



Encounters 2025: Knowledge Futures in the Age of AI

*The IAS/SCCI Quirk Creative Fellowship programme**

Overview

ARIEL, UCL's Centre for Creative Practice Research, is seeking to appoint four Creative Fellows to work with us in 2025. ARIEL (Artistic Research for Inspiration, Experimentation and Learning), is a new research centre, based jointly at the Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS) at UCL's Bloomsbury campus and the School for the Creative and Cultural Industries (SCCI) at UCL East. ARIEL is a forum for dynamic new interactions at the intersections of creative practice and academic research: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/institute-of-advanced-studies/ariel-ucls-centre-creative-practice-research>

*The **Quirk Creative Fellowship** programme is funded by UCL Faculty of Arts and Humanities from the generous bequest of Professor the Lord Charles Randolph Quirk, 1920-2017, linguist and life peer, who began his academic career as a lecturer at UCL and was Professor here from 1960 to 1981. Professor Quirk was renowned for his pioneering *Survey of English Usage*, which resulted in a series of publications that became standard works of reference on the English language. We trust that he would have approved of the Creative Fellowship programme's focus on diversity of practice and on communication between different communities, which echo his own approach to linguistic analysis.

The **Encounters** programme, which has been running since 2019, offers creative practitioners the opportunity to explore new directions in their own practice in partnership with UCL academics. This year - besides an open-ended exploration of the relationship between creative practice and research - these grants invite practitioners to work with UCL academics on the theme of **Knowledge Futures in the Age of AI**.

Knowledge Futures in the Age of AI

While the immediate concerns of educationalists about AI have focused on the consequences of LLMs for student assessment, the rapid development of increasingly capable tools for data processing and generation raises deep philosophical and political questions about how we conceptualise human knowledge and intelligence. What is the future for human thinking or human craft as AI plays ever greater roles in our everyday lives? At present educators can point to skills of critical reflection, creative imagination and intellectual empathy as distinctive to human approaches to learning, but are these attributes likely to continue being identified as uniquely human capacities? Indeed, were they ever so? We would be especially interested in creative practice projects exploring alternative conceptions of intelligence before twenty-first

century AI. Furthermore, in past, present and future worlds, there are crucial questions of verifiability, truth and trust, which take us to the politics and geo-politics of knowledge. As philosopher John Tasioulas has pointed out, 'the development of AI is not a matter of destiny, but instead involves successive waves of highly consequential human choices'. The arts and humanities, he argues, are best placed to explore these questions of who makes such decisions and how it is decided who makes them. It is often overlooked that one-third of the world's population still lacks access to the internet, which means, among other things, that their preferences are excluded from the data harvested to inform the algorithms for generating future data. What are the desirable values, processes and political practices to shape human learning in the age of machine learning? How can we reconceptualise human knowledge to maximise the benefits of AI and minimise the risks? What can creative practice bring to new imaginaries of knowledge and craft for inclusive worldmaking?

The *Encounters* programme

The Encounters programme aims to unpack creativity and the creative method, and to explore how creative practice operates as a form of knowing, exploring or discovering as well as doing, seeking to recognise the value of creative practice as knowledge creation and knowledge disruption. For our Fellowships, we are looking for creative practitioners who are excited about exploring, through their own creative practice, one or more of the following questions:

- What is the value of creative practices as forms of knowing, exploring or discovering, and how do these forms relate to more conventional modes of research?
- How might creative or artistic practices be used to transform or amplify more conventional modes of research in the humanities or social sciences?
- How can academic research learn to speak more clearly to the needs of creative practitioners and to the creative and cultural industries?
- How can creative practice map the future? How can it help map the future of research both at UCL and more widely?

The programme is broadly focused on the fields of performance, creative writing, visual arts or media. We are particularly interested in working with practitioners who may not have any prior experience of working with a university, and we are committed to providing support to help the Fellows to navigate our university 'walls' and engage meaningfully with our communities.

Creative Fellowships 2025

Four Fellowships are available for 2025, running from March to the end of the UCL financial year on 31 July 2025. The exact dates will be agreed at appointment stage. One of the Fellowships will be linked to **Music Futures**, which is a UCL-wide cross-disciplinary network exploring the potential of music as a research method. Music Futures is co-ordinated jointly by the IAS and the European Institute, with support from UCL Grand Challenges: please see our website: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/institute-of-advanced-studies/music-futures>.

One of the Fellowships will be linked to **Art Futures**, which brings together UCL academics and the creative industries to create new partnerships, business opportunities, and research. Co-founded by the Slade School of Fine Art, UCL Innovation & Enterprise and UCL Faculty of Laws, it creates a unique space for interdisciplinary research, production and design. Please see:

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/art-futures/>.

