

# REF 300-WORD CONTEXTUAL STATEMENT THEMATIC ANALYSIS

## INTRODUCTION

This document serves as a comprehensive guide and resource for academic researchers, particularly those engaged in creative practice, who are preparing to submit their work for evaluation, such as for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) or similar assessments. The content herein is meticulously designed to assist researchers in effectively contextualizing and presenting their creative outputs.

The first section of this document provides a detailed analysis of the structural elements found in 300-word contextual statements from the 2021 REF submissions. This analysis is instrumental in understanding the key components that constitute a well-rounded and impactful statement. It breaks down various aspects such as project overview, methodology, themes, audience engagement, outcomes, and future directions, offering insights into how these elements are woven together to create a coherent narrative about the research.

Following this, the document presents a methodical approach to crafting your own 300-word contextual statement. This section is structured as a step-by-step guide, offering clear and actionable advice on how to articulate the essence of your research in a concise and compelling manner. It emphasizes the importance of clarity, specificity, and relevance in conveying the unique aspects of your creative practice.

To further aid in this process, two sets of questionnaires are included. The first is a detailed questionnaire designed to elicit comprehensive responses covering all critical facets of your research project. The second is a simplified version, tailored for quick and focused reflection, ideal for drafting a preliminary outline of your statement.

This document aims to be a valuable tool for researchers, enabling them to present their creative work in a manner that is both academically rigorous and engaging. By following the guidelines and utilizing the questionnaires provided, researchers can effectively communicate the significance, methodology, and impact of their creative endeavours.

## METHOD

<https://results2021.ref.ac.uk/outputs>

I applied the search filters listed below and downloaded the first 100 results. I subsequently used specific search terms such as 'audiovisual', 'installation', and 'video art' to identify a more specific subset and downloaded these records (see table 1). I extracted the 300-word contextual statements for each record and merged these into one document. This document was then fed into ChatGPT, in addition I fed in further contextual information culled from REF guidance documents. A thematic analysis was then conducted, and the results provided below.

<u>UNIT OF ASSESSMENT</u>
UOA 32 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory
UOA 33 Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies

UOA 34 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information
<u>OUTPUT TYPE</u>
I Performance
J Composition
M Exhibition
Q Digital or visual media
<u>SEARCH RESULTS</u>
1-100 of 1,766
Audiovisual = 2
Installation = 39
Video Art =1

Table 1

## THEMATIC ANALYSIS

After reviewing the 300-word contextual statements from the 2021 REF submissions across all three parts, several patterns, deep structures, frameworks, and semantic characteristics can be identified. These elements reflect the diverse approaches and methodologies employed in creative practice research. Here's a summary of the findings:

1. *Interdisciplinary and Multimodal Approaches*: A common pattern is the integration of multiple disciplines and modalities in the research process. Many projects combine elements of visual arts, performance, digital media, and sound, indicating a trend towards interdisciplinary research in creative practices.
2. *Engagement with Social and Cultural Themes*: Several statements reflect a deep engagement with social, cultural, and historical themes. This includes exploring socio-economic changes, cultural rebalancing, historical narratives, and contemporary social issues like climate change and urban development.
3. *Innovative Use of Technology and Media*: There is a significant emphasis on the innovative use of technology and media. This includes the use of digital tools, immersive installations, algorithmic compositions, and interactive elements, showcasing a trend towards embracing new technologies in creative research.
4. *Site-Specific and Context-Responsive Works*: Many projects are site-specific or responsive to their context, whether it be a physical location, a historical period, or a cultural setting. This indicates a strong awareness of the importance of context in creative practice.
5. *Exploration of Personal and Collective Identities*: A recurring theme is the exploration of personal and collective identities. This includes investigations into subjectivity, gender, cultural identity, and historical figures, reflecting a deep interest in how individual and collective identities are formed and expressed.
6. *Narrative and Storytelling*: The use of narrative and storytelling is prominent, whether through literal narratives in film and performance or through conceptual narratives in installations and exhibitions. This suggests a continued interest in how stories can be used to convey complex ideas and emotions.

7. *Research Through Practice*: The statements often describe research conducted through the act of creation itself, indicating a methodology where practice is not just the outcome but also the means of investigation. This highlights the importance of practice-based research in creative disciplines.
8. *Audience Engagement and Experience*: Many projects place a strong emphasis on audience engagement and the experiential aspect of the work. This includes considerations of how audiences interact with, perceive, and are affected by the work, indicating a focus on the relational aspects of creative practice.
9. *Ethical and Reflective Considerations*: Ethical considerations and reflective practices are evident, especially in projects dealing with sensitive subjects or historical events. This shows a conscientious approach to the impact and implications of creative research.
10. *Global and Local Perspectives*: There is a balance between global and local perspectives, with some projects addressing universal themes while others focus on specific cultural or local contexts. This dual focus reflects the diverse scope of creative practice research.

In summary, these contextual statements from the 2021 REF submissions demonstrate a rich and varied landscape of creative practice research, characterized by interdisciplinary approaches, technological innovation, contextual responsiveness, narrative depth, and a strong focus on audience engagement and ethical considerations.

### **GUIDANCE ON WRITING A 300-WORD CONTEXTUAL STATEMENT**

To create a method for writing your own 300-word contextual statements based on the analysis of the provided examples, we can break down the structural elements commonly found in these statements. This breakdown will provide a framework that you can use as a guide for crafting your statements. Here's a detailed analysis:

#### **Common Structural Elements:**

##### *Introduction of the Project/Research:*

- Purpose: Briefly state the primary goal or objective of the project.
- Context: Provide a short background or the setting in which the research is conducted.

