



Newcastle
University

Museum, Gallery and Heritage

(MA, PGDip)

Our Museum, Gallery and Heritage Studies programmes are some of the most long-standing and renowned worldwide. You'll gain skills, knowledge and practical experience to help you establish or develop a successful career.

We work in partnership with a wide range of museums, galleries and heritage sites in the culture-rich North East region, as well as nationally and internationally. This means we can offer an unparalleled range of placements and work-based projects.

Sector professionals regularly contribute to teaching, ensuring we are at the cutting edge of current practice as well as academic excellence.

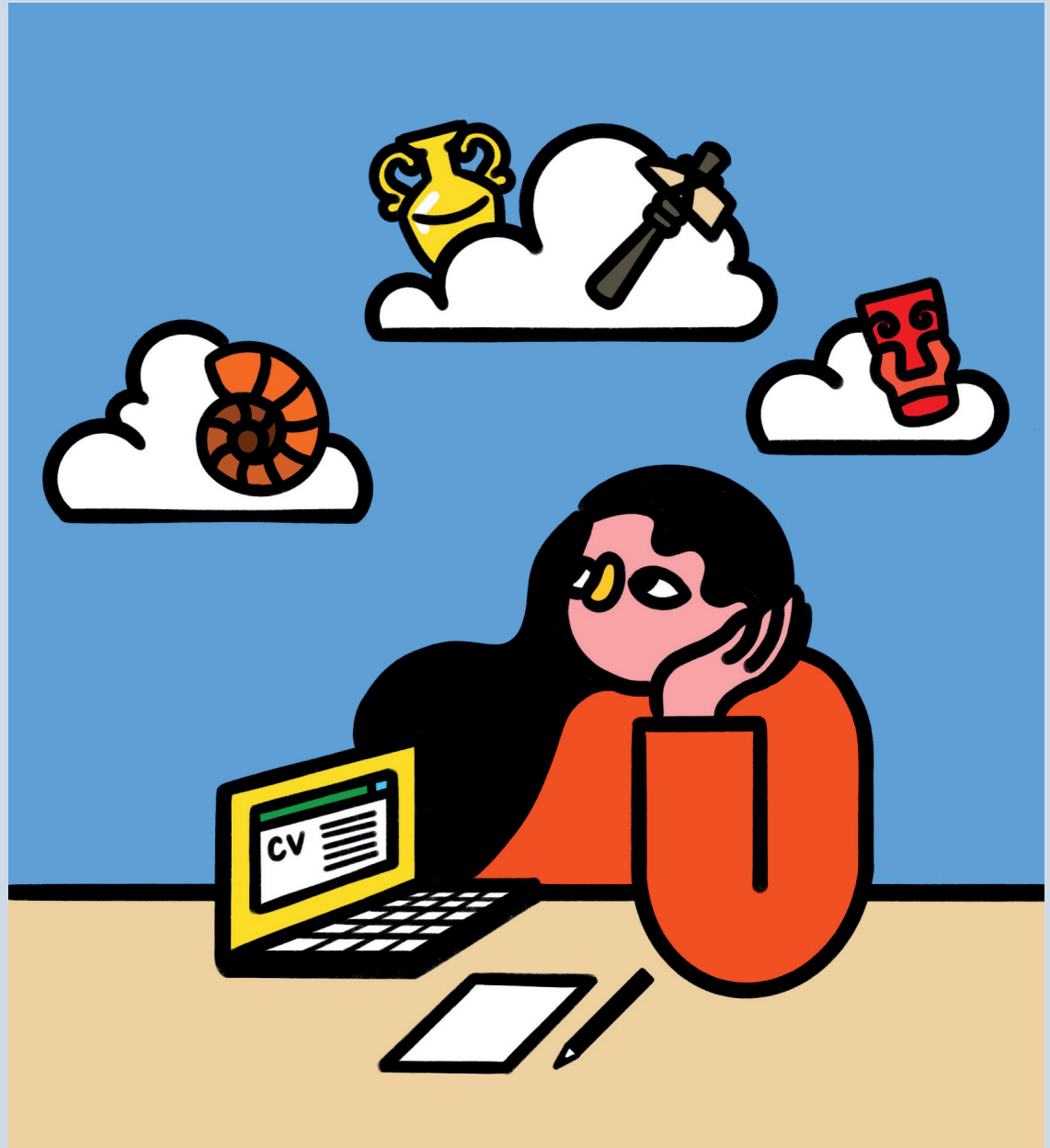
Further Information

For full details of our degrees visit www.ncl.ac.uk/sacs/mch.
Email us: pgmch@ncl.ac.uk



