

Creativity Guide for University of Exeter Colleagues

This is an accessible, text-only version of the Creativity Guide. The guide also exists in a print version and a digital version.

The print version can be acquired by contacting the Arts and Culture team at artsandculture@exeter.ac.uk

The digital version can be viewed on Issuu:

https://issuu.com/artsandcultureuoe/docs/creativity_guide_for_university_of_exeter_colleagu

The information in the print and digital guide is arranged visually across the page. For the accessible version, it is arranged in a linear format. Where relevant, text has been modified so that it makes sense in this context.

Introduction

The guide offers an overview of creativity resources that can support your working life at the University of Exeter.

We have provided four suggested pathways, named as different kinds of bird, to aid navigation. The birds were chosen for their bright colours and distinctive silhouettes, and do not hold a symbolic value. You are welcome to choose any combination of pathways that works for you.

We hope you enjoy it. Please get in touch to continue the conversation, you can e-mail us at artsandculture@exeter.ac.uk

On the Arts and Culture website, we have a lot more information and links to temporary programmes. Each pathway has its own webpage, with further information arranged in the following categories:

- Resources and Toolkits
- Spaces and Places
- Colleagues and Collaborators
- Workshops and Courses

Here are the links to the Arts and Culture website for each pathway:

- **Parrot Pathway – I’m curious about creativity; where do I start?** Link:
<https://www.artsandcultureexeter.co.uk/news/im-curious-about-creativity-where-do-i-start>
- **Hummingbird Pathway – How do I bring creativity into my daily work?** Link:
<https://www.artsandcultureexeter.co.uk/news/how-do-i-bring-more-creativity-into-my-daily-work>
- **Blue Jay Pathway – How do I build creative skills in myself and others?** Link:
<https://www.artsandcultureexeter.co.uk/news/how-do-i-build-creative-skills-in-myself-and-others>
- **Woodpecker Pathway – How do I embed creative processes in complex projects?** Link:

<https://www.artsandcultureexeter.co.uk/news/how-do-i-embed-creative-processes-in-complex-projects>

Using the Guide

For each pathway, the information is always arranged in the same order:

- Name of bird – this denotes the pathway.
- Creativity question – this is for the user to choose which pathway, or pathways, are most relevant to their needs.
- Descriptors – this gives a quick sense of the pathway.
- Use for – this helps the user decide if this pathway has the content they are looking for.
- Go to the website for – this gives the user an insight into what further content is available.
- Prompts – each pathway has five short prompts, numbered 1-20 across the guide as there are four pathways. The

prompt includes a short statement, encouraging action or activity, and supporting text that provides more details.

- **Quotes** – each pathway has three short quotes about creativity from inspiring practitioners. The origin of the quote is included in the References.

If you would like to skip directly to the pathways, they are on the following pages –

- **Parrot Pathway – I’m curious about creativity; where do I start?** From pages 6 -8. [Go straight to the Parrot Pathway.](#)
- **Hummingbird Pathway – How do I bring creativity into my daily work?** From pages 9 – 11. [Go straight to the Hummingbird Pathway.](#)
- **Blue Jay Pathway – How do I build creative skills in myself and others?** From pages 12 – 14. [Go straight to the Blue Jay Pathway.](#)

- **Woodpecker Pathway – How do I embed creative processes in complex projects?** From pages 15 – 17. [Go straight to the Woodpecker Pathway.](#)

The guide concludes with a list of [References \(pages 18 – 21\)](#) and [Acknowledgements \(page 22\)](#).

Parrot Pathway - I'm curious about creativity; where do I start?

Descriptors – awareness, confidence, identity

Use for supporting personal well-being and a sense of belonging, socialising with colleagues, taking time for reflection, sparking new ideas, and gaining fresh inspiration.

Go to the website for podcasts, craft and reading groups, nature walks, and introductory workshops:

<https://www.artsandcultureexeter.co.uk/news/im-curious-about-creativity-where-do-i-start>

Prompts

1. Use metaphors to 'loosen the knitting'

When ideas get stuck, metaphors can reveal new perspectives.

How might the characteristics of an everyday object reflect what you're working on, what new dimensions does it add?

2. Find your Flow

When are you in a Flow state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), where time means nothing and you are fully immersed? Attend to these moments.

3. Move with intention

Explore the campus with your query - focus on your surroundings; try a different route; bring a colleague for another perspective.

4. Embrace play

Play alleviates pressure and reduces mental load, inviting new possibilities. Use quick games like Dobble™ to start ideas generation sessions.

5. Try something different

Different prompts have different results - try a range of creative approaches to see what happens. Check out 'little c' creativity and possibility thinking (Craft, see Chappell et al, 2015).

