

# **Collaborating with Higher Education Institutions: Findings from NCACE Survey with Arts Professional**

**November 2021**

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## Abbreviations

ACE	Arts Council England
AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
HEI	Higher Education Institution(s)
KE	Knowledge Exchange
NCACE	National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange
TCCE	The Culture Capital Exchange



# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1 Introduction

Relations between the arts and culture sector and Higher Education are by no means a new phenomenon. Conversations, connections, collaborations and initiatives of many kinds take place between the two sectors. Activities that can broadly be defined as ‘knowledge exchange’ take many forms and manifestations and often evolve over long periods of time with relations between key actors deepening and evolving along the way. However, as many of us have long known, knowledge exchange and wider relations between the two sectors tends to remain somewhat under-narrated, particularly in terms of its benefits and impacts.

NCACE (National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange) was established in late 2020 to both champion and support knowledge exchange and wider collaborations between the arts and cultural sector and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and to better understand, evidence and showcase the social, cultural, environmental as well as the economic impacts of such activities.

Getting a complete picture of any set of relations in a short space of time can be a tricky task. However, getting a reasonable snapshot can be easier. It was with this goal in mind that NCACE approached Arts Professional in Spring 2021 to co-develop and promote a questionnaire to the arts and culture sector. We were doing so to hear directly from the sector about their experiences of working with Higher Education; from the nature of their collaborations and the roles they are undertaking to the benefits and challenges associated with such work.

The survey **Collaborating with Higher Education Institutions** was launched by Arts Professional on March 1st 2021 and it ran over a period of three weeks until March 21st 2021. It was also disseminated via NCACE/TCCE and other sectoral networks and received a total of 546 responses from individuals working within the arts and cultural sector. As far as we are aware, it constitutes one of the most substantial surveys of its kind, within England and possibly further afield. We have produced this report in order to share the key findings and to use it as a catalyst for further conversation and understanding.

The survey was designed to help us to gain both a broader and a deeper understanding of why and how practitioners and organisations from the arts and cultural sector become involved

with universities and the different modes of knowledge exchange in which they are engaged. The aim was to provide a space for the arts and cultural sector to share information and accounts of their first-hand experiences of collaborative activities with HEIs, with a particular focus on the nature of the collaborations and the values these brought to the organisation and/or their wider creative practice. In this summary we share brief insights with a deeper dive into the findings forming the remaining sections of the report.

## 1.2 Findings in brief

**Collaborations: the overall picture:** Almost three quarters of respondents (73.99%) to the survey had multiple previous experiences of collaborating with a HEI. These were in general positive with over 90% of respondents stating that they ‘definitely would’ (73.33%) or ‘probably would’ (18.89%) work together with HE in the future. Over 75% of respondents felt that either ‘a great deal’ (48.59%) or ‘a lot’ (20.34%) of knowledge exchange had occurred through the collaboration. Furthermore and most encouragingly, three quarters of respondents stated that they felt that the collaboration had left both partners with a strong sense of mutual benefit. Overall, the data would suggest that collaborations mostly have a positive impact for arts and culture sector partners, and their perception is that, in turn, this is also the case for their HEI partners.

**Arts and Culture Sector respondents:** The survey had responses from people working across a wide range of sub-sectors with the three most frequently reported being: Across Multiple Artforms (36.76%), Performance and Theatre (18.18%), and Visual Arts and Crafts (14.62%). Almost a quarter of respondents (24%) were artists or other sole cultural practitioners. Over 40% were from small organisations of 2 - 9 employees, whilst 20% were from larger organisations of up to 49 employees and 16% in the larger range of 50 - 249 employees. Of the respondents who were keen to stay in touch with us, over a fifth (21%) were Arts Council England NPOs (National Portfolio Organisations). Music and Theatre-based organisations formed the majority of those respondents (34% and 26% respectively) followed by the Visual Arts (16%).

**HEI types and locations:** Responses indicated that it was most likely for the arts and culture sector to collaborate with a Post-1992 institution (between 41-47% of responses), followed by a Russell Group institution (around 20% of responses). This was then closely tied between Small/Specialist HEIs (between 12-15% of responses) or ‘Other’ UK HEIs (around 15% of responses). A [tailored Google Map layer](https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/1/edit?mid=1EOlzXWXg_n2XOUXpkKQ_r8O879C1G) ([https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/1/edit?mid=1EOlzXWXg\\_n2XOUXpkKQ\\_r8O879C1G](https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/1/edit?mid=1EOlzXWXg_n2XOUXpkKQ_r8O879C1G))



[SXZ](#)) was created to show where the collaborations were located, with many institutions based in London or in other large cities. However, locations reported were relatively evenly distributed across the regions of the UK.

**Disciplines and departments:** Analysis was also undertaken on which academic disciplines/departments that the arts and cultural sector were associated with through their collaborations. Almost three-quarters (74.5%) of collaborations had taken place within an Arts & Humanities department. This was then followed by the Social Sciences (10.55%). Lesser reported departments/disciplines including Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (6.55%), Business, Management and Economics (4.72%), and other miscellaneous departments such as specific research centres or university-based cultural centres (3.63%).

**Nature and modes of collaborations:** We were particularly keen to find out more about the nature of the collaborations undertaken and we received almost 200 accounts of such work ranging from teaching and course development, to artists residencies to joint cultural programming all the way through to larger scale interventions, often with a place-based theme that might also involve actors beyond the university and the arts, e.g. local authorities. We detected a number of key types of collaboration with the top three including:

- **Research:** undertaking or commissioning research and/or producing research outputs alongside HEI staff
- **Teaching:** Teaching, running workshops, co-developing joint MAs, bringing in industrial experience and mentoring roles within the HEI
- **Placements/Hosting:** Provision of work experience placements and other such opportunities for undergraduate and post-graduate students, PHD students and Collaborative Doctoral candidates

The next three most often cited modes of collaboration included: Public and Community Engagement type initiatives; Creative collaborations focussed on joint arts and culture programming or commissioning, and Artist-in-residency or Company-in-residence type models.

**Collaborative roles:** The most reported role of an arts and culture practitioner/organisation within the collaboration was co-designing and/or producing a project alongside academic researchers (66.32%), followed by a practitioner/organisation teaching within a HEI context (54.4%). Others used collaborations to gain access to university resources and expertise

(46.11%), highlighting the value of knowledge and human resources. Interestingly, a significant number of respondents cited universities using the spaces and resources of the cultural practitioner/organisation (31.09%). And over a quarter of respondents said they had provided data for a HEI-led research project (28.5%). More specific examples are highlighted in Section 5.4.

**Common collaboration themes:** Of those who responded to this question (139), we were encouraged to find that there was a close correlation between the central themes of the collaborations and the broad NCACE themes with 64.75% of respondents citing Placemaking as a central theme within their collaborations and 62.59% citing Health and Wellbeing, 27.34% citing Technology for Social Good and 23.74% citing Environment and Climate Emergency.

**How the collaboration(s) developed:** In terms of how collaborations came about, the majority of respondents said that the cultural practitioner/organisation had approached the HEI (56.74%), closely followed by the HEI approaching the cultural practitioner/organisation (47.65%). Over a quarter (25.88%) also emphasised the role of networks they belong to within the wider collaborative ecology. Some respondents highlighted the importance of pre-existing connections in this process. The data, unsurprisingly, highlights the relational element of knowledge exchange partnerships with the centrality of the relationship between the various collaborative parties being consistently highlighted.

**How they were funded:** In terms of how collaborations were funded, of those who responded (162 in total) around half suggested that the HEI had provided the funding (50.62%) whilst over a third (37.04%) said that the collaboration was self-funded. Arts Councils were the third most cited (28.4%). Other funding bodies included; trusts/foundations (22.84%) research councils (e.g. AHRC) and local authorities (12.95%). The diversity of responses highlight again that there is a considerable diversity of approaches to funding collaborative projects.

**Costs and/or value of funding:** We had a relatively small number of responses (75 in total) to the question of the actual value of the funding with equally reported amounts of funding of £10,000 and £49,000 (20.55%) and larger projects of between £100,000 and £499,999 (20.55%). A significant percentage indicated that their collaborations were very small-scale, coming in at £5,000 or less (16.43%). However, half of all respondents said that they did not actually know the value of the collaboration, painting a mixed picture of the funding landscape for knowledge exchange collaborations and how it operates economically.

**What worked well and not so well:** A significantly higher number of survey respondents (163) did however respond to our question about what worked well and less so, with regard to their collaborations. Respondents were generally very positive about their partnerships with many saying they worked well or very well. Many spoke about the need to ensure clarity of aims and about the importance of establishing shared priorities. Some themes emerged particularly strongly as important signifiers of a positive experience. These included; access to research rigour, skills, expertise and advice and the contributions of students at all levels of study. Interestingly, the notion of profile raising and status for the arts or cultural organisation was also cited as was access to funding, resources and facilities. Whilst responses were on the whole positive, there were several negative factors mentioned including: funding delays and challenges, leading to unpaid labour on projects, discrepancies in scale leading to power imbalances and lack of communications, often internally and again sometimes connected to scale, leading to project disruptions and delay.

**Who do collaborations benefit most?** Our question on the balance of benefit from the collaboration had an even higher number of respondents (177) with over three quarters (75.71%) telling us there was a strong sense of mutual benefit for both parties. However, for the remaining 25% of respondents, around 30 said the benefit was most to the university. Only 13 listed their organisations as the key beneficiaries of the collaboration.