IN PRACTICE

CAREERS GUIDE 2022



Focus

Tackling social justice needs a representative museum workforce

54

The guide

How to improve your chances of securing a museum job

59

Trendswatch

Reforms are making recruitment a more equitable practice

61



Focus

A re-evaluation of vision and purpose is compelling museums to be creative to stay in business and engage with previously overlooked audiences. By *Toby Louch* and *Julie Nightingale*

Museums need you

Careers guide illustrations by Wendy Wong

Resilience has been a watchword in museums over the past decade, as funding cuts prompted restructures, streamlining and, for staff, job insecurity in the form of short-term contracts.

Yet a focus on social justice – promoting a fairer, more-inclusive and equitable society – has widened the scope of work undertaken and given fresh impetus to efforts to expand the workforce to better reflect the communities museums serve.

Initiatives such as the Museums Association’s (MA) Museums Change Lives flagship campaign – with its themes of promoting health and wellbeing, creating better places and inspiring engagement, reflection and debate – has highlighted those whose work serves the public directly.

In 2020, the campaign’s awards focused on the people and organisations that had made a genuine difference to their communities during the

pandemic. The winners included the staff at Seven Stories, the National Centre for Children’s Books in Newcastle upon Tyne, who – armed with snacks, puzzles and much-loved literature – took reading sessions to the front gardens of youngsters forced to stay at home.

Last year, the Museums Change Lives Awards digital engagement category was won by the Mixed Museum for its *Brown Babies* exhibition, which tells the stories of the British children born to Black US servicemen and white mothers during world war two.

Meanwhile, work on decolonising collections has become a strategic priority for many institutions. At the end of last year, a Decolonising Working Group convened by the MA published guidance to help people across the sector engage with decolonising practice.

For the past two years, the Powell-Cotton Museum in

Kent has been working on reinterpreting its programme to address its image as a museum named after the explorer and hunter Percy Powell-Cotton. It launched a social media campaign to explore what decolonising the museum actually meant and to challenge the myths of what is involved. Like many others, the Powell-Cotton is also undertaking work to become actively anti-racist.

Digital focus

The pandemic may have closed physical doors but many museums doubled down on their digital offerings, enabling people trapped at home to explore collections virtually, attend talks and take part in online workshops and conferences.

Climate change and the existential threat it poses has also forced museums to rethink how they operate, as well as how they tell the story of the battle for the planet.

The challenges these issues continue to raise require different skills from those sought by the sector even a decade ago. There is now a variety of roles that are as creatively and intellectually stimulating as ever, but are also underpinned by a deep sense of mission in education and social justice, and real urgency in the context of the climate crisis.

This is sometimes a shock

‘Museums are no longer places that just look to the past. They must reflect what’s going on socially’

to those unfamiliar with the sector or aspiring to enter it who may still think in terms of traditional curatorial roles.

“I prefer to think about what I call ‘job families’,” says Tamsin Russell, the MA’s workforce development officer. “You might have a job family that is associated with collections, another that targets audiences and one that acts as an enabling function.

“There are community roles, individuals who tend to work in a learning capacity, who could be responsible for running workshops for schools, visitors or external audiences.”

That variety makes museums dynamic places to work, says Catherine Doran, learning facilitator at the Northern Ireland War Memorial Museum and the MA’s Northern Ireland representative.

“One day you could be working with the collection, the next day you could be dealing with a moth infestation,” she says. “Museums are no longer

places that just look to the past. They aren’t allowed to be stuck in the past either. They must reflect – or be aware of – what’s going on socially in the world.

“You have to know your collection inside out, but you also need to know what else is going on out there. In the next few years, the focus will be firmly on the pandemic, decolonisation, climate change and anti-poverty.”

Antonia Canal, the MA’s policy and campaigns officer, joined the sector through a paid traineeship programme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and run by London-based arts charity Cultural Co-operation (now Culture&).

“It offered development opportunities for people of colour and working-class people with an aim to increase representation in the arts and heritage sectors,” she says.

“No prior experience in the sector was required – it was all about passion and potential. The traineeship was a game changer for me, not just in entering a new sector, but in my professional development.”

Traineeship programmes have played a big part in broadening entry routes into the sector and have influenced wider recruitment approaches.

