

University of East London – Research Excellence PhD Studentships

The University of East London (UEL) invites applications from highly qualified and motivated students for a Research Excellence PhD Studentship starting in September 2024. The Research Excellence PhD Studentships are the premier postgraduate merit studentship at UEL and provide full tuition fees and a generous stipend.

Founded in 1898, we at the University of East London (UEL) are proud to change lives through education, research and knowledge exchange. Our 10-year strategy, Vision 2028 is to advance industry 5.0 careers-first education and provide a clear path to the jobs and opportunities of the future. We're committed to driving diversity in the 5.0 talent pipeline, working in partnership to promote talent wherever it is found and creating a balanced, inclusive, and green future.

UEL is an innovative academic community, delivering high-quality applied research that is impact-led, intellectually stimulating, socially relevant and for public good. UEL's research efforts are shaped by its location, East London, one of the most diverse regions in the UK undergoing rapid urban transformation that presents both challenges and opportunities for thinking and acting on the city's future. In addition, London is at the heart of a rich global landscape and UEL is entwined into this landscape through its research engagement with areas of central and local government, science, technology, education, health, and arts.

The Research Excellence PhD Studentships are central to the University's strategy to enhance the research volume, quality and impact and are part of our investment in research people, culture and environment. At UEL, PhD researchers will be supported by a community of supervisors committed to their timely progress and development as professional researchers with publishable outputs. All postgraduate research students at the University of East London benefit from a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme designed specifically for PGRs to support them to develop academic and professional skills and an understanding of key doctoral milestones. The programme consists of three key strands:

Researcher-Ready: This strand of training focuses on helping PGRs navigate the doctoral journey while developing key skills in research design, research theory, ethics, and academic writing.

Empowering Researchers: This strand of the RDP focuses on peer-to-peer mentoring, ideas sharing, wellbeing, and community.

Pioneering Researchers: This strand of training focuses on employability skills, entrepreneurship, and knowledge exchange for academic, industry, alternative career paths.

The School of Arts and Creative Industries

The research will be hosted by UEL's School of Arts and Creative Industries (ACI) and the Centre for Inclusive Creative Practice.

Research students and staff in ACI are active in areas ranging across creative practice from theatre, film, music, dance, acting, directing, media, applied theatre, journalism, games design, contemporary performance practice, fashion and art & design.

Our research is embedded in our East London location and issues of diversity and marginalisation, cultural and social regeneration, social justice and community cohesion are central themes.

We aim to drive social justice, develop impactful methodologies of inclusion, enable interdisciplinary collaboration and drive art form and technological innovation both in scholarly publications and creative practice research.

About the Studentship:

Proposed Project Title: Performing Difference: Methodologically contesting under-representation on the British stage.

Project Summary: An investigation into performance methodologies that privilege cultural inclusion of minority or excluded groups and foreground sensitive or hidden histories. Brolly's creative approach addresses a lack of praxis historiography in contemporary UK performance from 1978 to the present. The studentship will connect with a large-scale music / dance theatre-work 'Women of East 15' commencing in Autumn 2024, which focuses on diverse stories of migration. There is scope for practice-research to be an element of the project, but this is not mandatory. The researcher will work closely with Professor Dominic Hingorani, co-artistic director of Brolly productions, whose approach to practice-research is embedded in the professional practice of the company.

Industry Partner: Brolly Productions

Research Context:

Brolly is a global majority led cross-arts company with co-Artistic Directors Rachana Jadhav (Designer/ Illustrator) and Dominic Hingorani (Writer/ Director). The company creates performance work features leading roles in the repertoire for under-represented artists, stages 'sensitive' and hidden histories of minority or excluded communities and create new and diverse artists, participants and audiences for the arts and heritage.

In this way, the company's work endeavors that the stage reflects the diversity of contemporary Britain, celebrates and foregrounds cultural difference and challenges the notion of a homogenous construction of the nation by creating, drawing on the work of

Homi K Bhabha, 'counter narratives' that 'disturb those ideological maneuvers through which imagined communities are given essentialist identities' in his seminal work *The Location of Culture*.

Brolly has a long track-record of producing Arts Council funded small to large-scale national touring productions and projects that disturb the borders of form and actively include and put into dialogues 'western' and 'non-western' traditions, languages, histories and vernaculars and create spaces for marginalized voices to be foregrounded and heard.

