JOB DESCRIPTION

Post: Research Assistant (Community Engagement)

School: School of Design

FTE: 0.2 (1 day a week)

Grade: 6

Term: Fixed-term for 8 months

Responsible to: Senior Tutor (Research) (Principal Investigator)

Background

The Royal College of Art is the UK's only entirely postgraduate institution of art and design, dedicated to teaching, research and knowledge exchange with industry. The RCA has been ranked the number one university-level institution for art & design, internationally, for the eighth consecutive year according to the QS World University Rankings by Subject, 2021.

The College currently has some 2,700 students registered for Graduate Diploma, MA, MRes, MPhil and PhD degrees, and this is set to rise to 3,000 in coming years. The majority of postgraduate teaching and research supervision is delivered by the RCA's four Schools: Architecture, Arts & Humanities; Communication; Design, with each School led by a Dean of international standing and a recognised leader in their field.

In addition, the RCA has a number of established and planned research centres: the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design; the Material Science Research Centre (which includes the Burberry Materials Futures Research Group); the Intelligent Mobility Design Centre, the HELIX Centre, and future centres in Computer Science and in Drawing. The School is also home to one of the UK's most successful university incubators, InnovationRCA.

Our People

The RCA's Royal Visitor (Patron) is HRH Prince of Wales; its Chancellor is Sir Jony Ive, and the Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council is Sir Peter Bazalgette. The RCA's Vice-Chancellor - the CEO of the institution - is Dr Paul Thompson. The RCA has more than 500 permanent staff, including internationally renowned artists, designers, architects, theorists and curators. These staff, together with an innovative pedagogy, world-class technical facilities and research centres, all contribute to an exceptional environment and a remarkable record of graduate employment. Generations of eminent graduates have created far-reaching impact and influence, such as Barbara Hepworth, Bridget Riley, David Hockney, Sir Ridley Scott, Sir James Dyson OM, Asif Kapadia, Thomas Heatherwick, Chris Ofili, Tracey Emin, Jake & Dinos Chapman, Christopher Bailey, Idris Khan, Chantal Joffe, Sir David Adjaye, Erdem, Philip Treacey, Monster Chetwynd, Oscar Murillo and Lina Lapelyte.

Strategic Plan 2022–2027

The RCA is currently crafting a new strategic plan, involving all staff in a process that was concluded in March 2022, with the publication of a new Strategic Vision and Plan for the next five years and the appointment of our new Chair of Council, Sir Peter Bazalgette.

This plan will embrace the roll out of a new model of delivery for our taught postgraduate programmes; it will underscore our commitment to being the world's most research-intensive art & design university; and it will commit to a number of Equity and Diversity goals which will lead towards the RCA becoming an anti-racist institution.

The School of Design

The School of Design offers programmes that engage with a broad spectrum of design from the industry-focused, through collaboration with engineering and science, to the experimental and theoretical. With a strong culture of innovation, experimentation and debate, as well as research degrees at MPhil and PhD level, the School explores the boundaries of knowledge in the fields of industrial design, design engineering, product design, service design, critical design, systems and services, social innovation, new materials, globalisation and the discourse between international pedagogies and manufacturing.

Connecting Roots
Connecting Roots: Co-creating a Green Social Prescribing Network in Walsall for Health and Wellbeing is part of a £1.5 million Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) programme for levelling up health and wellbeing in the UK. Led by Dr Qian Sun, Reader in Service Design, Policy & Social Innovation at the RCA, Connecting Roots will work with communities to establish how design principles and nature can combine to support physical and mental health.

The project brings together a range of stakeholders, including Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSEs), local authorities, primary care, funding bodies and policymakers, to work collaboratively towards green social prescribing – a type of social prescribing that links people to nature-based solutions, such as community garden projects, for health and wellbeing.

Over the past two years, the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of time spent outdoors to people's health – as well as the inequality of access to green space in the UK. The goal of Connecting Roots is to create a more integrated care system which addresses these issues, informing and influencing system change. The project will also draw upon our expertise in design thinking, management and policy to explore how localised nature-based activities for health and wellbeing can be scaled up.

Connecting Roots is one of 12 research projects supported by the AHRC, in partnership with the National Centre for Creative Health, the Medical Research Council (MRC)

and Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). All 12 projects combine nature and creative approaches to tackle health disparities across the UK. Further information can be found on the [UK Research and Innovation website](#).

Purpose of the Post:

To support the Principal Investigator and public sector bodies to co-create and deliver the outcomes of the *Connecting Roots* project.

To facilitate close collaboration with local partners, the candidate is expected to be based at Walsall, Regular travel to the Royal College of Art, London is expected.

Main Duties and Responsibilities:

The role will be responsible for a Work Package (WP) to facilitate the co-creation of a green social prescribing network with local VCSEs in Walsall that improves the sector's collective impact and gives voice to those who have been less heard.