“Fair Museum Jobs, a collective that campaigns for

more transparency around the criteria for museum jobs, has also had a big impact on how the sector thinks about recruitment,” says Canal. “Its recent manifesto challenges museums to do better.”

“I’m noticing more vacancies where there’s clearly been a change to how job descriptions and person specifications are put together, to ensure more people can put themselves forward.”

University postgraduate courses, which are still a common entry route into the sector, have adapted to reflect many of these developments.

The MA museum studies curriculum at the University of Aberdeen now features a module on museums and the digital world, and will add one on decolonising museums for 2022-23.

“We also have two online on-demand CPD courses, one on digital museum practice, and soon we will launch one on museums and sustainable futures,” says the programme director, Alison Brown.

“Issues such as climate change and social justice are embedded into our courses,” says Brown. “So students get a good grounding in these matters and how museums are addressing them.”

Toby Louch and Julie Nightingale are freelance writers

‘Matching your values with where you work is a force of good’

Leah Dungay, learning officer, National Videogame Museum, Sheffield

“Make the most of your transferable skills. My route into the museum sector involved a combination of my education, part-time jobs and volunteering opportunities – many of which were unrelated to museums and heritage. It can often feel like your experience is not relevant to a job application, but highlighting the skills you’ve developed in other roles is vital, particularly when you are able to connect them to roles in the museum sector.



Leah Dungay



Kayleigh Bryant-Greenwell

Remember you are always more experienced than you think you are.”

Sahar Beyad, press and communications officer, National Museums Liverpool

“Museums can change us but we can also change them. If you come from a marginalised community, a lower socio-economic background or a different religion or gender to the mainstream, this is your superpower – and the sector needs you. Matching your values with where you work is a force of good. Apply for a role in which you can make a

difference. Research the museum’s mission, vision, and values, and if you get a vibe of belonging, go for it.”

David C Weinczok, digital media content producer, National Museums Scotland

“My background is freelance writing and presenting, and I had never had a full-time job. I almost didn’t apply for my the role, as I was sure I would not make the cut. It turned out that my unconventional path gave me the skills to approach projects with an unusual perspective. If you think your experience is too

‘out there’, it might be exactly what a museum is after.”

Kayleigh Bryant-Greenwell, community engagement specialist, Smithsonian American Art Museum and Renwick Gallery, Washington DC

“Learn to focus on activities that amplify your values and relationships with leaders in those areas. Values-driven leaders recognise leadership at all levels of experience. You will likely need to get involved in opportunities outside of your full-time and paid labour – but be strategic about your efforts.”



IOE – FACULTY OF
EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

Working in the cultural sector... looking to update your qualifications?

MA Museums & Galleries in Education

The MA Museums & Galleries in Education programme combines academic study with professional educational practice, and is ideally suited to those already working in the cultural and educational sectors. The programme team collaborates closely with a broad range of galleries, museums and heritage sites. Our alumni now work at the cutting edge of developments in cultural institutions across London, the UK, and internationally.

This unique programme provides an opportunity for:

- the practical and theoretical study of museums, galleries and heritage sites as educational resources
- learning and researching with education staff at national, regional and university collections
- full-time students conduct research during a 21-day placement in a museum, gallery or heritage site and recent hosts have included national and local museums, art galleries, and heritage sites
- modules cover topics including: museums and galleries in education; responsive museums; inclusion and outreach; heritage and culture; material and virtual cultures; curation and education; contemporary art and artists in education

For further information

visit: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/graduate/taught-degrees/museums-and-galleries-education-ma>
email: j.borradaile@ucl.ac.uk



Royal College of Art
Postgraduate Art & Design

Jenny's Home kitchen set, Tri-ang Toys Limited,
Belfast, 1960s, V&A Museum of Childhood.

History of Design Postgraduate Programme

Study and research the history of design with the world's leading Museum of art and design and the world's top-ranked University of art and design.

The V&A/RCA History of Design MA and PhD programmes are renowned for their intellectually vigorous approach and first hand understanding of material and digital artefacts. Delivered jointly by the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Royal College of Art in London, the programmes teach and research cultural, social, economic, political and technological history through artefacts and human interactions with them.

Our programmes offer expertise in the global histories of design, performance, photography, fashion and architecture. Enjoy opportunities to be inspired by unrivalled collections and expert curators at the V&A alongside engaging with cutting-edge research and creative communities at the RCA.

For more information about the History of Design MA and Doctoral programmes, please visit:

www.vam.ac.uk/hod

Focus

What skills will those working in the museums of tomorrow need?

