

Researcher-Led Initiative Fund End of Year Report

Organised by [REDACTED] (MAH Doctoral Students)
4th August 2022

Introduction

This initiative supported a series of monthly events taking place between October 2021 and June 2022 specifically catered to doctoral students in Media, Arts and Humanities Schools, but open to all doctoral students across the university. These events were entitled “PhD Creative Outlets” and combined a socialising and networking opportunity alongside learning and taking part in a creative activity. Organisers have run something similar in previous academic years and have since opened this up to the entire doctoral community at the University of Sussex. While overworking is often seen as the norm within university structures, this initiative seeks to allow for times of reflection, solidarity and relaxation amidst a research and academic culture that thrives on competition and overworking.

Events

Here, the aims of these events lie on three key aspects in its development. Firstly, these events aim to provide a space for PhD researchers to relax and engage in creative outlets to move away from the mentally straining work of writing a thesis to more creative processes within various different artistic practices. Secondly, it allows for a socialising space to bring together researchers on a regular basis without having to speak about PhD related work, which celebrates the end of the working day and allows for a breather. Thirdly, the initiative aims to create a space for researchers to share and reflect on common problems and obstacles in the life of a PhD researcher that are not necessarily related to their thesis topic. The creative activities included arts and crafts sessions such as: origami, collaging, drawing, knitting, candle making, walks, acrylic painting, clay-making, weaving, embroidery, and printmaking (see posters below). These involved co-creation and input from PhD researchers who were invited to facilitate each session and teach other researchers a particular crafty skill. Facilitators were sought through email calls with great interest from researchers to share their crafty ventures and skills.

Outcome

The events were well publicised through the Hive, the Doctoral Newsletter, on social media and via email. They were generally well attended with the candle-making and acrylic painting events attracting a higher number of people (20-30 people), likely due to a combination of the timing (both sessions were at the end of term) and the materials on offer. There was a certain level of consistency with many returning to most sessions. At the same time, as the sessions were ‘one-offs’, consistency wasn’t a requirement, and many doctoral researchers came to sessions later in the term regardless of prior engagement. The facilitation structure was particularly invigorating with participants learning something new from another researcher and leaving with something they could develop outside of the session. Many expressed interest in attending future sessions.

Finance

We spent £342.55 over the Autumn term and £300.80 over the Spring and Summer term (see below figures) on various craft supplies, food and drink (see specific outline below). The room booking and facilitation fees for researchers was arranged separately by the Doctoral School. £101.81 was spent on supplies for the coming academic year in which events will be arranged informally by [REDACTED] through the Doctoral School.

Total spent: £745.16

Remaining amount: £4.84

Acknowledgements

We want to send a special thank you to all those who facilitated events for Creative Outlets:

[REDACTED]

Creative Outlets Autumn 2021

Craft and Chat Sessions for the PhD
Community at the University of Sussex

7 October **Origami**

21 October **Basic Drawing Skills**

4 November **Knitting**

18 November **Mixed Collage**

2 December **Candle Making**

All sessions are from 4 -6pm in the
Meeting House

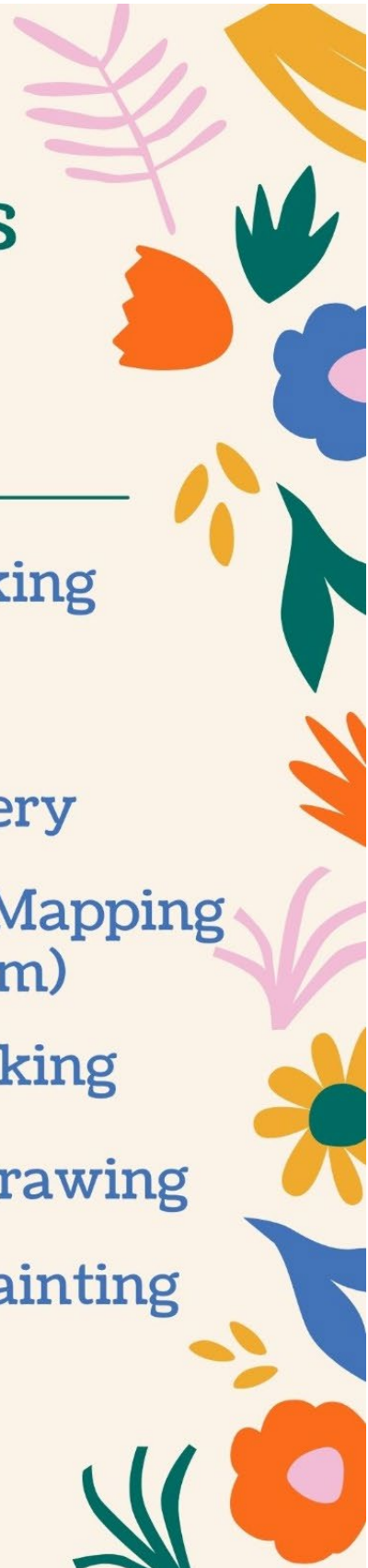


Creative Outlets Spring 2022

Craft and Chat Sessions for the PhD
Community at the University of Sussex!

10 February	Clay-making
24 February	Weaving
10 March	Embroidery
24 March	Creative Mapping (from 5pm)
28 April	Print-making
12 May	Animal Drawing
26 May	Acrylic painting

All sessions are from 4 -6pm in the
Meeting House



Autumn term spending

To be completed by claimant			To be completed by School/Division	
Date of transaction	Please give a full description of your expense and state how this relates to official University business	Amount	Account code	Subproject code
05/10/21	Drinks and snacks	27.01		
05/10/21	Pencils and erasers for drawing workshop	11.97		
20/10/21	Knitting supplies	47.25		
26/11/21	Wrapping paper	7.99		
26/11/21	Candlemaking	49.15		
26/11/21	Candlemaking	6.30		
26/11/21	Candlemaking	10.27		
28/01/22	Clay, yarn, acrylics, fabric, thread, sewing needles	169.70		
28/01/22	Slow-dri acrylic fluid	12.91		
Total		342.55		

Spring and Summer Term spending

To be completed by claimant			
Date of transaction	Please give a full description of your expense and state how this relates to official University business	Amount	
24/11/21	Frames for cross stitch	12.00	
17/02/22	Weaving looms	21.03	
28/04/22	Card and tracing paper	7.00	
05/05/22	Food and drink	43.18	
12/05/22	Charcoal pencils etc	23.40	
12/05/22	Pizza	132.8	
30/05/22	Fabric and thread for cross stitch	58.64	
07/06/22	Cake	2.75	
Total		300.80	

