

Policy Recommendations from the Liminal Zone Project

Arts teachers are facing a crisis of imbalance between their teaching commitments and creative practice. This is a key finding of a research project called 'The Liminal Zone', funded by the Carnegie Trust for Scottish Universities, and led by Dr Mandy Haggith and Rosie Newman at UHI Inverness. This action research project explored the seashore as a metaphor for the edge between arts teaching and creative practice, through a mix of quantitative, qualitative and creative methods. The findings of the project are in a briefing note and full report [here](#) and a link to more about the resulting art and artists is [here](#).

A key outcome was a summary of current best practice expressed as a model policy for how colleges and universities can support their creative arts staff. Each of the measures here is existing practice in at least one Scottish college or university. We hope that we can adopt this policy and work towards implementing all of these recommendations and even going beyond them to ensure an excellent creative teaching and research environment.

University/College Policy on Creative Arts

Recognising that many creative arts staff are hired and valued because of both their teaching skills and their creative practice, [this organisation] aims to nurture staff's creative practice so that it can continue to add benefit to the student experience, contribute to research outputs, maintain relevance to sectorial developments and aid in well-being.

This is underpinned by the following value statements:

1. We value the multiple benefits that creative practice brings to teaching, as research, on institutional reputation and on staff well-being.
2. Our managers recognise that their creative arts staff are creative practitioners and support that creative practice.
3. Creative arts methods need not only be limited to arts subjects and the use of creative arts methodologies and practices in sciences, social sciences, medicine and other disciplines is encouraged along with interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary collaborations.
4. We recognise creative practice as research, contributing to knowledge and a positive research environment and producing outputs, impact and public engagement that can be entered into the Research Excellence Framework.
5. We encourage creative staff to link their creative practice with their teaching.

For this to be effective, [this organisation] will provide mechanisms to support a good balance between teaching, administration and creative practice by adopting the following measures:

1. Creative staff contract time should be 0.4 full time equivalent (FTE) for teaching, 0.4 FTE for creative practice research and 0.2 FTE for administration (and pro-rata for part time staff). At least one day per week (0.2 FTE) for creative practice is essential.
2. Time off in lieu (TOIL) is guaranteed for when teaching duties go beyond contracted hours.
3. Sabbaticals are available to provide concerted time to spend on creative activity. Good practice is one sabbatical every six semesters.
4. Arrangements can be made for 'soft time', 'porous or fluid time' where creative activity can flow into teaching practice and collaborations can emerge. Use of unconventional spaces, including outdoors, are encouraged, and activities involving motion or exercise, such as walking, cycling or swimming meetings.
5. We will support staff by making financial and in-kind resources available for creative work, including studio space, exhibitions, publications, online showcases *etc.*
6. We will enhance student experience through active engagement with the creative practice of arts staff.