By *Toby Louch* and *Julie Nightingale*

For future reference



Specialist skills and a passion for collections have long been prerequisites for aspiring museum professionals. But those qualities now need to be backed up by an understanding of the new roles and responsibilities expected of individuals, as well as the many functions that modern museums have in the wider world.

Digital

There's an increasing need for digitally savvy practitioners with a wide range of skills and interests, from websites and app development to the possibilities of online learning and digital interactivity.

"The sector has been prioritising digital engagement for a long time but what's happened over the past two years has obviously accelerated that change," says Tamsin Russell, the Museums Association's (MA) workforce development officer.

"An individual needs good digital knowhow across the board, whether that's running a database or knowing how to make a mark across social media."

Wellbeing

As a result of museum staff struggling during the pandemic, Victoria Ryves, the programme manager at Heritage Doncaster, started an online wellbeing group.

She set up Glam Cares (Galleries, Libraries, Archives

and Museums), a support network for sector professionals, which enabled staff to talk about their concerns and socialise through online events.

"In museums, we spend a lot of time looking after the people that come to our sessions, but we're not always as good at looking after the people doing that work," says Ryves. "We're looking into skills development and working with counsellors to write a mental health first-aid kit with tips on mindfulness and mental resilience. We want to provide support that's personal and professional."

Decolonisation

In recent years, cultural sector organisations have made decolonisation a focus of policy and practice.

Understanding what this crucial issue means and how it plays out in terms of representation and audience development is just as important for individuals as it is at an institutional level.

"Many museums are embarking on decolonising

'Co-creation and facilitation are skills that entrants to the sector should develop'

work, but this needs to start here and now, with the quality and nature of the ways we work," says Charlotte Holmes, a member of the Museum Detox committee, the network for museum and heritage workers of colour.

"We all need to do the work to understand and address the oppressive ideas we have internalised if we don't want to repeat them."

Climate crisis

There's demand from museum audiences to act on climate change, says Sara Kassam, the sustainability lead at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and an MA trustee. "They want to see how we engage with the issues and how we are thinking about sustainability," she says.

Someone looking to enter the sector and interested in working in sustainability could usefully look to develop their understanding of systems and how they work, as well as behavioural and social change, adds Kassam.

"Basic carbon literacy is important. Understanding the terminology and activities that emit more carbon than others means you have the analytical skills and baseline knowledge for your role."

Social justice

Co-creation and facilitation are skills that entrants to the sector should look to develop,

CAREERS GUIDE 2022

says Margaret Middleton, an independent exhibition designer based in Belfast.

"It's important to know how to advocate for social justice work in museums," they say. "Students learn about the opportunities for this work in museum studies classrooms, but museums are conservative workplaces and initiatives need to be championed.

"You need to be savvy about money, partnerships and community relationships. Just be ready to be persistent."

Disability rights

Sam Bowen, a museums development officer in Kent, is a campaigner and activist for the inclusion of children with special educational needs and disabilities (Send) in museums, work that was recognised by her winning last year's MA Museums Change Lives Radical Changemaker award.

"Anyone wanting to enter the profession should learn more about this world," she says. "Follow Send advocates, parents, teachers and young people themselves on social media to start understanding the realities of the pressures faced by this group.

"We are making slow progress and need to shed light on why that is."

Toby Louch and Julie Nightingale are freelance writers

MANCHESTER
1824

The University of Manchester

MA HERITAGE STUDIES

Study today, change tomorrow.

- Develop your professional practice in heritage policy, conservation, engagement and activism
- Work across the intersections of cultural, natural, built and digital heritage contexts
- Collaborate with the University's fantastic cultural organisations, including The Manchester Museum, The Whitworth, The John Rylands Library and Jodrell Bank Discovery Centre

Our postgraduate programmes also include:

- MA Art Gallery and Museum Studies
- MA Arts Management, Policy and Practice
- PhD in Museology
- Professional Doctorate in Museum Practice
- PhD in Arts Management and Cultural Policy
- Professional Doctorate in Arts and Cultural Management

tel: +44 (0)161 275 0322 | email: museology@manchester.ac.uk

www.manchester.ac.uk/icp

UCL INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY



The **UCL Institute of Archaeology** is renowned as one of the world's leading centres of expertise for research and teaching in Museum and Heritage Studies. Our interdisciplinary courses bring together a wide range of academic and professional backgrounds, including anthropology, archaeology, conservation, curatorship, heritage studies, heritage and museum management, sociology, museum learning, audience research and material culture.