- To be the on-the ground voice connecting the project to the real-life communities in Walsall.
- To gather insights through interviews (formal and informal) of Walsall.
  To support or lead various in person (or virtual) workshops, sessions or events that ensure the designers activities are in line with the wants and needs of the community in Walsall.
- To work collaboratively with the design researcher (London based) to ensure the project core aims remain rooted and relevant to Walsall.
- To cultivate and maintain new and existing relationships with key stakeholders and collaborators in the Walsall area.
- Working with the project team, ensure that project outputs and project deliverables are properly documented and disseminated to key audiences, via reports, papers, exhibits, publications, the website etc.
- To undertake general administrative and other tasks as part of the project work, as required by the PI.
- To ensure all aspects of the work undertaken are compliant with health and safety rules.
- To respect the confidentiality of data stored electronically and by other means in line with the Data Protection Act.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Essential

- An honours degree (or equivalent) or equivalent experience in a communication role, community engagement setting or social, healthcare or policy role.
- Evidence of excellent communication, interpersonal and team-working skills, confidence in public speaking and excellent listening skills.

- Experience and confidence in liaising with local VCSEs and councils and other external organisations
- Demonstrable user engagement and workshop facilitation skills
- Experience working at a relevant level in a creative, open and collaborative way in the field of health, societal and political themes and topics related to the project, and confidence working with a variety of disciplines and stakeholders
- Understanding of ethical approaches (e.g. communication and engagement skills)
- Proven experience in working collaboratively within multidisciplinary teams, and the ability to work collaboratively across disciplines
- A self-starter, with the ability to work independently and as part of a team
- Ability to be an effective and collaborative member of a broader team working constructively with senior staff and supporting the work of students involved with the project
- A willingness to act under direction in a responsible and self-motivated way
- An innovative and flexible approach to work
- Excellent writing, communication and presentation skills, able to adopt an appropriate style for a range of specialist and non-specialist audiences
- Knowledge of social prescribing, systems and green healthcare
- Have excellent research skills to get to the root of the problems through user research, stakeholder analysis, system mapping and other forms of design research.
- Have excellent design skills to produce high quality outputs through the whole design process from concept development to implementation
- Flexibility and confidence to tackle a wide range of tasks, with an open, proactive, creative and problem-solving approach
- High level of digital literacy and IT skills, with the ability to produce quality digital outputs for the projects
- Experience of contributing to and reporting on projects
- Be aware of the risks in the work environment and the relevant Health & Safety issue

Desirable

- Knowledge of qualitative and quantitative research
- Experience of working on collaborative projects, preferably involving HE/industry collaborations in a relevant field.

Additional Information:
- This is an 8-month fixed term contract
- Normal hours total 7 hours per week, 09:30 – 17.30 with an hour for lunch
- Salary, working 1 day per week: £6,439.60 - £7,377.60 per annum inclusive of London Weighting Allowance
- 25 days annual leave per annum pro rata plus 6 days college close per annum, at the discretion of the college. Pro-rata for part-time employees.

- Location: Hybrid working which includes working from home & Walsall UK (partner organisation) with travels to the Royal College of Art, London (RCA campus) as required.

June 2022

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PAY & BENEFITS

Pension
The Royal College of Art is a member of the Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London (SAUL) which is a contributory defined benefit pension scheme. The college will contribute a sum equal to 19% of your salary while you pay 6%.

Holiday
30 days paid leave a year plus bank and public holidays normally observed in England and Wales. In addition, the college is normally closed for six days a year, one day either side of Easter and the remainder between Christmas and New Year. Part-time staff will be entitled to the pro rata equivalent.

Season ticket loans
Interest-free loans are available for staff to purchase annual season tickets.

Enhanced maternity and adoption pay
Qualifying employees are entitled to enhanced maternity/adoption pay: 26 weeks full pay, 13 weeks Statutory Maternity/Adoption Pay. This compares to the statutory provision of 90% of average pay for 6 weeks followed by Statutory Maternity/Adoption Pay for 33 weeks.

Enhanced paternity pay
Qualifying employees are entitled to two weeks' paternity leave entitlement at full pay. This compares to the statutory provision of two weeks' pay at the statutory rate.

Enhanced sick pay
Occupational sick pay after six months' service is three months full pay/three months half pay.

24/7 confidential support
Staff and family members in their household have access to a free, external confidential support service for work, financial, legal, family and personal problems 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Occupational health
Occupational Health support for the College is provided by Imperial College's occupational health service at their South Kensington Campus.

Cycle to Work Scheme
The Royal College of Art has signed up to the Cycle to Work Scheme – part of the government's Green Transport Initiative – which allows employees to make significant savings on purchasing new bikes and safety equipment.

Library
All staff are welcome to join the college library.

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Events

All staff are welcome to attend exhibitions, lectures and private views held by academic schools and programmes.

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