan to teach art. But I enjoyed covering for a friend who taught at a Further Education college. Working with students was very satisfying' she says, smiling.

Like many new PhDs, Constance needed immediate employment after completion. 'I worked very hard to finish my PhD in time. But then getting a job wasn't that simple as I wanted something in my field.' But there were few positions in Higher Education when she entered the job market. 'I almost didn't apply for my current job because I'd never thought seriously about working with young people. But the school was interested in my background as an artist-researcher and thought my different skills-set would be useful here. And I now think of teaching as an extension to my art practice.'

Did you know that some famous and well-known artists have done PhDs? There's Jeff Wall for a start. Take a look at James Elkin's book *Artists with PhDs: On the New Doctoral Degree in Studio Art* (New York: New Academia Press, 2009).

This leaflet has been produced as one of the outcomes from a UAL research project funded by the 'Creative Learning in Practice Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning' (CLIP-CETL). The Principal Investigators were CCW Research Fellows Dr Isobel Bowditch and Dr Mary Anne Francis, and the Research Assistant was Marsha Bradfield, CCW research student.

The project team would like to thank everyone who took part in the Focus Groups, and the CLIP-CETL team. The leaflet was designed by Mary Anne Francis working with Dennis Mariner.