**How collaborations are evaluated:** Questions regarding the evaluation of collaborations provided mixed results. It appeared to be most likely that the HEI would play the leading role in evaluating the collaborative project, most often using qualitative methods. However, there was some disappointment in the minimal role of the cultural practitioner/organisation in the evaluation, and the lack of mutual benefit which arose from the findings. Some respondents within the cultural sector felt that data and findings had not been equally disseminated with them, highlighting aspects of future evaluative practices which could be improved for collaborative activities between the sectors.

## 1.3 Concluding remarks

This survey indicates the scope and scale of deep and rich collaborative activities taking place between universities and arts and cultural organisations and practitioners across the country. It was conducted over a relatively short period of time of just three weeks, and with just one key survey partner, so a response rate of over 500 was a most encouraging start to our work at NCACE in getting a fuller understanding of relations between the two sectors.

It confirms that, for many of the organisations and individuals who are engaged in such work, collaborations are not a one-off but rather an ongoing part of how they operate, in some instances with one primary partner over a period of time and in other instances with multiple higher education institution partners. This in turn tells us of course that both sectors value the inputs and expertise of the other. They work well together and they also need each other.

Whilst this is most encouraging, we did of course have some respondents who told us they didn't know where to start to develop relationships in the first instance, indicating that there is yet more interest in working in partnership than is currently taking place and that there is also a need for further support to realise the fullest potential of collaborative ambition

The nature of the collaborative activities themselves were incredibly interesting and varied in their nature. They also ranged considerably in scale from one-off events to much larger projects with multiple funders and stakeholders, working together on the development of new buildings. Thematically, big challenge areas such as Placemaking/Levelling Up and Health and Wellbeing were strongly cited with themes such as environment and climate emergency also reported as key collaborative areas.

The survey revealed a generally very positive attitude to collaboration with strong articulations around the benefits of such work being closely connected, unsurprisingly, to key Higher Education missions and assets, including research expertise and access to students. However persistent challenges were also identified, including poor management and communications as well as funding challenges are the biggest barriers.

There is clearly a real appetite for arts and culture sector and Higher Education collaboration and as this survey strongly suggests, it is happening both with and, on occasions, in spite of clear financial support. Our respondents have reported that not only have collaborations resulted in wide-ranging new cultural outputs and infrastructures but they are also providing skills, opportunities, and expertise and have largely positive, mutually beneficial, symbiotic relationships.

Furthermore, the evidence coming through the survey shares patterns with narratives coming through key Higher Education exercises including the Research Excellence Framework (REF) as well as the more recent Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF), as highlighted in NCACE's recent reports (see NCACE, 2021a and 2021b in the bibliography). Overall this indicates not just the deep fruitfulness of collaborative relationships for both parties but also their greater

potential in enabling both sectors to achieve excellent work and have stronger impacts as a result of working together.

## 2. National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange (NCACE) Background

NCACE (<http://www.ncace.ac.uk/>) is led by TCCE (<https://www.theculturecapitalexchange.co.uk/areas-of-work/ncace/>) and funded by Research England (<https://www.ukri.org/news/national-centre-to-fulfil-sectors-knowledge-exchange-potential/>). Its key purpose and mission is to facilitate and support capacity for Knowledge Exchange between Higher Education and the arts and cultural sector across the UK, with a particular focus on evidencing and showcasing the social, cultural, environmental, as well as economic, impacts of such activities. NCACE is being delivered in partnership with a number of HEIs across the country, all of whom are part of strong local and regional networks, and all of whom are dedicated to the wider potential and impacts of Knowledge Exchange (KE) within and beyond their communities. These include: Bath Spa University, Birmingham City University, Manchester Metropolitan University and Northumbria University.

NCACE works across the following four key and often interrelated areas to help realise, communicate and evidence the potential of Knowledge Exchange with the arts and culture sector. Events and activities are open to all HEIs and to those working in the arts and cultural sector. The following is a short synopsis of each area of activity.



### Brokerage, Collaboration Support and Networking

NCACE is concerned with creating positive ecologies and environments in which to foster excellent Knowledge Exchange and collaboration between Higher Education and the arts and cultural sector and to support ambition around the wider potential and impacts for such work. In order to support this, we create many opportunities to bring people together. We host regular Getting Involved events, as well as events hosted by our regional partners to encourage more locally driven conversation and collaboration. We also host an annual Ideas Pool designed to support a number of mini-collaborations as well as an annual event

designed to showcase and discuss models of good practice in cultural knowledge exchange.

### Skills and Capacity Development

NCACE provides space and network capacity to support and develop KE staff, academics with a keen interest in developing social impacts, as well as arts/culture sector workers who wish to develop partnerships with universities. We do this in a variety of ways, from leadership focussed workshops, jointly developed with our colleagues at the Clore Leadership Foundation as well as our Knowledge Impacts Network (KIN) which creates space to bring people together around issues connected to capacity to undertake collaboration.

### Evidence Building and Impact Development

Addressing the need for more and better evidence and analysis about the extent, nature, histories, drivers and broader impact of Knowledge Exchange and collaborations more widely between HE and the arts/cultural sectors runs to the heart of the entire NCACE endeavour. Our Evidence Hub is the entity through which this work is conducted and it comprises various interrelated strands. As well as conducting primary research, we also collate literature and other materials relating to cultural knowledge exchange. This work forms our online Evidence Repository and is due to go live in Autumn 2021. We also run regular online Evidence Cafes as a space to discuss policy and evidence developments within the field, as well as annual workshops, the first of which was ‘Collaborations in Placemaking’. Another key dimension of our work is in creating a brand new body of knowledge based on sectoral interviews, case studies and blogs.

### Showcasing and Communications

Through our media and social media platforms and brands, NCACE seeks to showcase models of good practice in KE with the arts and cultural sectors from universities across the country. Furthermore, our work in this package supports the promotion of all NCACE events and activities, ensuring that we widely communicate our work both to Higher Education and to the arts and cultural sectors.

### 3. Survey Context

As we have previously indicated, a key element of the NCACE mission is to generate a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of knowledge exchange with the arts and cultural sector, or what we refer to in this report sometimes as cultural knowledge exchange. Through the work of the centre over the coming years, we are also aiming to develop greater insights into the social, cultural, environmental and economic impact of collaborations.

Our past experience at TCCE (and prior to that LCACE) has included curating hundreds of events designed to create conversations, engagements and collaborations between the two sectors. It has also included co-designing and co-delivering and/or leading key cultural knowledge exchange programmes including the AHRC funded Creativeworks London (2012-2016) and the HEFCE and Arts Council funded The Exchange (2015-2017). Yet whilst these activities have given us considerable insights, we have been consistently struck by the gap between anecdotal evidence about this emerging field of activity and ongoing new research, especially the creation of more formalised bodies of evidence. We regard this survey as a key component of this emerging evidence base.

Our recent Literature Review [Knowledge Exchange, HEIs and the Arts and Culture Sector: A systemic review of literature in the field \(https://ncace.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Final-Copy-with-Cover-Design-Sigal-Sarah-Knowledge-Exchange-HEIs-and-the-Arts-and-Culture-Sector-2.pdf\)](https://ncace.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Final-Copy-with-Cover-Design-Sigal-Sarah-Knowledge-Exchange-HEIs-and-the-Arts-and-Culture-Sector-2.pdf) by Dr Sarah Sigal indicated what we already tacitly knew, which is that often collaborations are narrated from the perspective of the academic institution. This is why we felt this survey was so important to undertake at the start of NCACE; to provide a much-needed platform for insights from the arts and cultural sector. The survey was designed in partnership between NCACE (Evelyn Wilson, Dr. Federica Rossi, Emily Hopkins) and Arts Professional (Liz Hill) between January and March 2021. Arts Professional<sup>1</sup> is a significant media platform and source of news, debate and information for arts practitioners, organisations and institutions across the UK.

The survey was promoted to Arts Professional subscriber base of over 46,000 people. It was launched on March 1st 2021 and ran for a brief period of three weeks until March 21st 2021. It was also promoted through NCACE and TCCE networks, as well as relevant networks within the wider cultural sector. We were pleased that 546 individuals took the time to complete the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/about-us>



survey, giving us the rich qualitative and quantitative data set that forms the basis of this report.

### 3.1 Survey Design

The survey was co-designed by NCACE and Arts Professional with both organisations bringing their respective expertise and experience to the process. It included a total of 26 questions with a mixture of closed and open-ended questions. Some of the closed-ended, single-answer multiple choice questions were designed to gather specific types of information, including locational data or quantitative data, such as funding levels. We also created several open-ended questions to enable respondents to give more in-depth accounts and personal reflections about key elements of their collaborations. The survey was predicted to take around ten to fifteen minutes to complete, but the length of responses to the open-ended questions may well have increased the time taken for some respondents.

The first question established if the respondent had or had not been involved in a collaboration with a HEI. For those who replied 'No' to this question, there were three further questions to answer in relation to why they had not been involved with or pursued a collaboration. For those who replied yes, there were around twenty further questions on different aspects of the collaboration. These included questions pertaining to: the nature of the collaboration, the role of the cultural practitioner/organisation within the collaboration, the sorts of themes it addressed, how the collaboration came about, how it had been funded, the aspects which had and had not worked well, and how - if at all - the collaboration had been evaluated. It also asked respondents about the extent to which they felt knowledge exchange had taken place throughout the collaboration, and the extent to which this exchange was mutually beneficial.

For all respondents, there were eight questions regarding: the name, geographical location and cultural sub-sector of the practitioner/organisations work; size of organisation; and the core work of NCACE.

