Career options with a history of art degree

From the art world to public relations and marketing, your history of art degree will give you exciting opportunities. Learn more about your career options and how we can support you on your journey.

A history of art degree gives you the in-depth knowledge to enter a variety of roles within the art world and many Nottingham graduates have successfully pursued such roles in the past. Equally, other students have found success across a wide variety of job sectors and it is important to recognise how transferable your skills can be in order to maximise both your options and your competitiveness.

What skills have I got?
The skills gained from studying history of art are diverse and transferable to lots of career fields. Skills include:

• visual awareness
• analysis and interpretation of information
• presentation
• spoken and written communication
• working independently and to deadlines
• powers of imagination to understand and empathise with the worlds of others

It is important that you can talk about these skills on application forms and in interviews.

Range of careers
Many people look to work in public art galleries and roles can vary including: curating, education and learning, audience engagement, marketing and public relations, visitor experiences and conservation. Public sector cuts have recently reduced some of these opportunities, but you should be aware of newer roles in business development and fundraising that are growing in response to the economic climate, especially in larger galleries.

Alternatively, you could consider the commercial art sector which typically cover private galleries and auction houses. Starting roles tend to be gallery assistants and gaining some work experience as a student with auction houses is a good place to start.

Some students consider entering the museum and heritage and arts and culture sectors in a variety of roles. Related work can be found in art publishing and relevant media organisations. Others have found successful openings in public relations, retail, marketing and charities.

Some students choose to go on to further study, doing taught masters in art history, visual cultures, galleries and museums studies and conservation etc or are pursuing professional training to move into teaching or law.

Stepping stones
It is true to say that many graduates of history of art (and other subjects) take some time building their career through a series of roles to get to a specific career where they want to be or even to decide what job suits them. This could be due to a variety of reasons, for example:

• the sector they want to enter requires an entry-level position (for example: heritage, media roles and publishing) or
• they are saving up to fund a postgraduate course or travel and therefore their first destination is a stopgap.

Extracurricular activities
Developing skills outside your degree course will enhance your CV and allow you to provide evidence of these in applications and at interviews. Examples are listed below.

• The Students’ Union offers a wide range of volunteering options both locally and internationally which you can fit around your studies – they have a fair at the start of every academic year but you can get in touch any time www.su.nottingham.ac.uk/activities/volunteering
Career options with Art History

How we can help

- You can talk to us about any aspect of your career such as your career options, work experience or internships, postgraduate study or if you have a query about your CV, application form or job interview.
- Talk to our team without an appointment at our drop-in service in the Humanities and Trent Buildings during term-time. The days and times are listed on our website.
- Alternatively book an appointment through My Career. These are available all year round and take place in our office on Level D West, Portland Building (above NatWest).
- We offer a wide range of employer presentations and workshops throughout the year. We organise sector workshops covering careers in: publishing, advertising, marketing and public relations, archives, journalism, arts into business and law.
- Check out the graduate vacancies and internships listed on My Career and set up email alerts for new opportunities. You may also be interested in Nottingham Internships Scheme with summer placements in local small to medium-sized enterprises.
- Start exploring your options on our website

General advice

The Prospects website provides information on career options with a history of art degree and job profiles.

Sources of further information

Industry insights, job profiles, jobs and case studies

- Association of Art Historians – also gain access to bursaries, competitions and awards. The book Careers in Art History is available from their website, Hallward Library and the Department of History of Art
- www.aah.org.uk
- Creative & Cultural Skills
- www.ccskills.org.uk/careers/advice

List of public galleries and museums

- National Museums Directors’ Council
- www.nationalmuseums.org.uk
- Museums & Galleries Yearbook available in Hallward Library

Internships and volunteering in regional and national galleries

Check out individual gallery websites; the following offer internships
- Tate
- www.tate.org.uk
- Victoria and Albert Museum
- www.vam.ac.uk
- Barber Institute of Fine Art
- www.barber.org.uk

Conservation opportunities

- The Institute of Conservation – details of internships
- www.icon.org.uk

Volunteering opportunities in Nottingham

- Backlit Gallery
- backlit.org.uk
- New Art Exchange
- www.nae.org.uk
- Nottingham Contemporary
- www.nottinghamcontemporary.org
- Surface Gallery
- www.surfacegallery.org
- Nottingham Lakeside Arts – The University of Nottingham’s public arts facility
- www.lakesidearts.org.uk

We're here to help, get in touch:

Careers and Employability Service
The University of Nottingham
Portland Building, Level D West
University Park
Nottingham NG7 2RD
United Kingdom

t: 0115 951 3680
e: careers-team@nottingham.ac.uk
www.nottingham.ac.uk/careers

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t: +44 (0)115 951 5559
e: alternativeformats@nottingham.ac.uk

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