Based at the heart of one of the world's museum capitals, we offer a wide range of placement opportunities and work-based projects through our national and international collaborations.

Courses available either full time or part time:

- [BA Heritage \(starting 2023/24 Academic Year\)](#)
- [MSc Conservation for Archaeology & Museums](#)
- [MA Cultural Heritage Studies](#)
- [MA Managing Archaeological Sites](#)
- [MA Museum Studies](#)
- [MA Principles of Conservation](#)
- [MA Public Archaeology](#)
- [Doctoral Research Degrees](#)

For further information:

www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology

email: ioa-gradadmissions@ucl.ac.uk

In Practice

The guide

Tamsin Russell offers some advice on how to improve your chance of getting a job in a museum

How to get your foot in the door



The museum sector has always been competitive. We've seen an explosion of postgraduate courses in recent years alongside vital work by museums to become more socially engaged, accessible and attractive to employees. But public funding cuts and the removal of the statutory retirement age have meant fewer vacancies and less turnover.

There are jobs in the sector, but the supply is outweighed by the demand to enter it. This reality check is critical to focus attention and to help manage expectations, whether you are joining the sector at the beginning of your working life or moving into it from a different sector.

There is no silver bullet but there are things you can do to realise your ambition.

Job searching

Identify the museums you want to work in. This can be a function of geography – how far you can realistically commute, taking into account time, cost and convenience? Listing all the museums within a specific area can help provide focus and support organisational research, as well as relationship building. If you are willing to relocate, then apply a similar approach to other areas. You might also want to identify museums based on collection type, their values and programming.

CAREERS GUIDE 2022

The sector is broad, so don't discount jobs at related organisations – suppliers, funders, consultancies and development agencies – or working as a freelancer.

CV and applications

The first step to getting a job is to successfully present your experience. Invest time in creating a master CV from which you can cherry pick the evidence to best match a job description or person specification. Using evidence-based statements in applications will increase your attractiveness for the next stage. A powerful positioning statement or covering letter outlining your motivations, interests and most-salient experience will also ensure you contextualise your ambition and give a sense of who you are, what you stand for and what you could bring to the role.

Networking

Networking not only supports your career ambitions but is an important part of partnership and other engagement activities. When you're new to a sector, it can be intimidating, so a good starting point is to list the relationships you already have in the sector: people you went to school or college with, those you have met at courses or events, friends or relatives and those more removed ▶

'Apprenticeships are a win-win: you learn far more at work than in a classroom'

Stacey Anne Bagdi, collections and exhibitions officer (curator), Headstone Manor & Museum, Harrow Council

"Try your hand at everything, so that you know what you like and what you don't. Talk to as many people in the sector as you can, and join or start a network. Volunteering or working in different roles in diverse museums helped me find my path."

Calum Pearce, junior content producer, Imperial War Museums

"Apprenticeships are a win-win for those involved. You get your foot in the door

and the museum gets you on the cheap. I had a degree but did an apprenticeship because it got me working where I wanted to be. Apprenticeship courses vary, but you learn far more at work than in a classroom."

Tom Hopkins, curator (aircraft and exhibits), Royal Air Force Museum

"When you are unsuccessful at an interview, it's important not to treat it as a failure, but as a networking opportunity. Connect with the panel on LinkedIn or Twitter. You never know when a job may come up again, so building such relationships can be

valuable. Check on LinkedIn who got the job that you didn't. This will help you identify your skills gaps."

Verity Smith, freelance curator, consultant and writer

"Volunteer at a museum or heritage site, even if it's only a few hours a month. This will help to build your skill set and experience. You never know when a chat with another volunteer or member of staff might lead to an opportunity. Don't underestimate the value of your experience from other jobs. Experience in office admin or customer service, and proficiency in IT



Stacey Anne Bagdi



Calum Pearce

systems, will help you stand out on applications and in interviews."

Rebecca Hossain, director of commercial and operations, Sir John Soane's Museum, London

"A willingness to start in a field that may not be your ultimate destination is a huge benefit. Be open to opportunities when they arise and expose yourself to variety – if antiquity is your thing, try contemporary museums. This keeps your options open and equips you with transferable skills and broad knowledge of the riches that the museum world offers."

