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## Crafting professionals: professional development and entrepreneurship in UK crafts higher education

Situated within the context of declining participation in and provision of craft higher education (Crafts Council, 2016), this paper explores pedagogical framings of professional development in UK crafts higher education (HE) and skills for independent craft practice. While a growing body of research has highlighted a need for entrepreneurial skills development in the creative industries (Ball, 2003; Bridgstock, 2011; Oakley, 2013; Hunt et al., 2010) there is currently limited understanding of the extent to which this has been integrated within craft education. There is also a lack of empirical evidence of the influence such practices have on the development of professional practice.

Through analysis of online course descriptions from a sample of undergraduate craft programmes across multiple craft disciplines and regions in England, I examine educational practices for professional development and the ways in which craft, professional practice and entrepreneurship are conceptualised within HE. From this I reflect on approaches taken to contemporary practice and how the presence or absence of discussion on craft and business could impact the practices of future professionals.

This is combined with findings from interviews with four early-career practitioners in which I explore the experience of professional development within HE and identify priority skills and resources, including reflections on educational practices (i.e. placements, live, industry engagement and business-planning) and what additional support is required both within and outside of higher education. The paper also highlights a need for further in-depth research into the influence of HE training on professional development for craft.

This initial paper presents early-stage findings from a collaborative PhD project between King's College London and Crafts Council UK through which the themes of craft work ideologies, entrepreneurship and the skills requirements of crafts graduates are being explored within the context of UK higher education.

## References

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