

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 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) within the department of Performing Arts.

Research students and staff in ACI are active in areas ranging from film studies to cultural theory, the performing arts, and art and 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. Both in scholarly publications and creative practice research, we aim to question and illuminate, and to engage students and the wider community as well as academic staff in the excitement of discovery and debate.

About the Studentship:

Proposed Project Title: Creative Walking and Community Connection

Project Summary:

This research project will explore how creative walking practices can increase community connections and well-being. Building on previous research on walking and well-being, and in particular *The Walkbook: Recipes for walking & wellbeing* (2022), the project will engage diverse populations, including international students, home students, university staff and communities living and working in east London. The proposal should emphasize strong engagement with Newham, the specific approach the researcher plans to take and how that will generate significant impact in the community.

The University of East London spans three campuses in Newham, London, each offering different experiences of the borough and its relationship to greater London. Newham is a rapidly expanding borough with a diverse population. While the population mirrors that of the University in many ways, community integration remains a challenge, especially for transient student populations. Partnerships with the Walking Artists Network and The Line public art project in East London will support routes for the project to develop. The researcher will work closely with Clare Qualmann and Anna Minton whose combined expertise covers creative walking, the interface between architecture, democracy and the city, foregrounding the connections between people, place and politics.

Industry Partner: The Walking Artists Network, The Line

Research Context:

The University of East London (UEL) is spread out over three campuses in the London Borough of Newham. Each campus offers different experiences of the borough and its relationship to greater London. Newham is incredibly diverse and densely populated—in 2021 it was among the top 3% densest areas in England and its population is rising at a higher-than-average rate.¹ In many ways its population mirrors the student population of UEL; this does not, however, always translate to integration with the community. Through the use of walking, and particularly creative walking practices, the project will explore the built environment of Newham and the campuses of the University of East London in relation to community connections and well-being for student, staff and local populations.

Working closely with Clare Qualmann (Associate Professor in Contemporary Performance), the researcher will be expected to develop a methodology for walking and community engagement, within the specific context of Newham and the campuses contained within it, in relation to questions around space and place. For example, how might walking engage transient student populations, often from international community diasporas, to respond to and engage with the specific community of Newham in which they are living and learning? Other students commute in from their home communities, creating a different engagement with the university and with Newham. How can these different students' needs for community engagement with the areas in which they are studying be addressed through creative walking methodologies? How might community neighbours connect with the life of the University and local public spaces?

The project will build on the underpinning research for *The Walkbook: Recipes for walking & wellbeing* (2022), which was created as part of the AHRC funded research project WalkCreate and provides artistic responses to barriers to walking. The research could be approached from a variety of perspectives, for example,

- walking and nature connection,
- walking and community,
- walking and disability,
- walking and older people,
- walking and young people,
- walking and mental health,

The proposal should outline a clear link between east London, the researcher and the proposed research approach. Additionally, it should show a strong engagement with the neighbourhoods' diverse communities. While the research methodology does not need to be developed for the proposal, it should indicate how it will be developed in relation to the researcher's already existing research or practice. Essential to the project will be including the generation and tracking of Impact as part of the developed methodology.

¹ Office for National Statistics. (2023, January 19). *How life has changed in newham: Census 2021*. How life has changed in Newham: Census 2021. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E09000025>

How can the reach and significance of this work be demonstrated in a way that shows the change it has contributed to the world?

Supervisory team:

Clare Qualmann (Associate Professor in Contemporary Performance)

Dr Anna Minton (Reader in Architecture)

Keywords

Walking, community engagement, connection to place, growth of place love, environmental/ecological awareness of place, countering isolation, urban environments.

Research Methods and Timeline

Year 1

- Desk-based research:
 - survey/review literature on creative walking methods
 - survey/review of how the Walkbook is being used, disseminated, etc.
 - survey/review of Newham based literature.
- Development of methodological framework and initial fieldwork
- Ethics process and review

Year 2

- Continued fieldwork: gathering and analysing data on current impact-evaluation practices, e.g., walks, workshops, interviews, focus groups, ethnographic observations;
- Continued desk-based research, analysis of comparable creative walking practices for wellbeing;
- Devising, implementing and evaluating new models using an iterative process of test pilots.

Year 3/4

- Write up, including the potential development of 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., Clare Qualmann)

Indicative bibliography:

Cadogan, G. (2016), *Walking While Black*, Lit Hub, online

Heddon, D. and Turner, C (2012) 'Walking Women: Shifting the Tales and Scales of Mobility', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 22(2), pp. 224-236.

Minton, A. (2012). *Ground control: Fear and happiness in the twenty-first-century city*. London: Penguin Books.

Minton, A. (2017) *Big capital: Who is London for?* London: Penguin Books

Morris, B. (2020) *Walking Networks: The Development of an Artistic Medium*, London: Rowman and Littlefield International.

Myers, M (2011) 'Walking again lively: towards an ambulant and conversive methodology of performance and research', in *Mobilities Journal*, 6,(2), pp 183-201.

Qualmann, C., D. Heddon, C. Hind et al. (2022) *The Walkbook: Recipes for Walking & Wellbeing*. Glasgow: Walking Publics/Walking Arts.
<https://walkcreate.gla.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/THE-WALKBOOK.pdf>

Qualmann, C. and C. Hind (2021) 'She Walked', in *A New Poetics of Space: Literary Walks in Times of Pandemics and Climate Crisis*. eds. L. Jeffery and V. Angelaki, London: Bloomsbury.

Rose, M. (2020). 'Pedestrian Practices: Walking from the Mundane' to the Marvelous. In *Mundane Methods Innovative ways to research the everyday*. Manchester University Press.

Springgay S. and Truman S. (2018), *Walking Methodologies in a More-than-human World*, London: Routledge

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 in 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.