Museum Studies



- 1 year full time/2 year part time Masters programme
- 3 year full time/6 year part time PhD programme available on campus or as distance learning
- Join an ancient university, where you will have
- first-hand access to our extensive museum collections
- Gain professional experience working in museums on campus, locally and throughout Scotland
- Learn from world-leading academics in Anthropology, Archaeology, Education and History of Art and the professional staff of the University's museums

*MLitt
and PhD*

Find out more: www.abdn.ac.uk/pgt/museumstudies

Museum and Heritage Studies: Graduate Diploma/MLitt



University of
St Andrews

The University of St Andrews provides world-class full-time (from 2022) and part-time (from 2023) masters programmes in Museum and Heritage Studies.



- Taught by world-leading academics and current museum professionals at the forefront of creative practice
- Core modules on practical and theoretical elements of museum work
- Opportunities to specialise through optional modules and practical project work
- Focus on career preparation

To find out more visit:
www.st-andrews.ac.uk/subjects/interdisciplinary/museum-and-heritage-studies-mlitt

Email: gradschool@st-andrews.ac.uk

The University of St Andrews is a charity registered in Scotland, No: SC013532

In Practice

(for example, those you interact with on social media). These people can be your eyes and ears to vacancies. They can review your applications, run mock interviews and give you feedback. They can introduce you to others and to opportunities, and support your professional development.