The survey aimed primarily to discover what kinds of collaborations were taking place and also to discover how and why arts and cultural practitioners developed collaborative projects with a Higher Education Institution (HEI). It also provided an opportunity for respondents to give their own accounts and narratives of their cultural KE partnerships which, in turn, was revealing about the values that the arts and culture sector hold about their collaborations with Higher Education.

Of course, as with every survey, there were limiting factors. It is likely, for example, that those who elected to respond to the survey, given its title, did so because, as the results indicate, they had previous experience of collaborating with Higher Education. The fact that some sub-

sectors in the arts and culture sector have relatively low readership of Arts Professional is another factor - for example, we had a relatively low level of museum professionals responding to the survey.

The survey obtained a total 546 responses from a potential pool of over 46,000 respondents who are part of Arts Professional, TCCE, NCACE and other arts/cultural sector networks. Senior staff at Arts Professional were happy with the number of respondents citing up to 500 as typical for their other survey responses. We present our findings not necessarily as representative of the overall population of arts and culture professionals in the UK (or even as representative of the sample of arts and culture professionals belonging to the above-mentioned networks). Rather, we see the survey as providing valuable insights from a substantial, self-selecting sample of arts and culture professionals who have direct experience of collaborating with HEIs at this time.

Given our focus, we primarily analyse the answers provided by respondents who stated they had collaborated with HEIs, although we briefly discuss (in section 5.10) insights from the small group of respondents who stated that they had not collaborated with HEIs and provided their reasons for not doing so. Additionally, while 546 respondents took the survey, there was an average response rate of 176.5 per question, which highlights that a reasonable proportion of the respondents did not complete the entire survey and whilst some opted to answer mainly the closed text questions, we had a high proportion who were more drawn to completing the open text, more qualitative questions.

## 3.2 Survey Analysis

Due to the quantitative and qualitative nature of the data collected, various analytical methods were used by both the Arts Professional and NCACE teams. For the qualitative and open-ended responses, NCACE undertook thematic analysis to code and categorise the topics which were emerging within the data. This was undertaken online, using colour coding and tables to group the data lifted from the survey transcript. After similar responses had been grouped, they were condensed into more specific subthemes to understand where respondents were reporting similar experiences.

The responses to closed-ended questions were analysed using descriptive statistics, mainly in the form of tables, cross tabulations and correlation analyses, and reported using tables, pie charts and histograms. For a small number of questions (those about the type of organisation the respondents worked for at the time of the collaboration, and the sector to which the

organisation belongs), responses were reclassified in a smaller number of categories to facilitate the analysis. The analysis was carried out using the statistical package Stata 13.1.

This public-facing report has been prepared alongside: a shorter, 'snapshot' findings infographic style document, a sister report focussing on place-based elements of the responses, and presentations on the general findings for external dissemination. Quotes used in these outputs are anonymised to protect the identity and confidentiality of the participants. Where quotes have been altered, there is a use of [ ] symbols.

## 4. Survey Respondents

The following section will provide further information about the respondents, as had been reported within the survey.

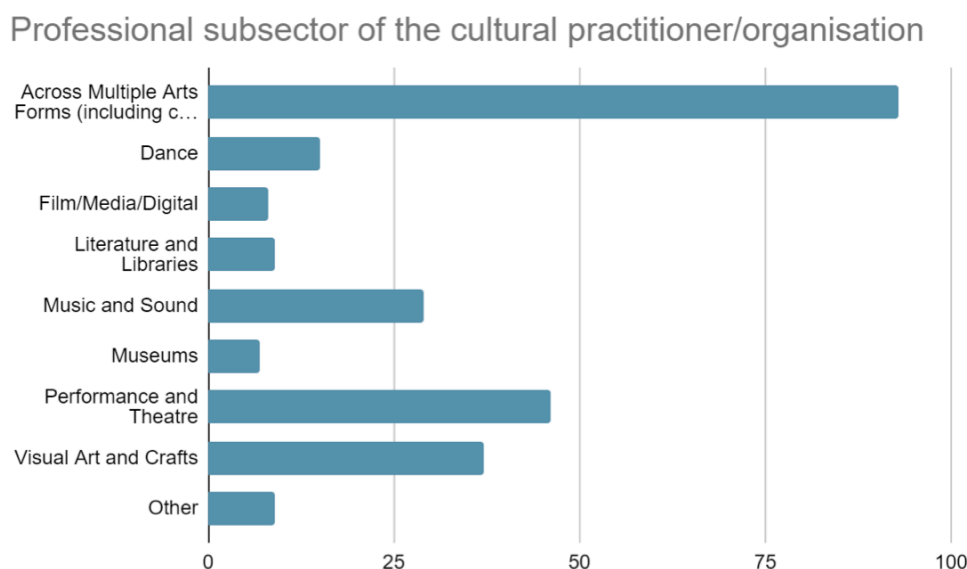
**Location:** Of the 546 respondents, 230 respondents provided information on the geographic location of their organisation with almost a third of those reporting that the main geographical base of their organisation/artistic practice was located in London (31.74%). The second most reported location was the South East (10%), and the third was the West Midlands (9.13%). A full breakdown of the locations taken from the survey report can be found in **Appendix 1**.

**Cultural Sectors:** 217 respondents provided information about the cultural subsector in which they primarily worked, shown below in Figure 1. These categories were loosely aligned with the cultural sub-sectors used by Arts Council England. Over a third of respondents (36.76%) stated that the cultural sector in which their organisation primarily worked was Across Multiple Artforms. The second most reported choice was Performance and Theatre (18.18%), and the third was Visual Arts and Crafts (14.62%). The least reported sector was Museums (2.77%). The second least reported sector was Film/Media/Digital (3.16%) and the third least reported sector was tied between Literature and Libraries and Other (3.56%).

Respondents who stated that their organisation worked in ‘other’ sectors included: textiles; health and wellbeing more generally; circus and street theatre; creative education; media arts; outdoor arts; poetry and spoken word; heritage; architecture; ecology and climate arts; opera; botanic gardens; craft; festivals; or they saw themselves to be purposefully undefined. A more thorough breakdown of the sub sectors can be found in the table in **Appendix 2**.

In order to address the low response level from the museums sector we plan to carry out a further survey with that sector in due course.

**Figure 1: Professional sub sector in which the cultural practitioner/organisation primarily worked**



**Size of arts/cultural organisation:** 224 respondents provided information about how many people worked full-time within their organisation. The most reported size of organisation was between 2 to 9 employees (41.07%), followed by an individual or sole practitioner scale (24.11%) or an organisation of 10 to 49 employees (19.20%). Around 16% of respondents were from organisations that employed between 50 to 249 employees. Despite the pre-survey introduction explaining that only professionals from the arts and cultural sector should proceed to answer the questions, a small number of respondents working within the Higher Education sector did fill in the survey and this may account for some of those larger sizes being cited.

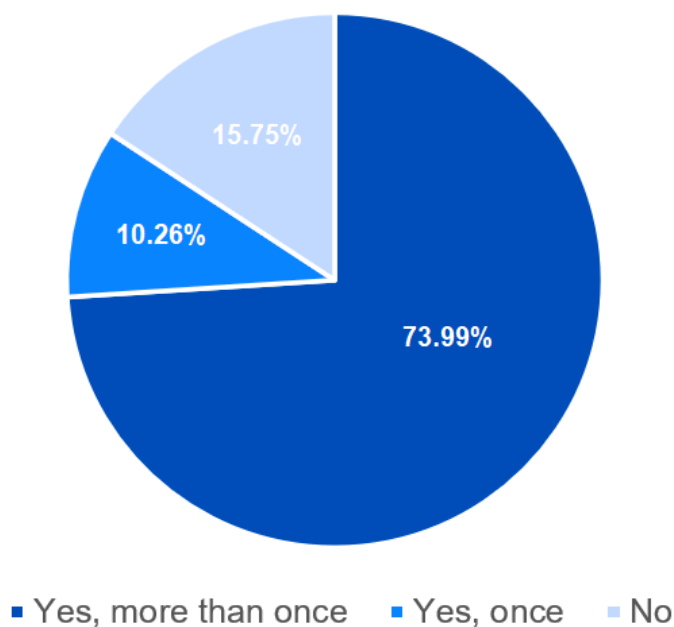
## 5. Survey Analysis and Findings

### 5.1 Collaborations with HEIs

The survey began with a closed-text question asking if the respondent had ever been involved with a collaboration with a HEI, to understand how common it is for these inter-sector encounters to take place. The results are visualised below in Figure 2. Out of the 546 respondents to the question, over 80% of respondents had been involved with a collaboration with a HEI. Almost three-quarters of respondents (73.99%) selected the closed-text option which stated they had been involved with more than one collaboration with a HEI in the past. In comparison, around 10.26% selected that they had only been involved with one collaboration. The remaining respondents reported that they had no experience of being involved with a Higher Education Institution. This suggests that arts and culture professionals who collaborate with HEIs have been particularly likely to answer the survey.

**Figure 2: The percentage of respondents who had or had not been involved with a collaboration with a HEI**

Have you ever been involved in a collaboration with a Higher Education Institution (HEI)?