Quotes

1. *“Creative confidence is not achieved by reading, thinking, or talking about it alone... the best way to gain confidence in your creative ability is through action.”*

Quote from David and Tom Kelley, Founder/Partner of IDEO Design Agency (2014, p.29)

2. *“Fine-tuning the ability to feel a creative connection can help us develop our empathy and establish a deeper relationship between ourselves and the world.”*

Quote from Kae Tempest, Poet & Musician (2022, p.3)

3. *“We have inherited the sticky myth that thinking happens in our heads, that creativity is a mental thing... This unfortunately leaves out the surprising materiality of ideas...”*

Quote from Bayo Akomolafe, Philosopher (2019)

Hummingbird Pathway: How do I bring creativity into my daily work?

Descriptors – collaboration, partnerships, habit-forming practices

Use for planning team meetings, away days and stakeholder sessions, encouraging social bonds in new networks, plugging into creative activity across the campuses, reframing your environment.

Go to the website for cultural venues, peer networks to meet others, and liaison teams to meet artists and communities:
<https://www.artsandcultureexeter.co.uk/news/how-do-i-bring-more-creativity-into-my-daily-work>

Prompts

6. See the talent around you.

Chat informally with someone different. Arrange a conversation with someone whose work you admire, or sign up for Fika Roulette via the Wellbeing Network to meet someone new.

7. Use cues.

Try AI cues and/or online versions of Oblique Strategies (Eno & Schmidt, 1975), TRIZ (Altshuller, 1946) and The Co-Production Oracle (Mumby & Schwartz-Marin, 2022) to nudge new thinking.

8. Start small.

Small actions, such as disrupting your daily routine, can be more sustainable than grand gestures. Tune into all your senses.

9. Tap into other networks.

Join mailing lists to gain new insights into other disciplines. Sign up for termly Arts and Culture Community of Practice sessions.

10. Follow your curiosity.

Attend a screening, performance or reading on campus – check out University of Exeter Event listings:

<https://www.exeter.ac.uk/events/>

Quotes

1. *“The making of connections defines and makes possible creativity. These processes tap into what we know and feel, but have not yet (or cannot be) articulated. They elude the rational, conscious mind.”*

Quote from Jan Steward, Artist Educator (2008, p.94)

2. *“I improvise in new rooms, turn on different music, change my reading habits, all in an effort to fight off old habits and shake myself up. If you scratch (seek ideas) the same way all the time, you'll end up in the same place with the same old ideas.”*

Quote from Twyla Tharp, Choreographer (2006, p.107)

3. *“Staying with the trouble means making oddkin; that is, we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles. We become - with each other or not at all.”*

Quote from Donna Haraway, Feminist Theorist, Science & Technology (2016, p.4)

Blue Jay Pathway – How do I build creative skills in myself and others?

Descriptors – professional development, learning, facilitation.

Use for module/course planning and delivery, co-facilitation, reflection on practice, designing sessions for creative skills, stretching your own skillset.

Go to the website for toolkits, maker spaces on campus, funding, networks, and courses for educators:

<https://www.artsandcultureexeter.co.uk/news/how-do-i-build-creative-skills-in-myself-and-others>

Prompts

4. Refresh your skillset.

EduExe is the home of many resources and initiatives that support educator development. Explore the SharePoint resources.

5. Collaborate outside your subject.

How would your session run differently with a poet, dancer, cook, gardener, photographer, graphic designer? Who can you bring in to shake things up?

6. Employ the Five Whys.

Questioning is an artform - iterate to delve deeper.

www.amorebeautifulquestion.com

7. Critique the ethics.

Ethics and trusteeship are part of a set of pedagogic principles used by the Centre for Research in Transdisciplinary Education.

8. Take risks.

Welcome the unfamiliar and extend your Learning Zone

(Senninger, 2000, cited in Lovejoy, 2018) – where might curiosity lead you?

Quotes

1. *“At the highest levels, physics is an intensely creative endeavour, involving finding unique approaches to problems that are impractical by other means.”*

Quote from Chad Orzel, Physicist (2017)

2. *Before you disturb the system in any way, watch how it behaves. If it's a piece of music or a whitewater rapid or a*

fluctuation in a commodity price, study its beat. If it's a social system, watch it work. Learn its history. Ask people who've been around a long time to tell you what happened."

Quote from Donella Meadows, Environmental Scientist (2008, p.170-71)

3. *"Go a little bit out of your depth, and when you don't feel that your feet are quite touching the bottom, you're just about in the right place to do something exciting."*

Quote from David Bowie, Musician (2017)

Woodpecker Pathway: How do I embed creative processes in complex projects?

Descriptors – project management, research, entrepreneurship

Use for interdisciplinary research collaborations, structuring research proposals, fostering links with creative industries.

Go to the website for toolkits, research networks, innovation advice, training, and funding:

<https://www.artsandcultureexeter.co.uk/news/how-do-i-embed-creative-processes-in-complex-projects>

Prompts

4. Design for the user.

The Design Council's Double Diamond model and Stanford d.school's Five Stages of Design Thinking are useful for keeping user needs central.

