**Consultant Brief for developing online digital engagement solutions for the Lancaster University art collection at Peter Scott Gallery, Lancaster Arts**

**Overview**

[Lancaster Arts](https://www.lancasterarts.org/) (LA) is a combined arts organisation featuring a contemporary arts programme within the portfolio of Arts Council England through presentations, commissions and arts sector support. We are responsible for the University art collection, held at the Peter Scott Gallery, which is an accredited museum.

We are committed to transforming access to, and engagement with, the University art collection through creating online opportunities to engage. The collection is currently a hidden gem: stored onsite, it is shared through temporary exhibitions and visits for a range of interest groups, students and researchers. We have made good progress with the actual digitisation of the collection but now need support to shape the next stage – making the collection accessible and engaging online in ways that are informed by the needs and interests of a broad range of audiences.

We wish to engage a consultant with museum sector-specific digital expertise to research and explore different technical options, cost these options, make a recommendation to the team and develop a brief for the preferred approach. This brief and costings will form the basis of future fundraising activity to secure investment for this work.

**Why we need this**

We are looking for someone who can help us think through different options for sharing the collection online in an efficient, accessible, affordable and sustainable way, and help us create accurate costings to feed into planned applications for funding. We have access to some support from the University’s Information Systems Services, who will be involved in the project, but are looking for sector-specific advice and capacity.

**Background information**

Art collections have been part of Lancaster University from our first decade, demonstrating early recognition of the vital role that university collections can play in contributing to a distinctive cultural identity for the university, as well as offering a rich resource for the city and region. We wish to fulfil the potential of our collections by making them more visible and accessible for audiences locally, regionally, nationally and internationally in a way that meets twenty-first century needs and standards through provision of a high quality online offer.

Since the 1960s, the collections have grown through acquisitions, two major bequests, gifts, donations and commissions. They include paintings, prints, drawings, sculpture, ceramics and mixed media work spanning thousands of years, from the archaeology of ancient Egypt and Greece to contemporary work created by international artists as well as those working in the North West. Major artists represented include Barbara Hepworth, L S Lowry and Terry Frost.

The Peter Scott Gallery uses MODES as our collection management software. We have no significant documentation backlog, with inventory level records for the vast majority of the collection (4,853 records). Over the past 3 years we have been creating enhanced records with fuller information and semiotic keyword tagging. 42% of the collection has been digitised through professional museum photography or scanning, including all of the paintings, applied arts and antiquities, with the remaining material primarily archive and works on paper.

Lancaster University has invested in 2 existing digital collections access solutions – one used by the [University library](https://digitalcollections.lancaster.ac.uk/), and one by [The Ruskin](https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/the-ruskin/). It will be important to consider how these systems might inter-relate and whether there is an option to build on existing investment to create a fit for purpose solution for the University art collection.

Lancaster Arts is committed to working with the communities we are part of to shape our offer, and works with an Ideas&Connectors Group (ICG) who act as a sounding board as we develop projects and programmes. Alongside this brief, the Lancaster Arts team will be working with the ICG and other potential users to help define audience needs and interests in relation to a digital collections offer. The consultant will be expected to take the findings of these conversations into account when presenting possible solutions and refining the brief.

This work is supported by Arts Council England via a grant from Museum Development North.

**Brief**

We want to identify possible solutions for sharing the collections digitally online that take into consideration the following:

* Cost (development costs and annual costs to maintain)
* User experience including exemplar accessibility standards and opportunities for personalisation / interactivity
* Staff skills and capacity needs to develop and maintain
* Sustainability including data storage
* Data security, resilience and future-proofing
* Suitability to the range of object types within the collection
* Compatibility with existing systems including MODES, our current website, digital collections solutions in use elsewhere in the university
* Customisation / brand compatibility
* Opportunities to link to existing initiatives eg Bloomberg Connects, ArtUK

**Deliverables**

* Presentation of options for possible digital solutions, including cost estimates for each, and recommendations for next steps
* Following selection of an agreed way forward, development of a detailed brief to be used as the basis for a tender process, and associated cost estimates.

**Timescale**

Initial options to be presented by 22 September 2025

Full brief complete by 20 October 2025

**Person Specification**

* Demonstrable track record in working with museum collections to develop online approaches to sharing collections
* Experience commissioning and establishing briefs for digital projects
* Expertise in developing digital solutions that are accessible, engaging and prioritise user experience

**Fee**

 £2800 (to include any necessary travel and other expenses)

**Application process**

Please send a CV and a covering letter explaining how your skills, experiences and expertise will enable you to respond to the brief, including links to relevant previous projects, to miranda@lancasterarts.org by midnight 3 August 2025

Online interviews are likely to be held on 12 August