## 5.2 Collaborations with HEIs: Location and Type

### 5.2.1 Location

252 respondents provided details about the location of the HEI with which they had the most significant or impactful collaboration. The majority of these were based within the United Kingdom, with a small number of collaborations with European and North American universities. Using geotagging, the reported collaborations were layered onto a base map using Google Maps software, which can be found [here](https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/1/edit?mid=1EOlzXWXg_n2XOUXpkKQ_r8O879C1GSXZ) ([https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/1/edit?mid=1EOlzXWXg\\_n2XOUXpkKQ\\_r8O879C1GSXZ](https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/1/edit?mid=1EOlzXWXg_n2XOUXpkKQ_r8O879C1GSXZ)). Each institution was mapped, with repeat mentions indicated by the number written in the comment section of the tag.

Analysis from Research England's UK Higher Education Providers data highlights a total of 165 institutions across the UK, with 14.5% being classified as Russell groups, 42.5% being Post-1992 institutions, 23% being 'Other' types of institution and 20% being small, specialist higher education providers. Within this map, each tag was also colour coded to represent the type of HEI being mentioned:

- Green - Russell Group
- Purple - Post-1992
- Yellow - Small/ specialist
- Blue - Other HEI
- Grey - International

The map shows how collaborations were most likely to be located in urban areas, reflecting on the non-rural location of the vast majority of HEIs. The majority of collaborations with smaller, specialist universities also took place in London. According to the locational data provided, the top 10 most cited HEIs with the most impactful relationship were: Birmingham City University (8); Newcastle University (6); University of Worcester, University of Leeds, Middlesex University, University College London, Winchester University and Liverpool John Moores University (5); Trinity Laban and Queen Mary, University of London (4). As NCACE is primarily focussed on England at this stage, we didn't actively target Northern Ireland or Wales though it would be interesting, as we evolve the centre's activities, to find out more about collaborations in the UK more widely.

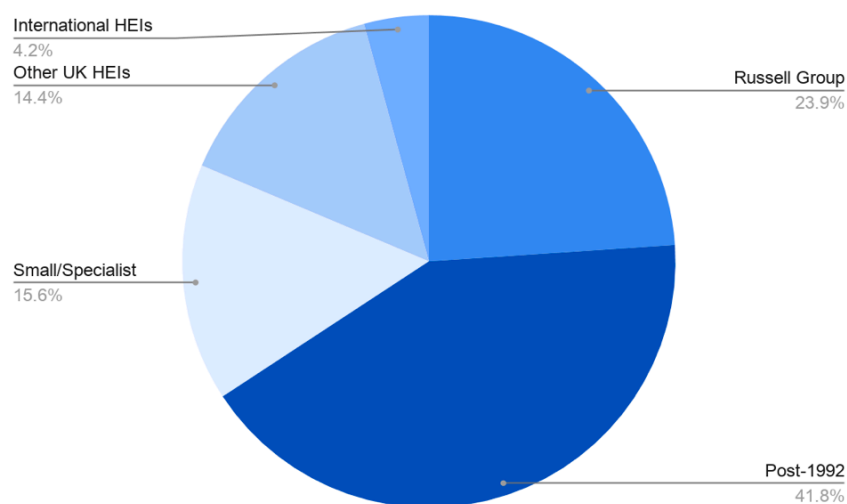


We have also developed a sister report on the survey entitled *'The role of 'place' in collaborations between HEIs and the arts and cultural sector'* (see NCACE, 2021c in the bibliography), which focuses in depth on the survey responses in relation to the place-based and place-focused dimensions of the collaborations.

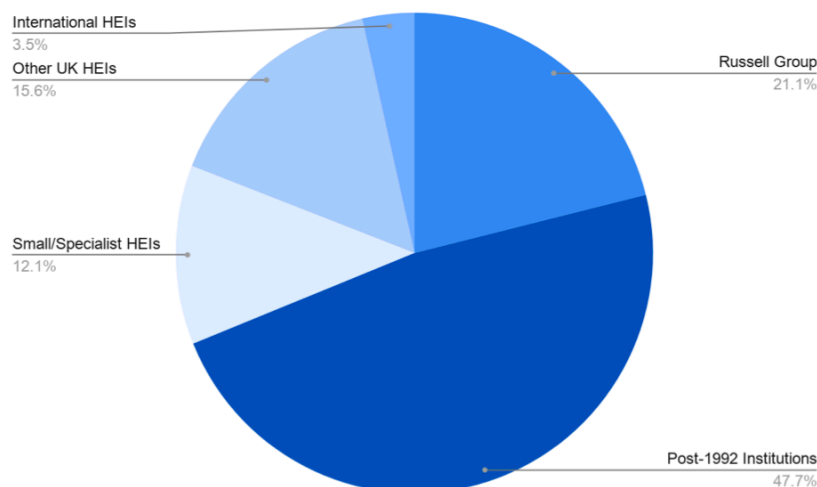
### 5.2.2. Type

Further analysis was undertaken on the types of higher education institutions and how often they were reported as previous/current collaboration partners. In relation to this survey, it was most likely for the collaborations reported to have taken place alongside a Post-1992 institution, followed by a Russell Group institution. This was then closely tied between Small/Specialist HEIs or 'Other' UK HEIs. Due to the reach of our survey, unsurprisingly, very few international collaborations were reported. The types of HEI reported are visualised in Figure 3 and 4 below.

**Figure 3: Type of HEIs reported in Q5 as previous and/or existing collaboration partners**

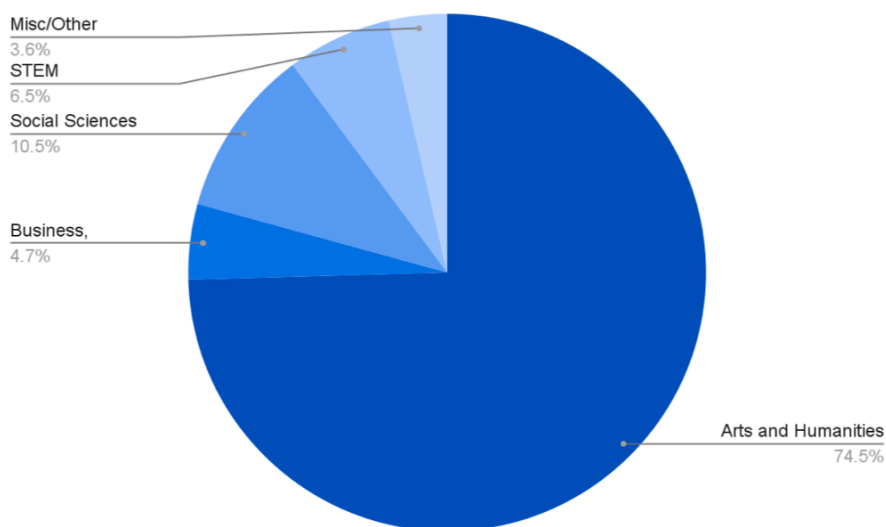


**Figure 4: Type of HEIs reported in Q6 as the most impactful collaboration partner**



Some respondents also provided details on the academic disciplines/departments that they had worked with through their collaborative history. Almost three-quarters (74.5%) of collaborations had taken place within an Arts & Humanities department. This was then followed by the Social Sciences (10.55%). Lesser reported departments/disciplines including Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (6.55%), Business, Management and Economics (4.72%), and other miscellaneous departments such as specific research centres or university-based cultural centres (3.63%). A visual breakdown of the disciplines/departments reported can be seen below in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Academic Disciplines/Departments Associated with Arts/Culture-HEI Collaborations**



Furthermore, a more specific breakdown of the top 10 subjects which were reported from across all of the disciplines reported in Q5 can be found in Table 1 below. These were overwhelmingly from the Arts & Humanities disciplines.

**Table 1: Top 10 Most Common Departments/Subjects reported in Q5**

<b>Department/Subject</b>	<b>No. of Mentions</b>	<b>Discipline</b>
Drama	16	Arts & Humanities
Fine Art	13	Arts & Humanities
Music	13	Arts & Humanities
Education	12	Social Sciences
Art and Design	11	Arts & Humanities
Performing Arts	11	Arts & Humanities
Dance	9	Arts & Humanities
Business School	8	Social Sciences
English	7	Arts & Humanities
Media and Communications	6	Arts & Humanities

## 5.3 The nature of the collaborations

After detailing the location of their most significant example of working with a HEI, we asked respondents to expand on the nature of the collaboration, including a brief summary of the title, aims, activities and duration of the project. We received responses from 194 survey respondents to our invitation to provide a brief summary of their collaborative project(s) and many of these provided detailed responses. The resulting rich array of accounts provided real insight and texture into the very diverse ways in which knowledge exchange can be recognised, defined and articulated. The multi-faceted nature of collaborations, and indeed the notion of what might be considered knowledge exchange activity by whom, highlights further, however, the complexity of defining the term, both within and across sectors.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, given recent and current government policy, there were a large number of responses broadly concerned with the theme of place-making, with several collaborations focussing on developments that were being developed to have wider impacts in their town or city. Some examples include: the development of significantly funded skills-led initiatives in Hereford; multi partner MOUs between Leeds Council and local universities to support the culture sector and highlight its role in place-making; relationships between the ACE and Heritage Lottery funded Great Place Scheme recipients in Kent and universities in the development of community arts and environment initiatives. In a response from Bristol, the university's role as a cultural beacon was emphasised through an investment partnership with existing arts infrastructure. A collaboration centred on the development of new cultural spaces, with a museum in the Lake District being reported as well as another which spoke to supporting local communities to have a say in decision making about place. A London-based response told us of a collaboration that would be resulting in new cultural spaces being developed in Queen Elizabeth Park in East London.

