



Queen Margaret University  
EDINBURGH



University  
of Glasgow



## Funded Applied Research Collaborative Studentship (ARCS)

[Queen Margaret University](#), Edinburgh and the [University of Glasgow](#) invite candidates to submit for an Applied Research Collaborative Studentship (ARCS) in partnership with [The Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humanities](#) and [Alchemy Film & Arts](#).

**Award:** A fully-funded\* PhD studentship, along with a stipend of approx. £15,000 per annum at UKRI rate (specific rate TBC). \*Fees are at Home/EU rates. Interested international students should contact the supervisor listed below to discuss their eligibility.

**Start Date:** Sept 2020 (Note: this date can be negotiated, but must be within this academic year)

**Title:** The Challenges of Professionalisation: The Case of Alchemy Film & Arts

**Context:** This study will examine a rural arts organisation during a key period of development and transformation. The successful candidate will have exceptional access to the partner organisation, Alchemy Film & Arts, which over the past four years has undergone a period of significant growth, curating the Scotland + Venice exhibition at the 2017 Venice Biennale and gaining Creative Scotland Regular Funded Organisation (RFO) status in 2018, which has allowed it to develop a longer-term vision and a more integrated year-round programme to complement its annual film festival. Now, Alchemy commissions and curates experimental film at the highest international levels and also works with local partners to deliver adventurous community filmmaking programmes in the Borders throughout the year. In order to satisfy multiple funders and stakeholders, attract wider audiences and ensure it has continued relevance in a precarious economic landscape, while keeping its artistic mission central, Alchemy Film & Arts needs to negotiate the challenges and opportunities of professionalisation with care.

The successful candidate can expect to draw on theories of cultural management, place-making and community engagement in order to explore how an arts organisation operates within insecure contexts. The impact of the project should be twofold. It should offer Alchemy the chance for organisational reflection, enabling them to critically challenge their current position, in order to re-imagine how they are currently operating and develop new structures of cultural management that will better support the organisation. The study should also make an original contribution to our wider academic knowledge about precarious arts organisations, how they are situated within rural contexts and policy landscapes, the particular pressures they face, and the ways this can best be managed for the benefit of the organisation, and the local community and its cultural life. In addition, the project is expected to provide insight to policy makers and bodies, specifically Creative Scotland, who have themselves in their April 2019 Sector Review document identified a need to find better ways of supporting rural arts organisations (2019). Methodologically, the supervisory team welcome, and can support, traditional social-sciences and humanities research (including, but not limited to, Document Analysis, Interviews, Surveys, Focus Groups, Case Studies and Ethnography) as well as Practice led/based and/or Creative Practice approaches, depending on student's project and interest.

Those eligible are invited to submit a short proposal (1000 words max) detailing their background, initial research design as well as any specific skills and perspectives they can bring to the project. Applications should be submitted via the [QMU Admissions Portal](#) (click [here](#))

**Please submit this proposal by 4pm June 26th, 2020. Shortlist Candidates will be notified by July 10<sup>th</sup> 2020, and interviews will take place (online) on Jul 17<sup>th</sup> 2020.**

Potential Candidates should ensure they hold the requisite qualifications before applying, which include a Postgraduate Masters in a relevant subject (or relevant professional experience) and 2.1 minimum at Undergraduate. When making an application, please ensure to include an academic reference. All transcripts should be in English, or accompanied by official translations.

Please see [this webpage](#) for further information or contact the lead supervisor Dr Anthony Schrag ([aschrag@qmu.ac.uk](mailto:aschrag@qmu.ac.uk)) if you have any questions.

## Further Information:

**ARCS Studentships:** ARCS provide opportunities for doctoral students to gain first hand professional experience outside the university environment. The support provided by having both HEI and non-HEI supervisors enhances the employment-related skills and training a research student gains during the course of their award. The Applied Research Collaborative Studentships (ARCS) funds doctoral research projects that are developed in collaboration with external organisations across creative, heritage, third and business sectors in Scotland. The student will therefore work closely with the industry partner - Alchemy Film & Arts in Hawick - and be based the Centre for Communication, Cultural and Media Studies at Queen Margaret University and affiliated with the Centre for Cultural Policy Research at Glasgow University. Support, training and development opportunities will be offered by both the HEIs as well as the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities.

## Supervisors & Partners:

**Dr. Anthony Schrag** (*Senior Lecturer in Arts Management and Cultural Policy - Media, Communications and Performing Art, Queen Margaret University*): Dr Schrag is the Programme Leader of the MA Arts Festivals and Cultural Management and Co-programme leader of the MA Applied Arts and Social Practice. He is a practising artist and researcher who has worked nationally and internationally, including residencies in Iceland, USA, Canada, Pakistan, Finland, The Netherlands and South Africa, among others. He works in a participatory manner, and central to his practice is a discussion about the place of art in a social context. His general research overview explores art within a social realm, and examines how 'art' and 'culture' is supported in wider institutional frameworks. He is specifically interested in exploring the relationship between artists, institutions and the public, looking at the productive nature of 'conflict'. Other research interests include the history of participatory practices (Socially Engaged Art/Community Art/Dialogic practices, etc) as well as how this type of practice is 'professionalised'. His current research has includes the development of the Rural Art Network (Scotland) supported by Creative Scotland and 12 rural art organisations within the UK.

**Dr. Melanie Selfe** (*Lecturer in Cultural Policy – Centre for Cultural Policy Research, University of Glasgow*): Dr Selfe is the Programme Leader of the Centre's MSc in Creative Industries and Cultural Policy. Her research centres on the organisations, infrastructure, policies and information networks that enable access to and participation within the cultural and creative sphere. Key areas of interest include geographic variations in creative sector policy and practice; film policy and art cinema history, with a particular focus on specialist film exhibition; and the role of amateur and professional status in the production, consumption and criticism of the arts. She conducts research on both historical and contemporary topics and has expertise in archival work, reception analysis, audience research and organisational ethnography. She has previously been Co-Investigator on an AHRC supported study examining another Creative Scotland funded RFO – Cultural Enterprise Office.

**Alchemy Film & Arts:** Alchemy Film & Arts is a cultural organisation invested in film as a means of generating discussion, strengthening community, and stimulating creative thought. It brings the highest quality experimental film to Hawick and the Scottish Borders, celebrating artistic excellence through a diverse range of year-round events – including exhibitions, commissions, workshops, residencies and an internationally renowned annual film festival. Founded in 2010 by Dr Richard Ashrowan, Alchemy has grown to be an enduring fixture in the Hawick landscape. It is one of 121 organisations to receive regular funding from Creative Scotland and the only organisation to receive such funding in the Borders. In summer 2019, the organisation launched Film Town – a community filmmaking initiative working with local partners to deliver training and development in the form of workshops, screenings, and an open-access common room. It currently employs two full-time staff (which significantly expands during the film festival) and has the capacity to support a PhD researcher, both within the town and organisation in general, but also to provide space within their offices.