



PhD Horizons Conference 2017

Panel 4B: Creative Industries

Dr Christopher John Ferguson, Managing Director, Dolce Stil Novo Sound

After a PhD in Italian Literature, he decided to leave academia because he enjoyed teaching but did not care for research. Keen on helping and educating people, and with talent for writing funding applications for others, Ferguson worked in research management at Edinburgh and Stirling. His role involved helping people add structure to their ideas and encouraging them to make solid funding applications.

Realising that he was more of a big picture thinker than a details-oriented person, and put off by the cyclical nature of fellowships applications, he decided to leave. His love for music and making people dance led him to inventing an item that enhances the sound of electric guitars and starting a company that offers music services to businesses. His aim is to support proficient musicians to interact creatively by harnessing new technologies.

Ferguson may see himself as a failed academic, translator, research administrator, musician, and businessman, but he is free and happy to connect with what matters to him and what he loves to do. His advice for setting up a business is to speak with people in related areas, such as innovation and copyright.

PhD skills:

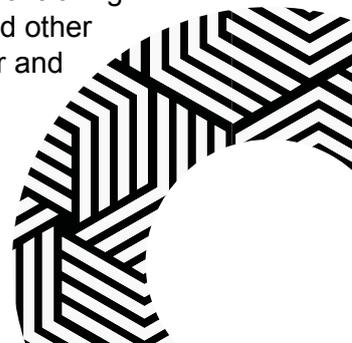
- self-awareness
- ability to write a lot and
- ability to read, digest, and skim while taking in information quickly
- confidence in handling masses of information

Words of wisdom: *everyone is pretending they know what they are doing but they don't, so you might as well do something you're passionate about.*

Dr Femi Folorunso, Development Officer, Creative Scotland

Planning to become an academic after his PhD in English Literature, he became SUISS co-director and taught at QMU on a casual contract before applying for the position of Ethnic Minority Arts Officer with Scottish Arts Council, later Creative Scotland. Folorunso is involved in debating funding and determining the value and public benefit of venues and events. He notes that arts organisations like to hire PhD graduates because they speak the language of universities and funding bodies.

However, artists are notoriously difficult to work with because of their ego, and the politics of culture is a fraught environment, as Creative Scotland is involved in everything, controlling the public endowment for the arts and allocating funding to theatres, festivals, and other events. Theatre Officers often struggle between the philosophy of art (i.e. wonder and genius) and the sociology of arts (i.e. the material conditions for creating).





PhD skills:

- argumentation
- conflict resolution
- questioning instead of taking things at face value

Words of wisdom: *use your PhD like a confidence umbrella in difficult conversations.*

Dr Liz Mylod, Assistant Registrar, National Museums Scotland

After a PhD in History, she became a Trainee Registrar with Leeds museum, then worked for the East Ayrshire leisure trust, and is now Assistant Registrar at National Museums Scotland. Her responsibilities include organising and documenting the movement of objects between exhibits. It is a demanding job that requires the ability to focus on the details while keeping in mind the big picture – just bit like a PhD! The role also involves problem-solving, security assessments, data cleaning for collection search, copyright management and reproductions, managing historic loans, and acquisitions. Other possible paths into the registrar career are through exhibitions and events, other museum services, legal services and copyright, marketing and communication, or curation.

PhD skills:

- reading and ordering vast amounts of documents
- analysis and writing
- problem-solving
- long-term thinking
- project management
- presentations

Words of wisdom: *meet people in the job you want, volunteer, and apply for traineeships – although you will start at the bottom a PhD will help you progress faster.*