Collaborations that connected to health and well-being, in the widest sense, were also strongly reported. Cited collaborations ranged from work on music therapy to Deaf Culture to significant long-term cultural projects concerned with mental health, to dance and health focussed collaborations as well as work focused on the development of healthy lifestyles. Some collaborations brought together a range of partners; university, arts and health partners, for example, with a hospital-based project bringing together fine arts and nursing students to enhance patient experience. Others spoke to the increasing attention to the intersections between well-being and the environment with projects concerned with, for example, re imagining the future of transportation and gender in farming and agriculture.

Several research collaborations were also cited that spoke to broader issues of equality and diversity with topics including: Black Theatre, Black Classical Composers, the exclusion/inclusion of BAME students, diversity and inequality in the craft sector and a library/university collaboration on The Battle of Lewisham. However, the survey results suggest that cultural knowledge exchange relating to EDI themes are still not nearly as common as those in areas such as place-making.

Many modes of collaborations were cited and, in many instances, respondents in fact worked across a range of modes. Creating an overarching taxonomy was not straightforward given that there were so many ways of describing the nature of the collaboration but broadly speaking we can detect two very significant areas that correspond to core university functions, namely Research and Teaching. However what is somewhat more surprising is that the third most frequently cited area amongst respondents was their role of acting as a host organisation, offering placements, work experience and careers and skills development to students of all levels on real sector projects.

- **Research**: undertaking or commissioning research and/or producing research outputs alongside HEI staff
- **Teaching**: Teaching, running workshops, co-developing joint MAs, bringing in industrial experience and mentoring roles within the HEI

**Placements/Hosting**: Provision of work experience placements and other such opportunities for undergraduate and post-graduate students, PhD students and Collaborative Doctoral candidates.

In addition to the top three, there were a number of other very significant modes of collaboration cited. These included:

- **Public and Community Engagement**: Including initiatives such as festivals and health-led projects
- **Creative collaborations and joint programming/commissioning**: Exhibitions and performances were regularly cited as the outcomes of such collaborations
- **Artist-in-Residence and Company-in-Residence**: Here, typically the individual or company would be embedded within the university models and have access to space and other resources

By contrast though, several collaborations also hinged on the arts or cultural partner giving their space over to their university partners. Although less frequently cited, there were

nonetheless a number of larger scale Strategic Partnerships and New Buildings cited as well as a significant number of initiatives that were centred on Skills, business and entrepreneurship for students and people in the wider workforce. Finally a wider sense of the importance of the wider networks and ecologies were frequently cited with universities for example being called on to provide content, act as judges or undertake trustee relationships, and indeed vice versa. Also implicit - but not directly identified as such - in many responses was the notion of the pracademic, with people essentially operating across the two sectors simultaneously.

The sheer breadth of research themes alone mentioned in this part of the survey paints a compelling picture of the potential and possibilities for future cultural knowledge exchange. We list types of associated outputs in the section below.

## 5.4 Roles undertaken in Collaborations

It became clear that arts/cultural organisations played various roles in KE collaborations: co-design/production of the project (66.32%); teaching or leading workshops for HEI students/staff (54.40%); leading the collaboration project (46.11%); using university resources and expertise (46.11%); university using their space/resources (31.09%); providing data or information for a HEI research project (28.5%).

Other roles included: co-writing funding bids; presenting work at academics conferences; curatorial roles; mentoring roles; investment and fundraising roles; industry knowledge sharing; community engagement alongside or on behalf of academics/the university; brokerage roles; researcher in residence positions; practice-based studentships (e.g. doctoral level); sharing research and information on behalf of a university; and providing work experience/placements for university students.

Of the 194 responses, knowledge exchange collaborations were identified more specifically, as highlighted in Table 2.

**Table 2: Roles reported to be played by the arts and cultural sector within HEI collaborations**

Research and Research Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conferences</li> <li>• Exhibitions</li> <li>• Installations</li> <li>• Joint publications</li> <li>• Lecture series (design of or contribution to)</li> <li>• Open calls and commissions</li> <li>• Open source software co-creation</li> <li>• Performances</li> <li>• Research projects</li> <li>• Resource creation</li> </ul>
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to equipment</li> <li>• Access to facilities</li> <li>• Access to libraries and archives</li> <li>• Access to technical expertise</li> </ul>
Career and Skills Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career development sessions for art/cultural sector</li> <li>• University used as a training centre</li> </ul>
Teaching and Mentoring Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artist/practitioner taking on an external examination role</li> <li>• Artist/practitioner acting as clients for student work</li> <li>• Creative contribution to an educational programme</li> <li>• Creative workshops</li> <li>• Cultural education programmes</li> <li>• Lectureships for artists/practitioners</li> <li>• Mentoring and industry expertise provision for students</li> <li>• Student placements/internships</li> </ul>
Network Membership and Relationship Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artist/practitioners taking on a creative consultation role</li> <li>• Brokerage roles</li> <li>• Co-design of fundraising bids</li> <li>• Co-design of physical infrastructure</li> <li>• Consortium creation</li> <li>• Curator/advisor work</li> <li>• HEI hosting a cultural organisation (university embedded)</li> <li>• Long-term strategic partnerships</li> </ul>
Studentships and Further Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable higher education provision for artist/practitioner</li> <li>• Artist in residence placements</li> <li>• PhD studentships and doctoral training centres</li> </ul>

Furthermore, if we consider the roles played in the collaboration according to the respondents' collaboration experience (in this instance, based on the number of universities they have previously collaborated with), we find that:

Respondents with greater experience of collaborating with many universities tended to tick more collaboration roles

Most roles are ticked more frequently the greater the experience; this is particularly the case for co-design and production which is ticked by 80% of more experienced respondents and by 49% of less experienced ones.

Teaching or leading workshops is equally frequent across all types

We find that differences among organisations with different collaboration experience are significant for most roles (the exception is Teaching or leading workshops)

In general this suggests that - since each respondent discusses one collaboration - the greater the experience, the greater the variety of roles respondents tend to play in each collaboration; demonstrating more versatility with experience. In fact, on average, organisations with greater collaboration experience (more than five collaborations) tick a significantly higher number of roles (3.45) than organizations with less collaboration experience (between two and four collaborations: 2.64 roles on average; one collaboration: 2.06 roles on average).

There are no particular differences across sectors in the roles played in the collaboration. However, if we distinguish just between respondents who work individually as freelancers and those who are part of a larger organisation (of any kind), we can see that individuals are more likely to provide data/information while organizations are more likely to lead the project and use university resources/expertise.

## 5.5 Exploring how the collaborations develop

Speaking to the importance of relationship building and partnership development in knowledge exchange collaborations, we asked respondents how their collaboration had come about. Over half of the 170 respondents who responded to that question reported that they had approached the university (56.47%), with 47.6% saying that the university had approached them or their organisation. Some respondents utilised their involvement with a creative network to instigate the collaboration (25.88%). It seemed significantly less likely that collaborations emerged directly as a result of the availability of grant funding (10.59%), or that the artist/cultural organisation had responded to open call commissions (6.47%).



For those who selected the open-text ‘Other’ option, there was an emphasis on the role of personal connections between the sectors, often building on pre-existing relationships. Others were connected via the local authority or other governance stakeholders, with a small number of respondents stating that they auditioned and/or interviewed for the collaboration role. The social nature of collaborations seemed to be a crucial element for initiating connections between the arts and cultural sector and HEIs.

The pattern does not change very much according to collaboration experience, with direct contacts remaining prevalent. The more experienced the respondent in developing collaborations, the more likely they are to approach the university directly. They are also more likely to approach the university in response to funding opportunities. Less experienced respondents rely more on networks and on being approached by the university. In terms of organisation size, we find that smaller organisations are more likely to be approached by a university while the opposite holds for larger organisations (except for the largest ones). The use of networks and grant funding is similar across all sizes, while responding to open call commissions is significantly higher for small organizations. If we distinguish just between respondents who work individually as freelancers and those who are part of a larger organisation (of any kind), we can see that individuals are more likely to be approached by the university while organisations are more likely to take all other approaches.

## 5.6 Funding for the collaborations

We were also keen to find out about financial support for such collaborations. Of the 162 respondents who were aware of these details, half (50.62%) had reported that the HEI provided the funding for the collaboration. Interestingly, the second most reported option (37.04%) was that the collaboration had been self-funded by the artist/cultural organisation. Other options included a variety of external grants and funds, including: Arts Council grants (28.4%); Trust or Foundation funding (22.84%); Arts and Humanities Research Council grants (14.81%); or via funds provided by the local authority (12.96%). It was less likely for funding to arise from a different research council (3.7%), or via Research England (2.47%). Almost 5% of respondents did not know the source of the funding for their collaboration.