The other two Fellowships will be open to applicants wishing to work either with members of ARIEL or with members of other UCL research centres or networks based at the IAS or at SCCI. For information on the range of possibilities, see: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/institute-of-advanced-studies/research/research-centres-and-networks> and <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/creative-cultural-industries/>.

All four of the appointed Fellows will be asked to respond creatively to the theme of Knowledge Futures in the Age of AI and then to plan and deliver at least two events aimed at staff or students at UCL, and, as appropriate, a wider public. These could be seminars, creative workshops, performance events or any other medium that allows people to collaborate in exploring creativity. How you respond to the ideas you encounter at UCL is up to you; we will not expect you to follow any prescribed format; we are keen for you to experiment, as long as some of our community of researchers and students can be involved in the process. Fellows will also be expected to help imagine future directions for ARIEL.

Summary of Fellowship conditions

There will be four Fellowships of £5,000 each, which require Fellows:

- To engage actively with UCL academic life, linking up with academic staff or students to explore, through their own creative approaches and practice, the relationship of creative practice to the humanities
- To respond creatively to their experiences of meeting and sharing ideas with academics and students at UCL
- To plan and deliver at least two events for the ARIEL programme that engage different groups at UCL in an exploration of creative method(s) and the questions posed by the Fellowship, one of which should also be aimed at a broader public
- To contribute to strategic thinking about ARIEL's work
- To prepare a short report (1,000-1,500 words) on the work done during their Fellowship

The grants will be paid in two instalments – the first soon after the beginning of the Fellowship on agreement of an outline plan of work; the second halfway through the Fellowship. Fellowships will run from March/April to the end of July 2025.

What you will bring to the Fellowship

- Creative curiosity about research and creative practice: how these two processes operate and influence one another within a university context, and what value the creative arts and humanities bring to wider society
- Openness to working with academic researchers, educators or students to explore the relationships between research, learning and creative practice

- Willingness to plan and then lead some events that explore themes of creative practice and creative methodologies
- Willingness to share insights into your creative practice and insights into how UCL can better integrate creative practice and research through our vision for ARIEL and how its research can contribute meaningfully to the work of creative practitioners and the creative and cultural industries.

What UCL will bring

- Support for you to meet and develop creative collaborations with academics who are interested in creative practice from across the Faculty of Arts and Humanities
- Membership of the Institute of Advanced Studies community, including access to all IAS events, especially the ARIEL programme
- Access to UCL library and archival collections and museums for the duration of the Fellowship
- Access to facilities at SCCI in UCL East (1 Pool Street, Olympic Park)

Making an Application

If you are interested in this opportunity, please apply as follows:

1. Complete the expression of interest form with basic information about you and the nature/mode of your creative practice (e.g. poetry, visual art, performance, etc.)
2. Respond to the open questions on the form. You can either offer written responses or send us a video/audio recording (max. 7 minutes). These questions ask:
 - a. What the term 'Creative Humanities' means to you, and why the inclusion of creative practice in research is important
 - b. Why you are interested in working collaboratively with researchers and students at UCL. Please specify if you have identified particular research centres and/or researchers relevant to your practice
 - c. Any experience you have of making connections with non-practitioners and talking with them about the creative process
 - d. What you hope to get out of the Fellowship
 - e. A couple of ideas for creative and engaging 'encounters' with members of the UCL community
 - f. What you imagine ARIEL could do to engage creative practitioners and to develop its work

Deadline: Midnight on Sunday 16 February 2025

Contact for enquiries/expressions of interest: Catherine Stokes, IAS Administrator and Executive Assistant to the Director: c.stokes@ucl.ac.uk

Further information for applicants

Creative Arts and Humanities at UCL

UCL has a long history of practice-led research within the humanities, from artistic practice as a form of research in the Slade School of Fine Art, to practice-led PhD programmes across a number of disciplines.

The Faculty of Arts and Humanities is committed to strengthening the role of creative practice within research and teaching, fostering greater dialogue between humanities researchers and creative practitioners; and foregrounding the value of creative practice as research.

The Faculty has also developed an undergraduate degree programme in the Creative Arts and Humanities that launched in Autumn 2023 as part of the School for the Creative and Cultural Industries at UCL East. This degree allows students to draw upon the richness of the humanities disciplines at UCL to engage with both critical and creative practices as well as active engagement with the creative industries:

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/undergraduate/degrees/creative-arts-and-humanities-ba>.

Institute of Advanced Studies

UCL's Institute of Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences (IAS) was founded in 2015 as a research-based community of scholars from diverse fields committed to working across conventional disciplinary and organisational boundaries. As one of our Creative Fellows you would join this community and be encouraged to engage with researchers and research students to explore shared areas of interest, for example at our weekly Residential Seminar, at which our staff and visiting scholars present their work in an informal cross-disciplinary discussion. We also run an extensive and varied programme of events, in which you would be encouraged to participate.

