Undisciplined Spaces: ensuring research makes a difference in the real world

The Arts and Humanities are the key to unlocking nuanced explorations of who we are; how we exist; where we have travelled from and how we can move forward to tackle problems that affect us as people, as part of a group, as a society. *Undisciplined Spaces* has been running annually as a professional development opportunity since 2023 for PGR students from King's College London as part of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) awarded to the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. This year, King's faculty of Arts and Humanities is partnering with the Courtauld Institute of Art to extend the opportunity to their PGR students. The programme aims to embed and extend skills, opportunities, and experiences for dynamic, impactful, community-based engagement activities within the next generation of researchers. It will drive positive, meaningful social change rooted in research across local London communities.

Undisciplined Spaces provides a unique opportunity for Postgraduate Research (MPhil/PhD) students from the faculty of Arts and Humanities and the Courtauld to co-design and deliver with local community partners a meaningful and accessible engagement activity rooted in community priorities and based on research in the arts and humanities. The ethos of *Undisciplined Spaces* is to give researchers the tools to bridge the gap between universities and communities and to highlight the value community-based participatory research and co-production can bring both personally and professionally.

Participants work collaboratively in three teams to produce engagement activities, so gaining expertise on project design and delivery, and on research impact and knowledge exchange agendas. Each team is partnered with a London-based community organisation. Our partners are: Arts Network, Positively UK, and Release.

Benefits of involvement:

- Learn the skills to embed impact and knowledge exchange activities, and the tools to evaluate their effectiveness, into research to make it societally relevant.
- Make a positive difference by working with a local community to address issues important to them and enhance their capacity to create change.
- Expand your skills and mindset from a traditional PhD experience by: developing an innovative project creatively and unconventionally; working in an interdisciplinary team of postgraduate researchers; engaging with issues of cultural competency and sensitivity.
- Receive specialist training in community engagement and involvement alongside a suite of transferable methodological skills.
- Engage with, and learn from, different local communities.

- Develop foundational literacy in critical knowledge exchange and research impact, two aspects of UK and international academia that are important considerations for individual grant applications and institutional rankings (e.g. Research Excellence Framework, Knowledge Exchange Framework, Times Higher Education Impact Rankings).

What's involved:

Undisciplined Spaces will run from May to September 2026. Taught afternoon in-person seminars occur on May 6, May 13, May 20, June 10 and June 17. You must attend all sessions of the taught section of the programme. The activity with your community partner must occur anytime between June 18-September 30, 2026, and will be negotiated between the schedules of the members of the group and the community partner.

The taught section of the programme comprises a mixture of practical and theoretical training and are delivered by Chelsea Mac Donnchadha, who previously facilitated this programme at The Young Foundation and now facilitates it independently as a freelance practitioner. Chelsea is a facilitator, researcher, and community practitioner with extensive experience working with marginalised communities, particularly Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller people. Their work centres participatory approaches, lived experience and social justice, creating reflective and inclusive spaces for dialogue, learning, and collective action.

Three teams will be formed to work with our London-based community partners: Arts Network, Positively UK, and Release. These community partners may also assign additional speciality training or readings to further prepare participants to work with their members in a sensitive and responsible way. Following the taught aspect of the programme, teams will set about designing and delivering an activity in collaboration with their assigned community organisation that is directed by the priorities of the organisation.

The activity with your community partner must occur anytime between June 18-September 30, 2026 and will be negotiated between the schedules of the members of the group and the community partner. Teams will continue to be mentored through this stage by King's and Courtauld staff. We estimate that project delivery amounts to maximum 15 hours per person.

In early Autumn, teams will share their projects and experiences through a reflective practice workshop. Teams are expected to produce a short report such as the ones available here.

Find out more / To apply:

If you wish to find out more, please attend one of our information sessions. Please register for the events on Ticket Tailor.

- 12:00-13:00, 11 March online

- 16:00-17:00, 25 March in person reception with alumni of the programme

If you wish to apply to the programme, you can do so here**. Applications are due 12:00 Monday, 6th April 2026. See below for application questions.**

Applicants to previous iterations of *Undisciplined Spaces* need not reapply. If you have submitted your doctoral thesis for Viva you are not eligible to apply to *Undisciplined Spaces.*

An informal in-person conversation (15 minutes) will take place on 15 April to get to know you and to understand your motivations for applying.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr Emma Libonati, Senior Engagement Officer for the Faculty of Arts & Humanities: Emma.1.Libonati@kcl.ac.uk.

For your reference these are the questions on the Application.

Personal details:

First Name:

Surname:

Email:

Department:

Institution:

Research Interests or subject areas of interest:

What year of research are you in?

Please advise of any accessibility requirements you might have, so we can accommodate:
An informal conversation (no more than 15 minutes) is part of the application.
The conversation will cover the expectations of the programme and a few general questions. Conversations will be held on 15 April in-person**.**
If there is a reason why you cannot attend an in-person conversation on April 15, please detail here and we will try to find a solution.

Can you confirm that you are available to attend in-person the taught seminars in the afternoons of May 6, May 13, May 20, June 10 and June 17.

Questions for written response:

1. What are you hoping to learn, both personally and professionally, by taking part in this programme and by working with peers from different departments and with community partners? (250 words)

2. Please give an example of a time that you have worked in a team and the opportunities and challenges that you found in doing so. (250 words)

3. How might you display sensitivity when working with a marginalised or excluded community? (100 words)

4. Describe your research in terms understandable to a general audience. (100 words)