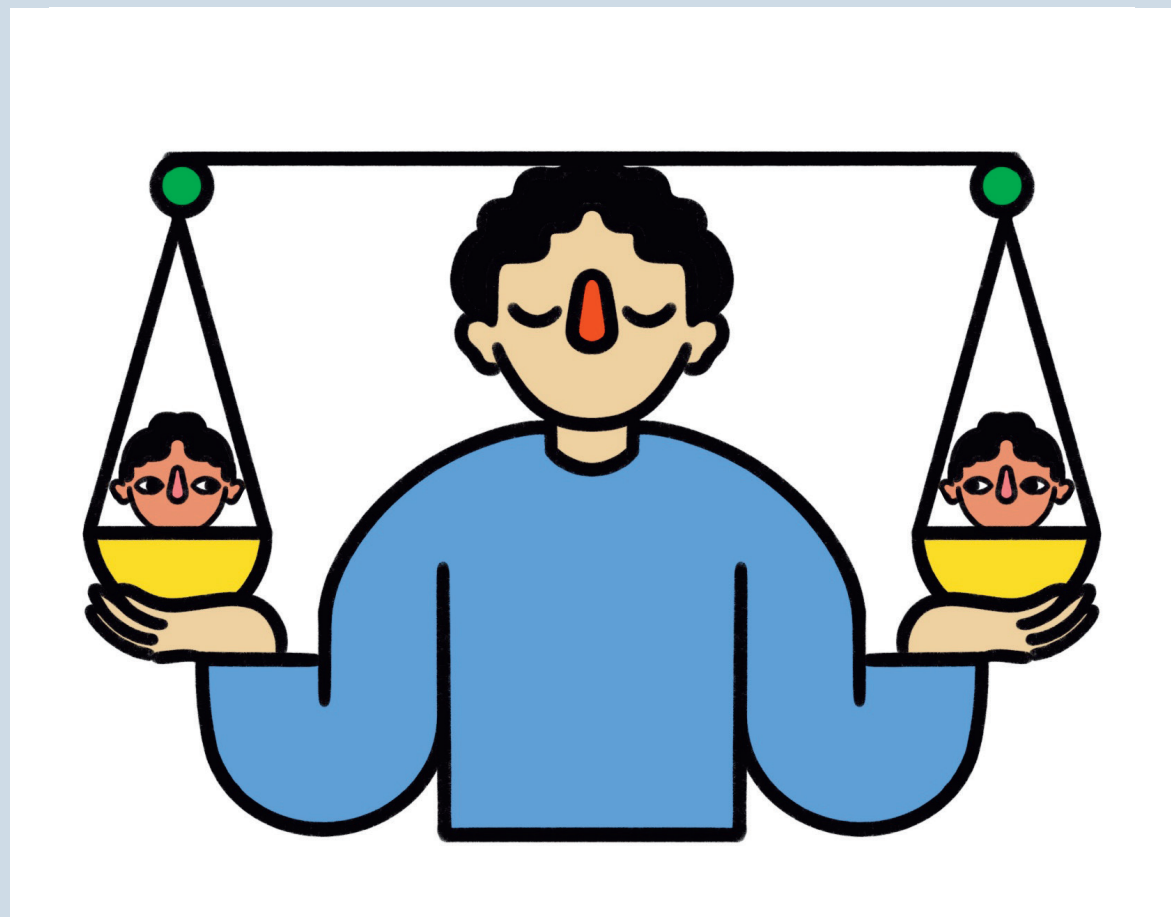
Interviews

Enjoy the success of being shortlisted for a role and use that confidence to fuel your preparation for the interview stage. Prepare evidence, examples and opinions relating to the requirements of the job. You should be able to talk about your achievements, but also the achievements of others in the field. This demonstrates your knowledge and awareness of the sector – and highlights crucial critical-thinking skills. Practising the interview alone or with support will help you talk more readily and instil confidence. Consider asking for as much detail about the interview and selection process as possible.

Professional development

Unless you are applying for an apprenticeship or traineeship, it is likely that the museum is selecting for competence, not potential. This means you will need to demonstrate awareness, understanding and experience in the sector or in the tasks related to the job. Gaining these takes time and money, so having a focused and targeted approach will help. Read books and articles, visit museums and their websites, watch recordings from conferences, listen to podcasts, and join groups and events to support your development. Volunteering can provide opportunities to develop skills. The key is to ensure that you are learning and growing on your terms – and moving on when a job no longer meets your needs.

Tamsin Russell is the Museums Association's workforce development officer. For more information, visit museumsassociation.org/careers



Trendswatch

Campaigning groups are helping to stamp out bad practice in recruitment. By *Deborah Mulhearn*

Recruitment fair

Bad practice in recruitment is as much a problem in the museum sector as in any other. But reform is happening, thanks to campaigning groups that advocate more equitable practices, including the Museums Association and Fair Museum Jobs.

One development that has helped to level the playing field has been anonymising applications. Stripping a job application of any data that can imply certain characteristics of a candidate (such as their name, address, years in education and the names of educational establishments attended) can help remove sources of bias by which the interview panel could consciously or subconsciously discriminate.

Cornwall Museums

Partnership (CMP) supports a network of more than 70 museums across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The organisation has started recruiting on a value-led basis and uses a task-based methodology.

“We ask questions designed to help us understand applicants’ values, as well as their skills and experience,” says Charlotte Morgan, collaborative programmes manager at CMP. “Most recently, we didn’t ask any questions at application stage – except those needed for right-to-work checks – and set a task to complete, which was presented to the interview panel anonymously.”

A recently appointed member of the team through

CAREERS GUIDE 2022

CMP’s task-based methodology shared their feedback: “I loved the task-based shortlisting – I felt this allowed me to immediately play to my strengths, rather than my weaknesses. It was reassuring that my disability wouldn’t be taken into consideration. The process couldn’t have given me a better introduction to the values of CMP – a great first impression of an organisation and what it stands for.”

Time is another area where employers can demonstrate that they value and respect applicants. For example, for applicants who work full-time and/or have caring responsibilities, a job application closing date at 5pm on a Friday is difficult to meet – extending it to a ►

In Practice

Monday will rarely have an impact an organisation's processes.

"We've been grateful to our networks for making us aware of different biases – for example, moving applications away from platforms such as Microsoft that need subscriptions," says Morgan.

CMP included a commitment to equity and inclusion at the start of application forms, published the interview dates, and provided choices for applying in written or video formats. It also made sure applicants were aware that they could claim expenses for travelling to interviews.

The interview stage is where subconscious bias can creep in. CMP is considering bias training for all interview panellists.

"Recognising assumptions you have as harmful to others is a long and difficult

'Zoom interviews can generate sources of bias absent from traditional on-site interviews'

process," says Morgan.

Zoom interviews may be the new norm but they are not a cure-all, and penalise the digitally excluded.

"We broadly support the rise in recruiters accepting video or audio applications, as it opens the field to candidates who might not have the same written communication skills as others," says Tom Hopkins, one of the co-founders of Fair Museum Jobs.

"But video applications will be harder to anonymise. And Zoom interviews can

also generate sources of bias absent from traditional on-site interviews: the candidate's backdrop; a lack of dedicated workspace in their own home; and the speed of internet connection and personal devices.

"At some point, a balance will have to be reached – but we're not quite sure where that is yet," says Hopkins.

Curating for Change, a scheme run through Screen South's Accentuate Programme to get more deaf and disabled curators into the museum sector, launched last year. Recruitment practices are often mentioned as a particular barrier for disabled members of the workforce, including not allowing flexible options for being interviewed or complex online forms that prioritise qualifications over transferable skills and experience.