However, an open-text ‘Other’ option was provided to capture information on alternative funding avenues. The funding sources reported here included: income generation via performances or merchandise, in-kind donations from partners/stakeholders, National Lottery Heritage Fund grants, UKRI, diversion of ongoing ACE NPO funding, specific projects

(e.g. Great Place Scheme), specific institutions (e.g. Wellcome Collection), private donors or corporations, national government, or self-funding. Others did not rely on funding or were involved with collaborations on a voluntary basis

If we consider the source of funding according to collaboration experience, we find that:

- More experienced respondents are more likely to know where the funding came from, and to use all types of funding sources
- The share of respondents who chose 'don't know' is significantly lower among those who had two or more collaborations with HEI
- More experienced respondents are more likely to be part of collaborations that receive funding from AHRC and from Research England (the shares of respondents who received funding from these sources are significantly higher among respondents with more than five collaborations with HEIs)
- The share of self-funded collaborations is higher among those who had more than five collaborations with HEIs, but the difference is not statistically significant
- For all other funding sources, differences are not statistically significant

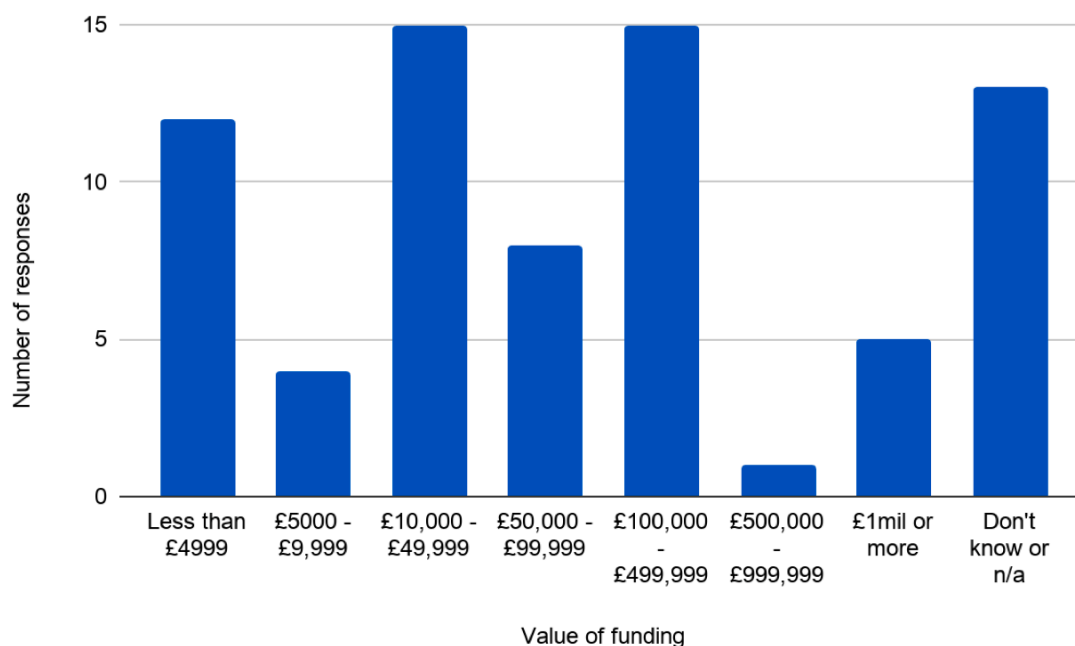
If we consider the collaboration funding according to organisation type, we find that the university is the main source of funding for most organisation types (this also includes universities, which report this under 'self funding'). Exceptions are:

- Local authorities report themselves as the main source of funding (significant difference)
- Cultural institutions (including museums, galleries, libraries, archives and botanical gardens) more frequently report AHRC as a main source of funding
- Organisations that tend to be predominantly community-led report Arts Councils and self-funding as the main sources of funding

If we analyse how collaborations were initiated according to the type of funding, we find that collaborations with funding from Research England, a research council other than AHRC, and the university itself were more frequently initiated by the university (and also collaborations where the respondent is not sure of the funding source, since the project was presumably managed by the university). Collaborations with funding from AHRC, Arts Councils, local authority, trust or foundation, or self-funded, were more frequently initiated by the respondent.

75 respondents (13.74%) provided further details about the financial value provided to their collaboration, which can be seen below in Figure 6. Whilst it was less likely for collaborations to be awarded over £499,999, 5 large-scale collaborations receiving over £1million were nonetheless reported. This highlights the mixed nature of the funding landscape for collaborations, from small-scale to much more significant amounts of funding being reported.

**Figure 6: Financial Value of Collaborations Reported (if known)**



## 5.7 Collaborative Values

A number of our questions were concerned broadly with the idea of collaborative values, where we were keen to create the opportunity to draw out how respondents felt about the ways in which their projects were working or had worked. We were also keen to find out about both the perception of who benefits within such arrangements and indeed also to gauge a sense of how important or significant collaborations are to the sector. Across all questions, answers were largely positive, optimistic and very encouraging although of course, and as we anticipated, challenges, or aspects of the experience that worked less well were also voiced.

## 5.7.1 What works well, and less well

A total of 163 respondents gave us their perspectives on what worked well and less so, with regard to their collaborations. Respondents were generally very positive about their partnerships with many saying they worked well or very well. Some themes emerged particularly strongly as important signifiers of a positive experience. These included; access to research rigour, skills, expertise and advice and the contributions of students at all levels of study. Profile raising and status for the arts or cultural organisation were also cited quite frequently as were access to funding, resources and facilities. Whilst responses to this question were generally positive, unsurprisingly, several negative factors were also mentioned. These typically included issues relating to funding or the lack of funding delays and challenges and differences in scale leading to power imbalances. Lack of communications was another big challenge, leading to project disruptions and delays. The open texts were thematically analysed and are listed more comprehensively in Table 3 and 4 below.

### Aspects of the collaboration which worked well

Table 3: What worked well in the collaborations

<u>Project Management</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Overall reports of very positive experiences</li><li>● Mutual aims and benefits well reported</li><li>● Good and equal co-management of projects reported</li><li>● Better understanding of the human resources implications for collaborations reported</li><li>● Good administrative procedures reported (e.g. Terms of Reference, MoUs, risk analyses, conflict of interest)</li><li>● Development of strong relationships with HEI professionals/students/communities reported</li></ul>
<u>Capacity building and skills development</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Data findings/analysis leading to organisational development and business plans</li><li>● Exposure to research and development processes</li><li>● Increased support for practitioners/organisations through volunteering/student placements</li><li>● Opportunities for live feedback from new audiences</li><li>● Opportunities to learn academic and non-academic languages</li><li>● Opportunities to research/learn more about specific themes</li><li>● Strong cross-institutional dialogue between partners</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Training and leadership development for practitioners/organisations provided by HEIs</li> <li>● Valuable experience of jointly delivering projects/exhibitions/performances</li> <li>● Widened understanding of and access to new/different funding streams (e.g. AHRC)</li> </ul>
<u>Student involvement/experience</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Practitioners/cultural organisations providing positive education/scholarship/work experience for students</li> <li>● Some HEIs later borrowed methods of explanation and education from the arts/cultural sector</li> </ul>
<u>Social impact</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Improved/increased networking opportunities on multiple scales (e.g. local regional, national and international)</li> <li>● Extended networks valuable for promoting project outputs</li> <li>● Increased connectivity with the local communities</li> <li>● Performance opportunities helping to build audiences (academic and non-academic)</li> <li>● Collaborations providing a platform and spotlight for specific specialised issues</li> <li>● Input from organisations helped to diversify academic audiences and teams</li> </ul>
<u>Financial impact</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collaborations leading to additional funding</li> <li>● Collaborations creating less financial risks for some cultural organisations</li> <li>● Ability to draw upon internal HEI funding expertise</li> <li>● Some reports of ample travel costs and expenses provided</li> </ul>
<u>Spaces, places and physical infrastructure</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Access to high quality facilities and infrastructure</li> <li>● Access to research/library/archive resources</li> <li>● Some collaborations lead to the creation of new spaces/resources which local authorities do not have the capacity to support (e.g. archive storage)</li> </ul>
<u>Creative Leadership, kudos and profile building</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Academics invited to join advisory boards, bringing new expertise to organisations and individuals</li> <li>● Broader audiences reached via HEI communications channels, sometimes international</li> <li>● Creative consultation as part of the evaluation</li> <li>● Positive reputational/profile impact</li> <li>● Good marketing opportunities for all partners</li> </ul>

## Aspects of the collaboration which worked less well

Table 4: What worked less well in the collaborations

<u>Project Management</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management misunderstandings sometimes reported around contracts, Terms of Reference, Memorandum of Understandings, risk analysis and the like</li> <li>• Short-term, unrobust planning processes reported</li> <li>• Difficulties around IP and ownership of the narrative of the collaboration sometimes reported</li> <li>• Some reports of a lack of time to work on collaborations alongside 'day jobs'/primary roles in cultural sector</li> <li>• Some voiced the need for joint shared priorities to be more explicitly developed</li> </ul>
<u>HEI Specific</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change of personnel within HEIs</li> <li>• Difference in scale (e.g. small organisation, large HEI)</li> <li>• Difference in work timetables</li> <li>• Difference in cultures between the partners</li> <li>• Drawn out nature of approvals and procurement (e.g. budget, ethics, contracts)</li> <li>• HEIs inexperienced in working with cultural organisations</li> <li>• Lack of understanding of the arts/cultural sector within HEI departments</li> <li>• Priorities within the HEI can change quickly</li> <li>• Senior staff within HEIs had less buy-in to the collaboration</li> <li>• Time and capacity were limited from HEI partners</li> <li>• Translating between academic and non-academic languages</li> </ul>
<u>Social Impact</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building audiences for the collaborative output</li> <li>• HEI expectations of community groups/audiences</li> <li>• Underrepresentation and lack of diversity in some university teams</li> <li>• Lack of ongoing engagement</li> </ul>
<u>Financial Impact</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application work unpaid</li> <li>• Access to continuation funding</li> <li>• Poor payment processes within HEI administration</li> <li>• Higher cost of researchers/HEI staff within funding bids</li> <li>• Limited financial remuneration in general</li> <li>• Work of cultural organisations sometimes undercosted</li> </ul>

<u>Spaces, places and physical infrastructure</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEIs use of the cultural spaces/venues can prevent opportunities to gain further income</li> </ul>
<u>Evaluation</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of longitudinal evaluation following the completion of the collaborative project</li> <li>• Limited contribution of arts organisations within the final reports/evaluations</li> </ul>
<u>Other/Miscellaneous</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty transitioning from in-person to online collaborative work during the Covid-19 pandemic</li> </ul>

### 5.7.2 On the benefits of working with Higher Education and knowledge exchange more widely

We then asked a series of three closed text questions. First of all, we asked respondents to tell us who they thought was having the most benefit from the collaboration.

