



# Where do I start?

## Museums and Galleries

### Introduction

There are many museums and galleries across the UK, ranging from large iconic national bodies to small local organisations staffed mainly by volunteers. Many museums and galleries are run by local authorities.

The role of these institutions is not only to acquire and preserve objects but to interpret them by advising on their historical and cultural significance, and to widen public understanding and access. This has been summarised (by The McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery and Museum) as “collecting, recording, caring and sharing”.

Employment opportunities range from curator or conservator to roles in marketing, fundraising, exhibition design, retail and education. In the smallest organisations, these responsibilities may all rest with the same person.

There is a lot of competition for jobs in this sector and salaries are generally modest, although job satisfaction can be very high. Most applicants have a degree and many will also have a postgraduate qualification. Volunteering in any sort of position in this sector will give you a useful insight into how it works and will strengthen your applications for jobs or postgraduate courses.

### Finding out about...

#### Web

The Careers Service website links to many useful websites about

museums and galleries, including some that contain job vacancies. Use the *Information, patents and heritage management* section at [www.ed.ac.uk/careers/occupations](http://www.ed.ac.uk/careers/occupations).

- The Museums Association ([www.museumsassociation.org](http://www.museumsassociation.org)) is the leading professional body for this sector in the UK. Its website has very helpful information on starting a career in museums and galleries, and includes case-studies on a wide range of roles. You will find information on choosing postgraduate courses, as well as vacancies, salary surveys and a database of museum-related companies and suppliers.
- Engage ([www.engage.org](http://www.engage.org)) is an organisation which promotes enjoyment of the visual arts by developing projects and programmes to widen access. Its website has lots of information on working in a gallery, with an emphasis on gallery education.

### Information folders

- Green folder (W3) *Heritage & Museums Management*

**Reference Books** (the brackets refer to which Careers Service office holds them)

- *Museums and Galleries Yearbook* <sup>(C & KB)</sup>
- *How To Get A Job In a Museum or Art Gallery* <sup>(C & KB)</sup>
- *Museums: A Place To Work – Planning Museum Careers* <sup>(C)</sup>
- *Careers in Art History* <sup>(C)</sup>

### Journals

- *Museums Journal* <sup>(C & KB)</sup>

### Information Team

- The Careers Information Adviser at our helpdesk will be happy to help with information and advice on careers in museums and galleries. Even if we do not have the information you are after, we can tell you how to track it down. No need to make an appointment - just ask!

### Getting experience

- **Volunteering** is an excellent way of showing commitment and of exploring the various career paths. Many smaller museums and galleries rely heavily on their volunteer staff, and opportunities will be advertised through volunteer agencies. There can be a lot of competition for voluntary roles, especially with larger organisations,

and it may be worthwhile making a speculative approach to smaller less well-known ones. For information on voluntary work, visit [www.ed.ac.uk/careers](http://www.ed.ac.uk/careers)>Explore your options>Volunteering. Opportunities are also advertised on the Creative Scotland website, <http://opportunities.creativescotland.com>.

- To find museums and galleries in Edinburgh and Scotland to approach speculatively, use Museums Galleries Scotland's database:  
[www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/scotlands-museums](http://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/scotlands-museums).
- The University of Edinburgh's Centre for Research Collections (CRC) regularly has volunteers and interns working in areas including museums and exhibitions.
- It can be helpful to speak to professionals who are currently working in the sector. They can give you an insider's view and relevant, up-to-date advice.
- The **Connect.ed** database (accessible to students from 3rd year onwards) is an informal and confidential opportunity for you to gather occupational knowledge from former University of Edinburgh students currently working in the area you are interested in. Access it from the Careers tab on MyEd.
- You could also contact a local museum or gallery and ask to speak to a member of staff about their experiences and skills. Use the **Museums And Galleries Yearbook** to identify contacts for speculative approaches.

## How to find a job

- Check MyCareerHub, available through the Careers Service website, for vacancies. It is also worth looking at the archived vacancies to see organisations who have advertised with us in the past and who may be worth approaching with a speculative application.
- Museums vacancies are advertised on the website [www.museumsassociation.org](http://www.museumsassociation.org).
- The University of Leicester's Museum Studies Department maintains the jobs desk which advertises jobs in museums, [www.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/jobdesk](http://www.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/jobdesk)
- For jobs in museums and galleries run by local authorities, look for vacancies on the councils' own websites or use My Job Scotland, [www.myjobscotland.gov.uk](http://www.myjobscotland.gov.uk) or Local Government Talent: Jobs, [www.lgjobs.com](http://www.lgjobs.com).

- Networking is a great way to find out about jobs. By building up a range of contacts within the sector you can hear about opportunities before they are advertised. If you are unsure about this approach look at the information about networking in the red Job Seeking Strategies folder, or look on our website [www.ed.ac.uk/careers](http://www.ed.ac.uk/careers)>Looking for work>Graduate jobs>Finding unadvertised vacancies. You are welcome to discuss this approach with a Careers Consultant.
- Speculative applications use a similar method to networking. You can use the Museums & Galleries Yearbook to identify organisations to approach. Find out more in the red Applications folder in the Careers Information Centre or look on our website [www.ed.ac.uk/careers](http://www.ed.ac.uk/careers)>Looking for work>Graduate Jobs>Finding unadvertised vacancies. A Careers Consultant can provide you with feedback on your application.
- Social media can be an effective way to connect with people working in museums and galleries, identify potential employers, find out about vacancies and learn about the latest news and issues affecting the sector. For advice on using social media, visit [www.ed.ac.uk/careers](http://www.ed.ac.uk/careers)>Looking for work>Graduate jobs>Finding unadvertised jobs>Using social media.

### Further study

- A postgraduate course in museum studies, or similar, may increase your chances of entering the profession, but is not essential and is definitely not a guarantee of getting a job in this field. Some recruiters will be more impressed by extensive relevant work experience than a postgraduate qualification.
- For entry to most postgraduate courses work experience (either paid or voluntary) is an important factor, whatever your first degree subject.
- For curatorial positions, a PhD in a related subject may be more useful than a museums qualification. Discuss this with a Careers Consultant or with contacts in the sector.
- Roles in, for example, marketing or museum education may look for relevant qualifications in marketing or teaching rather than museum studies.
- Most students doing postgraduate courses fund themselves or take out a Professional And Career Development Loan. Some courses have some funding available from the Arts & Humanities

Research Council. Course websites will tell you if this is the case.

- Find a list of relevant courses in the Museums & Galleries Yearbook which is available for reference in the Careers Service or on Prospects ([www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)).
- The content of courses will vary. Some might have an emphasis on archaeology, others on social history. Choose one which corresponds to your particular interest.
- Course websites may have case studies of alumni, or list their occupations. This can give you a flavour of the course. It is always worth contacting the course leader/administrator if you have specific queries.
- Postgraduate courses can offer networking opportunities, as visiting lecturers may act as useful contacts for job hunting. Many courses include a work placement, which is another way of extending your professional network.

### **Considerations**

- Many jobs are not particularly well-paid. This is a sector to enter for the love of the job rather than remuneration.
- You should be prepared to move around the country if you want to progress through the profession as opportunities are likely to be limited.
- If you work in a small organisation you are likely to have a range of roles and responsibilities. If you work in a large organisation you are more likely to have the chance to specialise. Think about which you would prefer.
- Weekend and evening work may be necessary. Is this something that you are able to do?
- Discuss these issues, or any others which occur to you, with a Careers Consultant.

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**Space for your notes**

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# MyCareerHub

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**Careers Service**

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