The IAS is also home to several specialist [research centres](#) and research themes, which change annually. This year's theme is 'Languages of the Future', building on last year's 'Languages of the Anthropocene' and the previous year's 'Indigenous Ecologies and Environmental Crisis'. We also work closely with departments across the Faculties of Social and Historical Sciences, Arts and Humanities, the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, the Institute of Education and the Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment. As the home to ARIEL, the IAS will act as the base for the Creative Fellows, who will also have access to facilities and events at SCCI to help extend the opportunities for cross-disciplinary dialogue that the Fellowships provide.

The School for the Creative and Cultural Industries at UCL East

The School for the Creative and Cultural Industries at UCL's campus in East London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park draws together research, learning, public engagement and enterprise focused on art and technology, media, history, heritage and cultural production.

The School for Creative and Cultural Industries supports and develops the next generation of practitioners to work across the cultural and creative sectors, and more widely for careers where creativity and critical thinking are valued. Its spaces are creative and collaborative gathering places for students, academics, professionals and activists with a common passion for shared exploration, a belief in the power of creative practice and the importance of role of heritage and public history in creating new futures. We work with community partners, creative practitioners and organisations across the creative and cultural sector in East London and beyond.

ARIEL: UCL's Centre for Creative Practice Research

Purpose: A forum for intellectual exploration and exchange between academics of all disciplines and the creative and cultural industries.

Artistic
Research for
Inspiration
Experimentation
Learning

Three aims:

1) To provide a dedicated intellectual and physical space for UCL academics from any discipline to work with creative practitioners on specific research projects

ARIEL is working to create optimum conditions for such partnerships by: i) harvesting and showcasing the work that has been done over many years, but which has often been small-scale and one-off, so that the learning does not outlive the specific project; ii) offering facilities for exchange of ideas, dissemination of best practice and networking; iii) supporting multi-disciplinary collaborations among academic and creative partners; and iv) providing training for academics, especially at early-career stage, in working with creative practitioners, including media training.

This first aim responds to the fact that a lot of work has been done at UCL, especially in the Slade School of Fine Art, the Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment, Science and Technology Studies, the Institute of Education and by individual academics in a wide range of disciplines who have worked with creative artists, writers or musicians, but to date there has been no institutional means of expanding and developing small projects, disseminating best practice or of helping people to develop skills in this area of work. ARIEL's co-ordinating role will enable all academics interested in this field to find new opportunities for their work and to build a legacy for it.

2) To connect people in the creative and cultural industries with cutting-edge academic research to inform and fertilise their creative work

There is currently a convergence of public demand for high quality intellectual content in the arts and the media alongside cutbacks in research departments at leading institutions, such as the BBC and national museums and galleries. Serious artists of all kinds undertake their own research, but it is often hard for them, especially freelancers, to access the research that is done in universities or, perhaps even more importantly, to enjoy conversations with academic researchers.

ARIEL is working to establish itself as the first port of call for, e.g., a playwright interested in the latest developments in space science, or an opera director staging *Fidelio* who wants to learn about the latest thinking on prison reform, or a TV producer who wants to go beyond an authenticity check on language or costume to research the deep history of racism for their latest historical drama. Through specialist mediators who understand both the arts and universities, ARIEL will put people in touch, help them to access university libraries and collections, and design bespoke workshops for their project. Through this work, ARIEL will harness the research power of London's leading multi-disciplinary university to enhance the creative process and

contribute to higher quality cultural experiences for the public. In time, this strand of ARIEL's work could develop into a consultancy that could support its other work.

3) To stimulate scrutiny of the creative-critical divide and to support collaborative research to develop new thinking about methods, outputs and pedagogies

This third aim responds to the desirability of better co-ordination of the wide range of work already going on at UCL in this area, such as the PhD in creative-critical writing, or the site-writing pioneered by Jane Rendell. UCL ARIEL will also provide a research context and an intellectual home for staff and students on the new teaching programmes in creative and applied humanities at the UCL East-based School of Creative and Cultural Industries. More broadly, it responds to contemporary imperatives to generate new ways of knowing, thinking and communicating for the post-pandemic world.

Guiding principles of UCL ARIEL are:

- excellence in both creative and academic work
- diversity, both local and global, as the pre-requisite for high quality work
- commitment to bridging divides
- sustainability in all senses

Location: ARIEL is a virtual space, at least initially, strongly enhanced by the physical spaces of the Common Ground of the Institute of Advanced Studies at the Bloomsbury campus and the facilities at UCL East, 1 Pool Street. We can also make maximum use of other UCL facilities, such as the Bloomsbury Theatre, exhibition spaces and so on.

This co-location of ARIEL offers a uniquely advantageous combination of the IAS's outstanding track record in cross-disciplinary research with pioneering initiatives in creative and applied humanities and community engagement at UCL East. It will thus help to ensure strong and constructive interaction in the wide field of culture between UCL Bloomsbury and UCL East.