'By working in an operatic form, with a diverse cast, in a black led company, this production is an essential part of redefining opera: whose stories are represented on the opera stage; who creates and tells them.'

Jo Nockels, Opera North

Work includes *Guantanamo Boy* (Half Moon Theatre, 2013), *Clocks 1888, the greener* (Hackney Empire, 2016), *her* (Half Moon Theatre, 2017) *The Powder Monkey* (The National Maritime Museum, 2019) and *The Stopping Place* (Newham, 2024).

<https://www.brollyproductions.com/>

Brolly work in partnership with museums and libraries as a key element of their methodology to develop authentic representations of character and the sensitive and hidden histories they stage and in order bridge the gap and develop new audiences for the Arts and Heritage.

This PhD will examine and contextualise Brolly's work within a broader historiography of actively inclusive contemporary performance praxis, using as a catalyst the publication of the ground breaking report 'The Arts Britain Ignores' (1978) by Naseem Khan that recognized that "'ethnic arts" should not be regarded as an exotic extra outside of British theatre but should be understood, funded and fostered as though they were a part of British theatre'.

The work could be explored in relation to a wide variety of research themes, which include, but are not limited to:

- How do Brolly and other similar organisations create performance methodologies of inclusion and representation for under-represented artists and audiences
- How do Brolly and similar organisations address issues of representation, cultural difference, intersectionality and 'authenticities'

- What role does archive, and heritage play in creating work for underrepresented artists and audiences
- What role can performance praxis play in developing counter narratives that contest exclusionary discourse and constructions of the nation.

Essential to the project, will be including the generation and tracking of “impact” as part of the developed methodology:

- How can the reach and significance of this type of work be demonstrated in a way that shows the ‘change’ it has contributed to the world?
- How could other companies, artists or community groups, generate and track impact through this kind of work?

While your research methodology does not need to be developed as part of the proposal, you should indicate how you will develop a methodology in relation to your already existing research or practice.

Keywords

Diversity, representation, opera, theatre, dance, performance, methodologies, innovation, marginalization, archive, sensitive / hidden history, music, design, community.

Research Methods and Timeline

Year 1

- Desk-based research:
 - survey/review literature on Brolly, comparable companies
 - survey/review of Newham based literature.
 - survey/review of methodological/ethical/other theoretical literature.
- Development of methodological framework
- Ethics process and review

Year 2

- Fieldwork: gathering and analysing data on current impact-evaluation practices, e.g. workshops, interviews, focus groups, ethnographic observations;
- Continued desk-based research: practices of comparable companies;
- Workshops or practice based/research as dictated by your project.

Year 3/4

- Write up, including the development of practical, high-quality resources that can be used by stakeholders as a result of the research project.

- Expectation of 1 peer-reviewed publication, co-authored with a REF eligible employee (e.g. Dominic Hingorani)

Some examples of relevant publications:

Funding

The studentship is for a period of three years including fees and an annual stipend of £20,622 (2023/2024), plus a training bursary of £2,000. The candidate will be expected to complete the full application and admissions process to start September 2024.

Additional Information

Find out more about the School of Arts and Creative Industries:
<https://uel.ac.uk/about/our-schools/school-arts-creative-industries>

The PhD Process:

<https://uel.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/mphil-phd-school-arts-creative-industries>

Informal enquiries about the studentships should be addressed in the first instance to:
ACIstudentships@uel.ac.uk

The closing date for applications is 1st July 2024. Shortlisting will take place by 8th July. Interviews will take place during the week commencing 15th July. If you are successful at interview and offered a studentship you will be directed to complete the UEL application process [further information is available at – School specific course page]

Criteria:

Evidence of sustained commitment to Drama, Theatre and Performance particularly in relation to community engagement and impact.

BA qualification or equivalent

A Masters degree, MRes or MA or equivalent

Aptitude and experience in primary research and/or action research.

Evidence of strong organizational ability.

Proposals:

Your application should include:

- 1-page proposal detailing the focus and conceptual framework you would like to use to contribute to the project as laid out in the advert, your potential theoretical and contextual literature(s).
- 1-page personal statement detailing the experience and skills you will bring to the project.
- Maximum 1-page CV.