Out of 177 respondents, over three-quarters (75.71%) replied that they had felt that there was a **strong sense of mutual benefit within the collaboration**, whilst 16.95% stated that they had found the HEI to be the main beneficiary of the collaboration. A relatively small proportion (7.34%) thought that their own organisation had been the main beneficiary.

This was further echoed in the second question which asked if respondents felt inclined to work with Higher Education in the future. This time 180 people responded with an overwhelmingly positive **73.33% of respondents** stating that they **would definitely like to work with the HEI sector again** in the future. A further 18.89% reported that they ‘probably would’ work and only 5.56% of respondents stated that they would ‘probably not’ work with the HEI sector again, with a smaller percentage (2.22%) of respondents replying that they definitely would not. This positive response indicates a real interest in and commitment to developing knowledge exchange collaborations with HEIs coming from the arts and cultural sector.

Our third question took the definition of knowledge exchange outlined by the Knowledge Exchange Concordat and used that to ask respondents to tell us how far they felt their collaborations had supported knowledge exchange and sharing. **Of 177 respondents, almost 70% felt their collaborations either supported ‘a great deal’ of knowledge exchange and sharing between the arts/culture sector and HEI(s) (48.59%) or ‘a lot’ of knowledge**

**exchange (20.35%).** A fifth or so of respondents (20.90%) felt that the collaboration had supported KE 'to some extent'. Less than 7% felt their collaborations had contributed either 'a little' (4.52%) or 'not at all' (2.26%) to KE, whilst a small number (3.39%) of respondents felt they could not yet say, as the collaboration was still ongoing.

Taken together, these combined responses reveal a generally very optimistic outlook for the potential and appetite for future collaborations between the arts and cultural sector and HEIs.

### 5.7.3 Importance of research collaborations to Arts and Culture Organisations

Of the 163 respondents who answered this question, over three quarters of respondents (75.46%) told us that research collaborations were either the most important (9.2%) or 'a priority but not the most important' aspect of their work (66.26%). Only 15.95% of respondents said collaborations were 'not very important' to their organization with 2.4% of respondents stating that collaborations were 'not at all important'. There was also a small number (6.13%) who were unsure of the importance of collaborations to their organisations. The overall picture yet again suggests a very significant level of interest in research collaborations with Higher Education.

To expand further on this question, we provided an optional open-ended question for respondents to provide additional information about how research collaborations fitted with their organisational mission. The responses to the question were yet again really rich and compelling and here below we have highlighted a few recurring themes emerging from these narratives as follows:

- As a way to share, widen and better understand audiences at a local, regional and international scale;
- To enable working on major projects with national significance
- For practical support and skills building for artists;
- For the opportunity to share physical spaces and infrastructure;
- To access and engage with more research and expertise on artistic practice/interests
- To better understand history/experiences/subject/theories of creative practice;
- To develop research frameworks and improve evaluation practice;
- To establish shared strategic objectives;
- To obtain robust evidence for business planning;
- To put into place a cooperative model of collaboration built on similar values;



- To strengthen specific arts/cultural subsectors in particular regions.
- To help map pathways through collections
- To help with creation of new content and narratives
- To keep practices up to date and encourage peer networking
- To provide evidence to support future work

## 5.8 Evaluating the Collaboration

We had 150 respondents to our open-text question on how the collaborations were evaluated. Here we asked for details on who evaluated the work and which methods were used. Responses suggested that collaborations were most likely to be evaluated by university partners, or not at all, although there was some evidence to suggest that sometimes evaluation was undertaken by the cultural practitioner/organisation themselves, or by an independent evaluator. It was, however, less likely for collaborations to be co-evaluated, with less than ten respondents reporting this to be the case. Some organisation-led evaluations were required for funding bodies as evidence for specific grants. Some organisations expressed dissatisfaction at having a minimal role in the university-led evaluations, or said that they had not received any results or feedback gathered from these evaluations.

The open-text option for this question allowed respondents to provide information on the various data collection methods applied. Evaluation methods were largely qualitative rather than quantitative, with the following examples reported:

**Table 5: Qualitative approaches to evaluating HEI collaborations**

Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Academic evaluations and reviews for studentships (e.g. PhD)</li> <li>- Arts Council England grant reports</li> <li>- Action research methods</li> <li>- Annual appraisals</li> <li>- Case studies</li> <li>- Co-designed monitoring structures</li> <li>- Feedback forms for participants</li> <li>- Films and videos</li> <li>- Formal reporting for funding requirements</li> <li>- Interviews</li> <li>- Joint academic papers</li> <li>- Modules assessed through QA procedures or Exam Board reviews</li> <li>- Narrative based enquiry</li> <li>- Observation-based evaluation</li> <li>- Peer-review between artists/practitioners</li> <li>- Quarterly reviews of project progress/outcomes</li> <li>- Photos</li> <li>- REF submission</li> <li>- Reflective journals</li> <li>- Surveys (e.g. visitors)</li> <li>- Theories of change and evaluation frameworks</li> </ul>
Variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anecdotal evidence</li> <li>- Impact on beneficiaries</li> <li>- Social media comments</li> <li>- Student feedback</li> </ul>

**Table 6: Quantitative approaches to evaluating HEI collaborations**

Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Internal accountancy reviews</li> <li>- Reviews of sales of products/collections</li> </ul>
Variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Audience numbers</li> <li>- Box office turnover</li> <li>- Demographic statistics (e.g. ethnicity, disability)</li> <li>- Student grades (e.g. outcome of leading modules)</li> <li>- Ticket sales</li> </ul>

Some comments discussed how project outcomes were evaluated rather than the strength of the collaboration partnership itself, highlighting both a possible focus for future evaluations as well as indicating the need to also consider how best to measure and understand the wider range of collaborative values within evaluation methods.

There were a number of comments suggesting that some evaluations seemed ‘rushed’ due to lack of time or human/financial resources, with other collaborations relying on informal evaluations via check-ins and meetings rather than a formal evaluation strategy. There were also suggestions that future evaluations could be more mutually beneficial by being more tailored towards the outcomes of the project and priorities of smaller cultural organisations. One comment discussed a project being supported by a large external research centre with a focus on how collaborative partners could produce new metric data collection methods, highlighting possible avenues for future cross-sector research.

## 5.9 Connecting with NCACE’s mission and supporting future Knowledge Exchange

We were pleased to have 219 survey respondents give us their thoughts in relation to **the mission and activities of NCACE**, providing us with information about which of NCACE’s activities would be most valuable to the respondents. **Over 92% of respondents told us the proposed NCACE activities would be either valuable or very valuable to them.**

The following percentage of respondents rated our core planned activities as ‘very valuable’:

- Ideas Labs and Networking activities to meet potential researcher partners (48.86%)
- Learning programmes and activities to support capacity and skills for developing collaborations (43.58%);
- Events showcasing creative research collaborations and their outcomes (41.1%);
- Online resource centre with toolkits, case studies and publications about creative collaborations (39.91%).

Less than 8% of all respondents stated that the proposed NCACE activities would be ‘not very valuable’ or ‘of no value’ to them with some sharing concerns about what they felt was another HEI- focused initiative. However overall, as indicated the feedback strongly suggests the need for substantial support infrastructure to further develop knowledge exchange activities and collaborations.

**What else the sector would value:** When given the opportunity to suggest other activities that could be valuable for the sector, respondents articulated the following areas:

- Troubleshooting of collaborations
- Centralised online lists of HEIs and their specialities/contact details or a matchmaking service of some kind to support research interests
- A KE prospectus
- Funded opportunities, and information about funding opportunities, for practitioners to access HEIs
- Sessions to support practical understanding of KE related issues including: the research and development landscape and how it operates; how to develop effective KE collaborations, how to support better clarity around internal workings of HEIs, full economic costing and budgeting in KE collaborations, evaluation of collaborations, ethics and data collection
- International network creation

## 5.10 Responses from Non-Collaborators

Respondents with no prior experience of collaboration with HEIs were directed to a further stream of questions which specifically aimed to understand the various factors involved. The first of these questions asked whether the respondents had actually considered working with an HEI. Out of the 80 respondents, 90% told us that yes they had considered working with a HEI. Those who said they had not considered working with a HEI were directed to a follow up question with 7 people saying they were unaware of opportunities and a further 2 respondents said that collaborations would distract them from their core mission.

We also wanted to further understand the specific barriers to collaborating from the perspective of those who reported that they had not been involved with collaborations, but had considered doing so. The main barriers reported were: not knowing how to go about a collaboration (62.90%); lack of time/staff (38.71%); not being sure what the HEI had to offer (22.58%); an attempt had been made but no funding was available (12.90%); universities not getting back in touch (12.90%); and collaboration initiators leaving the cultural organisation (3.23%). In an additional open-text response box, respondents listing other issues perceived to be barriers including: 'bureaucratic' or impermeable university governance structures; a lack of information about who best to contact about collaborations; no HEI within the organisation's local area; and a lack of trust around university ethics, motivations and priorities.