5. Try new tech tools.

Check out the Digital Skills Initiative (SharePoint) for hundreds of resources to build digital confidence and support your creativity.

6. Work with creatives.

Get Creative is an online toolkit that guides you through every step of working with creative practitioners. See Art and Culture website, Resources

<https://www.artsandcultureexeter.co.uk/resources/get-creative>

7. Explore interdisciplinarity.

Creative Research Methods, Non-Traditional Outputs (NTOs), and Practice Research are forging new pathways for research methodology. Visit the Hidden Ref website www.hidden-ref.org

8. Get out more.

Connect with industry partners via Exeter Innovation's Creative Industries team, the online Ideas Hub, SETSquared, and Directors of Business Engagement and Innovation (DoBEs).

Quotes

- 1. "As an insight percolates into an opportunity, all ideas must pass the sniff test of desirability, viability and technical feasibility before moving forward."*

Quote from Kevin G Bethune, Design and Innovation Executive
(2022, p.96)

2. *“Can design be extricated from its embeddedness in modernist unsustainable and defuturing practices and redirected toward other ontological commitments, practices, narratives and performances?”*

Quote from Arturo Escobar, Anthropologist (2018, p.15)

3. *Cognitive flexibility is fostered through creativity... Additionally, social support and connection are important factors in the creativity-mental health relationship, as creative endeavours often involve social interactions and community engagement.*

Quote from Duce Jean-Berluce, Social and Behavioural Scientist (2024)

References

Akomolafe, B. (2019, 3 December). *Thinking outside the box*.
<https://www.bayoakomolafe.net/post/thinking-outside-the-box>

Bethune, K.G. (2022). *Reimagining Design: Unlocking Strategic Innovation*, The MIT Press.

Chappell, K., Cremin, T. and Robert, J. eds. (2015). *Creativity, Education and Society: Writings of Anna Craft*. London: Trentham Books.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. Harper Collins.

Design Council. (2005). *A Study of the Design Process*. UK: Design Council.

Eno, B., and Schmidt, P. (1975). *Oblique Strategies: Over One Hundred Worthwhile Dilemmas*. [card deck]

Escobar, A. (2018). *Designs for the Pluraverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds*. Duke University Press.

Haraway, D. (2016). *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press.

Jean-Berluche, D. (2024). Creative Expression and Mental Health, *Journal of Creativity*, 34 (August).

Kaplan, S. (1996). *An Introduction to TRIZ: The Russian Theory of Inventive Problem Solving*. Ideation International Inc.

Kelley, T., and Kelley, D. (2014). *Creative Confidence: Unleashing the creative potential within us all*. HarperCollins.

Kent, C. and Steward, J. (1992, 2008). *Learning by Heart: Teachings to free the creative spirit*. Allworth Press.

Lovejoy, C. (2018). The benefits of reflection and role models in learning medicine: An interview with Dr Paquita De Zulueta. *Cambridge Medicine Journal*, 1-3, 2018.

Meadows, D. (2008). *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*. Chelsea Green Publishing.

Mumby, H., and Schwartz Marin, E. (2022). *The Co-Production Oracle*. [card deck]

Orzel, C. (2017, 20 November). Physics is a Creative Endeavour. *Forbes*.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/chadorzel/2017/11/20/physics-is-a-creative-endeavour/>

Stanford d.school. (undated). *Get Started with Design*.

<https://dschool.stanford.edu/innovate/tools/get-started-with-design>

Tempest, K. (2022). *On Connection*. Faber.

Tharp, T. (2003, 2006). *The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It For Life*. Simon & Schuster.

Whately, F. (2017). *David Bowie: The Last Five Years* [Film]. UK: BBC.

Acknowledgements

Devised by **Sarah Campbell** (Arts and Culture, A&C) and greatly improved with colleagues, **Dr. Chloe Asker** (European Centre for Environment and Human Health), **Anna Bunt** (A&C), **Prof. Kerry Chappell** (School of Education), **Kerry Deacon** (Education Incubator), **Belinda Dillon** (Exeter Innovation), **Rebecca Edgerley** (Educator Development), **Dr. Kate Ellis** (Exeter Business School), **Dr. Dreolin Fleischer** (Public Engagement with Research), **Dr. Daniel Fountain** (Department of Languages, Cultures and Visual Studies), **Naome Glanville** (A&C), **Dr. Harriet Hunt** (European Centre for Environment and Human Health), **Dr. Caitlin Kight** (School of Education), **Dr. Peter O'Rourke** (Researcher Development and Research Culture), **Dr. Rob Pearce** (Exeter Business School), **Fiona Rourke** (Creative Quadrant), **Annie Sheen** (A&C) and **Dr. Ellen Wiles** (Department of English and Creative Writing).

Many thanks to the Scriberia Team – **Dan Porter, Lydia Robinson and Matt Swan** – for guiding us through the process and turning our fledgling ideas into something beautiful.

© Copyright Arts and Culture, University of Exeter 2025. All rights reserved.