

Example Case Study for QUAL (qual.org.uk)

Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop (<https://edinburghsculpture.org>)

Background

Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop (ESW) is a centre of artist studio spaces, facilities and opportunities for making, learning and researching sculpture. ESW's remit is to provide opportunities for both artists and audiences to engage in meaningful ways as a way of opening up the debates and developments within contemporary sculpture.

What are you trying to find out?

- To explore the perception of the ESW current offering relative its studio holders' key needs.
- To explore perceptions and awareness amongst its local community (audiences and potential audiences).

Who do you want to talk to?

- ESW studio holders responded to the ESW recruitment email, explaining the nature of the research. Members were given a choice of group time slots and they self-selected the most convenient time to them.
- ESW's potential audiences i.e. those with an interest in the art, but who had not visited ESW.
- All groups were conducted at ESW.

Choosing your approach

- Three mini groups of potential ESW's attenders (3 or 4 people): recruited professionally at £25 per person (www.taylormckenzie.co.uk). The mini groups were split on the basis of age groups in order to facilitate the discussion i.e. similar life stage, interests, demands on time etc. i.e. 18-25; 26-45 and 46 and over.

- Two mini groups of studio holders. At least two groups are necessary to make findings meaningful and here mini groups (rather than full focus groups of 6-8 people) also made it a cost-effective option.
- Time: lunch time (studio holders) and evenings (potential attenders) – to fit in with the working day.
- Duration: 1 hour per group
- Incentive: studio holders were incentivised with a free lunch; potential audiences were incentivised with £30 each.

Methods

Example fieldwork schedule

	Duration and time	Target	Research Aims
1	Wed June 14 th 2017 6.30-7.30pm	Local community / potential ESW attenders: 18-25 years	<i>To explore ESW local community's awareness of ESW, and in particular its facilities and community-based activities and events</i>
2	Wed June 14 th 2017 7.30-8.30pm	Local community / potential ESW attenders: 26-45 years	
3	Wed June 14 th 2017 8.30-9.30pm	Local community / potential ESW attenders: 46 years and over	
4	Wed June 28 th 2017 12-1pm	ESW artists	<i>To explore the perception of the ESW current offering relative to its artistic community's key needs.</i>
5	Wed June 28 th 2017 1-2pm	ESW artists	

Topic Guide 1

ESW potential attendees

Introduction: important to establishing a rapport

- Assurances of confidentiality and introduce the recording device to the group (if there are objections to recording, cannot proceed with recording, take notes only)
- Introduction of self and then go around the group and ask them to introduce themselves, their occupation etc.

Warm up questions: important for context

- Discuss / brainstorm (on flip chart) all types of activities they like to do in their spare time – why, how often, key things that matter, what people relate to / value etc.?
- Explore perceptions of arts venues / activities that are currently available in Edinburgh generally, and then more specifically within their local communities – what
- Discuss whether they feel their needs are met by current arts venues in Edinburgh / across Scotland

Key questions to meeting the research aim

- Explore current awareness of ESW – IF aware – how/why?
- Discuss associations that come to mind when they think of ESW – how and why? Probe what type of person works / might work / attend exhibitions / do workshops within ESW and why etc.

Read pre-prepared description of ESW and its facilities

- Explore perceptions of ESW (brand) identity - perceptions of identity as a building / as an artist space – how and why?
- Considering the current arts activities and spaces you engage with in Edinburgh – how do you think ESW can fit within these / have added value – how and why?
- Are you aware of any communication from ESW among the community? What would be the best way to communicate with you – ask specifically about social media / community engagement events.

Sum up

- What would be your 'ideal' ESW community engagement programme – discuss fully – probe strengths / weaknesses, attract you to go why/why not etc.
- Establish overall favourite ideas, and ways they could be made *even* better...
- Sum up by establishing **key** ESW do's to attract /engage people 'like them' /and the community around ESW

Thank & close

Topic Guide 2

Current ESW studio holders

Introduction: important to establishing a rapport

- Introduction of self and then go around the group and ask them to introduce themselves, their occupation, how long they have been working in the creative industries, where they are based etc.

Warm up questions: important for context

- Explore career background and past / current work
- Explore current professional role – in particular on:
 - Key relationships – particularly in relation to studio spaces / residencies / exhibition spaces
 - Priorities in relation to studio spaces / work
- Explore perceptions of the current contemporary arts scene – particularly in relation to sculpture / visual arts
- Probe for awareness and experiences of different studio spaces in Edinburgh

Key questions to meeting the research aim

- Explore relationship with ESW – how did you become aware / how long have you had your studio space / explore individual and collective experiences of ESW
- Specifically explore and understand ESW's perceived positioning as a studio space – within broader visual arts community context in Scotland – how/why?
- Explore perceived areas of development for ESW? Personally / within the wider artistic community / community engagement

Thank & close

Key findings

NB these represent headline findings only and are presented here to give a flavor of the insights that can be elicited from qualitative research. We also present illustrative quotations from the transcripts to support the findings.

Local community

Values sought from cultural experiences:

- ❖ **Immersive and unusual experiences and unique *whole* experiences:**

“I want to enjoy the before, during and after”

- ❖ **Perceived barriers to contemporary cultural experiences:** a perceived need to *understand* the arts, rather than enjoy it for what it is:

“...Maybe it's taste or maybe some people feel you're meant to be able to understand everything you look at or hear, whereas in reality even the ones who are pretending to understand probably don't.”

- ❖ **Overall lack of awareness of ESW** primarily due to lack of awareness / building perceived to be “off putting” / residential location

“Even though it's a massive building, it's quite understated ...anonymous...there's nothing to see, nothing shouting out.”

- ❖ **Artists and Community: similarities in suggestions to raise awareness of ESW:**

Through community-based events:

“One off, unique events and stuff that can sort of generate a bit of a buzz and stuff, so you’ll hear about them ...maybe not a one off, but you do it a couple of times and then do something new.”

- ❖ **Through Milk Café:** Milk Café as a part of ESW is a key point of ‘neutral’ and ‘everyday’ access:

“When you walk past it now there is Milk Café, because that’s the only thing you can actually identify with”

- ❖ **Through utilizing the ESW courtyard / outdoor space:** as a public art / exhibition space:

“It would be good to just try and do some sort of fun thing...like a sculpture fair...Just have some fun and do it in the courtyard.”

- ❖ **More signage / outdoor sculpture** to raise of ESW and its work:

“...If we had an evolving ...sort of plinth that you have in Trafalgar Square where someone is allowed to show a sculpture for 6 months...”

ESW Artists

- ❖ **The artists felt ESW needed to have a more ‘up front approach’ to raising its awareness:**

“On our website it’s almost as if the organisation is slightly embarrassed or whatever, but they don’t acknowledge us.”

- ❖ **Overall the artists rated ESW very highly**, particularly in terms of:

Value for money/space to work:

"I came here to do a project which was based on very large boxes, a metre cubed boxes...I had nine of them ...I can't think of anywhere else that allows you to use the space in that way way...It's good value for money."

Communal space: supportive community:

"It's a great space for encountering people"

Technical support:

"There's wonderful technical support here ...there are a lot of people with different skills."