CAREERS GUIDE 2022

"During the development phase of Curating for Change, we consulted widely with deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people," says Esther Fox, Curating for Change project leader.

"They sadly confirmed what we had suspected was the case – that the barriers for them in pursuing a career in museums were multiple and complex."

But the outlook is positive. "The museums we are working with are going on a journey with us," says Fox. "The will is certainly there, and once the programme is up and running, there will be many good examples."

Publishing guidelines and policies so that candidates can know what to expect from the recruitment process, is a good first step.

Deborah Mulhearn is a freelance journalist

'Don't be dispirited if you're told you need experience for an entry-level job'

Liz Power, director, London Museum of Water & Steam

"Get your foot in the door! I had no idea that I wanted to work in museums, I was just dyslexic and knew I couldn't work in an office like most of my friends did. I got a front-of-house job and then realised how much museums suited me. I took different jobs in museum learning, and learned about museums by working with great people and going on all the training I could. I am glad to have had front-of-house experience and can still work a till if needed."

Liz Johnson, director of museums and cultural property (interim), Arts Council England

"Experience gained in unlikely places can be applied to museum jobs. My first job in a museum was as a security guard at the National Railway Museum in York, because I had been a door-person while I was at university. Aside from giving me a lifelong mistrust of museum mannequins (they move when they think no one is



Liz Power



Liz Johnson



Peter Fallon



Rachel Adams

watching), it gave me insight into museum operations. I subsequently took jobs in higher education and the third sector, before returning to a role linked to what I am passionate about – museums in society."

Ellie King, doctoral researcher and exhibitions officer, Oxford University Museum of Natural History

"Practical experience is more important than studies. You should spend time building networks, relationships and contacts in the sector. Work out what your strengths are and where you can add value to an organisation – and emphasise that in your early career. This may be through specific volunteering projects or in a job role. It's also crucial to log your experiences and keep reflecting on the skills and knowledge you have learned. Specific examples of your expertise are handy to have when applying for jobs."

Peter Fallon, visitor team manager, Manchester Museum

"You will be competing with

lots of applicants, so demonstrating knowledge of the organisation's values and mission and how you can contribute to those is vital. For visitor facing roles, experience and genuine enjoyment with working with people, evidence of great teamwork and a passion for the objects on display will go a long way. This experience doesn't have to come from within the sector. Just be sure to evidence your experience and skills in applications and interviews."

Rachel Adams, managing curator, the Firing Line Museum of The Queen's Dragoon Guards and The Royal Welsh, Cardiff Castle

"Many jobs now involve roles where you're not working in one area with specific collections, audiences or museums. Use volunteering to get experience of different aspects of heritage and to gain a more solid understanding of the nature of these careers. Investigate different types of organisations to discover the roles that you feel particularly connected to or passionate

about. Don't be scared to work on things that make you uncomfortable, as this will help you to become more adaptable to change and new ideas. Also don't underestimate the transferable skills that you can gain from other sectors, as these often lead to positive innovation and change."

Alex Bird, museum development officer: workforce and skills, Museum Development North West, and an MA board member

"The first job I applied for was in a museum shop. I was 16 and was told that I needed experience to gain even an entry-level job. Dismayed by this, I decided museums weren't for me, as I couldn't afford to volunteer. So I worked in visitor-facing roles in cinemas and chippies, which gave me many transferable skills needed to get ahead in the sector. My advice is don't be too dispirited if you're told you need experience for even an entry-level job. Relevant skills can be learned in a variety of places outside of the sector."



Make the past your future

Gain hands-on experience and practical skills, working across Durham's unparalleled World Heritage Site & historic collections, with expert professionals.

Our courses:

MA Museum & Artefact Studies

MA Conservation of Archaeological & Museum Objects

MA International Cultural Heritage Management

Find out more
durham.ac.uk/archaeology

  @ArcDurham



WEST DEAN COLLEGE
ARTS & CONSERVATION 

GET YOUR MASTERS

MA Collections Care and Conservation Management, 2 years part-time
MA Conservation Studies - specialise in Books, Ceramics, Clocks, Furniture or Metalwork



Study in a working historic house environment
Benefit from funding opportunities
Virtual Open Days: 9 & 16 March
westdean.ac.uk

Full partner of

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

Looking for your next career move?

Search the latest jobs in museums and take the next step in your career
www.museumsassociation.org/find-a-job

* Institutional members of the Museums Association can post vacancies for free.

 Museums Association