## 6. General patterns

In addition to the findings resulting from the core survey questions, we undertook some further analysis to see what other patterns we might be able to detect. Of significant interest to us were the following issues: prior experience; size (especially given that around a quarter of our respondents were individual practitioners); patterns related to organisation type and to individual practitioners. We have also listed a number of other interesting miscellaneous observations.

**Organisational resources: prior experience.** Prior experience of collaboration with HEI is an important differentiating feature among respondents. Organisations with greater experience of collaborating with HEIs:

- Tend to play a greater variety of roles with the collaboration (they are more versatile)
- Are particularly likely to engage in co-design and production (80% of more experienced respondents and by 49% of less experienced ones)
- Are more likely to approach the university directly
- Are also more likely to approach the university and be aware of available grant funding
- Are more likely to know where the funding came from, and to use all types of funding sources
- Are more likely to be part of collaborations that are in receipt of Research Council or other significant funds.
- Are also more likely to self-fund their collaborations
- Tend to select more themes

**Organisation size** is important in differentiating respondents' roles in the collaboration and in how the collaboration is initiated:

- The share of respondents that ticked "Teaching or leading workshops with students and/or university staff" is particularly high for individual artists or cultural practitioners.
- More than half of micro and small organizations tick "Leading the project", while more than half of individuals and micro-organizations tick "Using university resources / expertise to develop your work"
- Individuals and smaller organizations are more likely to be approached by a university while the opposite holds for larger organizations (except for the largest ones)

**Organisation type patterns:** We find some relevant differences among organisation types particularly in relation to the way in which the collaboration is initiated:

- Individuals and local authorities are most frequently approached directly by the University/College
- Smaller community-led organisations mainly rely on networks in order to initiate their collaborations
- For all other types of organisations, the most frequent approach is from organisation itself to the university
- Collaborations with funding from research council other than AHRC or the university itself were more frequently initiated by the university
- Collaborations with funding from AHRC, Arts Council, local authority, trust or foundation, or self-funded, were more frequently initiated by the respondent

**Specific patterns connected to individual practitioners (freelancers):** If we just distinguish between respondents who are individual freelancers and those who work for an organization (of any kind) unsurprisingly perhaps we find that individuals are generally in what we might think of as a less powerful position vis a vis the HEI. They are:

- more likely to be contacted by the university and less likely to initiate the collaboration themselves
- more likely to play the role of data/information providers and less likely to lead the project and/or to use the university's resources

**Other interesting patterns:** We also detected some interesting sector patterns in relation to the main role played in the collaboration and to the collaboration's source of funding.

- While respondents in most sectors ticked "Co-design and production/delivery of an arts/creative project" as their main role, respondents in both Literature and Libraries and Visual Arts and Crafts ticked "Using university resources / expertise to develop your work" as their main role.
- Although we received only a small proportion of responses from the museums sector, their collaborative activities with HEIs were more likely to receive AHRC funding.

## 7. Emerging Research Needs

As far as we are aware and at the time of writing, this is the most comprehensive survey of its kind to be taken nationally. As we might expect, whilst the survey has provided us with a solid data set and given us very considerable insights into how the arts and culture sector is collaborating with universities, it does however raise a number of areas for further research. These include:

- A better understanding of how the Museums Sector as a whole are working in collaboration with universities, given that we had relatively low levels of respondents from that sector to the survey and given their prominence in UKRI.
- A better understanding of the ways in which individual practitioners and creative freelancers work with, navigate and influence Higher Education and act as intermediaries between HE and the wider creative sector. We had a high proportion of respondents from this sector who cited work primarily connected to teaching and one-off workshops, but what else is this telling us about the connections between the sectors.
- The evidence shows there is a need for further action research on what better support in order to undertake Knowledge Exchange might involve and what a more transparent funding landscape might need to look like.
- Greater research is also needed to unpick exactly what the training and skills development needs of the sector are in response to their highlighted needs.
- Better understanding of the value created to the arts and culture sector by Collaborative Doctoral Awards and student knowledge exchange more widely.

More reports and case studies should be written about knowledge exchange collaborations from the perspective of the arts and cultural sector. This would enrich the current literature base considerably, as has also been noted in NCACE recent Literature Review by Dr Sarah Sigal.

Our findings also suggest that universities might benefit from a better understanding of the positive impacts that cultural collaborations and knowledge exchange can play for institutions, their public profile and indeed their performance in REF and KEF, both of which also strongly evidence and narrate these connections and networks

NCACE has published two reports highlighting those contributions and relationships in REF and KEF (see NCACE, 2021a and 2021b in the bibliography) and we are aware that the survey presents us with an opportunity for further cross-examination.

In addition to these areas, the findings suggest that more opportunities should be created to connect and build relationships across the sectors following the emphasis on pre-existing connections leading to collaborations. They also highlight the timeliness of the soon to be launched NCACE Evidence Repository as a space to host and share information and evidence about the expanding field of cultural knowledge exchange.



## 8. Concluding Remarks

As has been indicated comprehensively throughout our findings to this survey, collaborations with Higher Education Institutions are regularly taking place and, furthermore, they are highly valued by the arts and culture sector - with a substantial majority (75%) of our respondents having worked with academic institutions on multiple occasions.

The geographical spread of the collaborations and the types of HEIs with whom they are taking place is such a rich seam that we have developed a sister publication to this, *'The role of 'place' in collaborations between HEIs and the arts and cultural sector'*, profiling those aspects of the survey in greater detail.

The richness and diversity of the collaborations reported were also remarkable, enabling us to identify many modes of collaborations. Unsurprisingly, many of these relate to key university missions with many collaborations connected to research and teaching as well as both research placements, such as those afforded through Collaborative Doctoral Awards, as well as work experience placements for undergraduates and masters students. In addition to these three key modes other examples included: public and community engagement, joint programming and commissioning, Artist-in-Residence models, strategic partnerships, sometimes connected to the development of new cultural buildings, as well as skills, business and entrepreneurship initiatives, not to mention collaborations that were in and of themselves networked initiatives.

We found that in general, the more experienced respondents were with working with universities, the more likely they were to undertake a variety of roles in the collaboration and to be adept at identifying diverse routes to funding. Personal connectivity, the social nature of collaboration and strong relationships also came through very strongly as being one, if not 'the' key ingredient to developing successful partnerships, indicating the importance of softer skills such as people management, trust building and effective, creative leadership.

Funding for collaborations was a less than rosy picture and the fact that only 75 of our respondents were prepared to give us an indication of the financial value of their collaboration suggests a significant presence of ad hoc, unpaid or voluntary activity as well as an undoubtedly great deal of emotional labour. This in turn does of course point to the need for more joined up thinking about how, and by whom, collaborative activities should be supported. Those initiatives that were in receipt of funds cited self-funding or funding via their university partners. External funding bodies including Arts Council England (ACE) and research councils, in particular the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRC) were also mentioned.

On occasion too, substantial projects of £1million or more were listed, however these would still appear to be really quite rare.

In spite of this, however, 74% of our respondents say they would definitely work with the sector again suggesting that the benefits of collaboration are wider and have greater values than the financial element alone, important as that is. Indeed the centrality and value of collaborations, at least within the scope of this survey, were very highly rated, with many recurring themes ranging from the role of research in supporting and helping to shine a light on artistic practice and helping to, for example, ‘map pathways through collections’ to helping to create stronger and more vibrant cultural ecosystems in parts of the country.

However, for collaborative activities to be better supported and to reach their best potential into the future, it is clear from the survey that the arts and culture sector does need support. Getting a better picture of the possible routes to funding for collaborative activities emerges as only one of a number of practical aids that respondents told us would be very helpful. We were pleased and reassured to see that 92% were receptive to NCACE’s proposed activities over the coming years. These include: ideas labs and networking activities, learning programmes to support skills and capacity building, events showcasing successful collaborative activities and online resources to support better knowledge and know-how.

More specifically, we were told that the arts and culture sector feels the need to have a better understanding of the university landscape and how it operates to support best practice in working together. Matchmaking services, knowledge about funding opportunities, access to funding, and practical sessions about the R&D landscape, and getting involved in it were all cited. In our work over the coming years, we will be working hard to address some of these needs. Challenges will remain however, particularly with regard to scaling, and there are parts to be played by many actors; ranging from our funding bodies to HEIs and indeed the arts and culture sector to create the best mechanisms to help with these needs and to tell the best stories about these incredible yet all too often unsung endeavours that are so mutually beneficial and that are supporting and enriching so many cultural lives and careers and bringing so much value to so many places around the country.

Evelyn Wilson, Emily Hopkins and Dr Federica Rossi  
NCACE  
November 2021

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Statistical information regarding the survey question asking for the geographical location of the artist/cultural organisation.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
East of England	4.35% 10
East Midlands	5.65% 13
London	31.74% 73
North East	5.22% 12
North West	8.70% 20
South East	10.00% 23
South West	6.52% 15
West Midlands	9.13% 21
Yorkshire	5.65% 13
Northern Ireland	0.87% 2
Scotland	3.48% 8
Wales	3.48% 8
Elsewhere in Europe	3.04% 7
Outside Europe	2.17% 5
TOTAL	230

**Appendix 2: Table detailing the cultural sub sector in which the cultural practitioner/organisation worked, as self-reported by 253 respondents.**

Across Multiple Arts Forms (including cross-disciplinary)	93	36.76%
Dance	15	5.93%
Film/Media/Digital	8	3.16%
Literature and Libraries	9	3.56%
Music and Sound	29	11.46%
Museums	7	2.77%
Performance and Theatre	46	18.18%
Visual Art and Crafts	37	14.62%
Other	9	3.56%
	253	100.00%