##### *Methodology and Approach:*

- Techniques: Describe the methods or techniques used in the research.
- Interdisciplinary Elements: Mention any interdisciplinary approaches, if applicable.
- Innovation: Highlight any innovative aspects or unique approaches.

##### *Themes and Content:*

- Central Themes: Outline the key themes or concepts explored.
- Cultural/Social Relevance: Explain the project's relevance to cultural, social, historical, or contemporary issues.

##### *Engagement and Interaction:*

- Audience Experience: Discuss how the project engages with its audience or participants.

- **Interactive Elements:** If the project is interactive, describe how it involves the audience.

*Outcomes and Insights:*

- **Findings:** Summarize the main findings or outcomes of the research.
- **Contribution to Field:** Explain how the project contributes to its field or discipline.

*Reflection and Future Directions:*

- **Reflective Insights:** Offer personal or reflective insights about the research process.
- **Future Research:** Mention potential future research directions or questions raised.

**Method for Writing Your Statement:**

*Start with a Clear Introduction:*

- Begin by introducing your project and its main objective. Set the stage by providing necessary background information.

*Detail Your Methodology:*

- Describe the methods you used. Be concise but clear about your approach, especially if it involves unique or innovative techniques.

*Highlight Key Themes:*

- Clearly outline the central themes of your research. Connect these themes to larger cultural, social, or historical contexts.

*Discuss Audience Engagement:*

- Explain how your project engages its audience. If your work is interactive or experiential, detail these aspects.

*Summarize Outcomes:*

- Concisely present the main outcomes or findings of your research. Highlight its contributions to your field.

*Conclude with Reflections and Future Directions:*

- End with reflective insights or thoughts about the research process. Mention any future research directions or unanswered questions.

**Tips for Effective Writing:**

- *Be Concise:* With a 300-word limit, every word counts. Be clear and direct.
- *Use Specific Examples:* Where possible, use specific examples to illustrate your points.
- *Maintain a Scholarly Tone:* While being accessible, maintain a tone appropriate for an academic audience.
- *Revise and Edit:* Ensure clarity and coherence. Edit to fit within the word limit.

By following this structure and method, you can create a comprehensive and coherent 300-word contextual statement that effectively communicates the essence of your research project.

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CRAFTING A 300-WORD CONTEXTUAL STATEMENT

To assist a creative practice researcher in producing a bullet-pointed outline for a 300-word contextual statement, a questionnaire can be an effective tool. This questionnaire will prompt answers that cover key elements typically found in such statements. Here's a simple and concise questionnaire designed for this purpose:

### Questionnaire for Crafting a 300-word Contextual Statement

#### *Project Overview:*

- What is the title of your project?
- Can you summarize the main objective or goal of your project in one or two sentences?

#### *Research Context and Background:*

- What is the broader context or background of your research?
- Are there any specific cultural, social, historical, or contemporary issues that your project addresses?

#### *Methodology and Creative Approach:*

- What are the key methods or techniques you used in your project?
- Did your project involve any innovative or interdisciplinary approaches? If so, please describe them briefly.

#### *Themes and Content:*

- What are the central themes or concepts explored in your project?
- How do these themes relate to the wider context of your field or discipline?

#### *Audience Engagement and Interaction:*

- How does your project engage with its audience?
- Are there any interactive or experiential elements in your project?

#### *Outcomes and Contributions:*

- What are the main outcomes or findings of your research?
- How does your project contribute to the field of creative practice or to a broader discourse?

#### *Reflection and Future Directions:*

- What insights or reflections have you gained from this project?
- Are there any future directions or questions that your project has opened up?

### Instructions for Use:

- Respond to each question concisely, aiming for one to three sentences per answer.
- Use these responses to create a bullet-pointed outline, organizing your answers under relevant headings (e.g., Overview, Methodology, Themes, etc.).
- Ensure that your outline encapsulates the essence of your project, its methodology, themes, audience engagement, and its contributions to the field.

- Use this outline as a basis for drafting your 300-word contextual statement, expanding on each bullet point to create a coherent narrative.

This questionnaire is designed to prompt critical thinking and reflection, helping researchers to distil the core elements of their project into a structured and concise format suitable for a contextual statement.

## **SIMPLIFIED QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN**

Here's a more simplified questionnaire to help a creative practice researcher draft a bullet-pointed outline for a 300-word contextual statement:

### **Simplified Questionnaire for Contextual Statement**

*Project Summary:* What is your project about in one sentence?

*Purpose and Background:* Why did you start this project? What background issue or question does it address?

*Methods and Materials:* What main methods, materials, or techniques did you use?

*Key Themes:* What are one or two key themes or ideas in your project?

*Audience Interaction:* How does your project engage with its audience?

*Main Findings or Outcomes:* What did you discover or achieve with this project?

*Personal Insight or Future Direction:* What is one important thing you've learned, or where do you want to take your work next?

### **Instructions for Use:**

- Keep your answers brief and focused.
- Use these responses to form a structured outline for your statement.
- Expand on each point to elaborate your statement, ensuring clarity and conciseness.

This simplified questionnaire is designed to quickly capture the essence of your project, providing a clear framework for your contextual statement.

*Example survey:* <https://forms.office.com/e/1Rsp0UhdNj>

## Questionnaire for Crafting a 300-word Contextual Statement

<b><i>Project Overview:</i></b>
What is the title of your project? Can you summarize the main objective or goal of your project in one or two sentences?
<b><i>Research Context and Background:</i></b>
What is the broader context or background of your research? Are there any specific cultural, social, historical, or contemporary issues that your project addresses?
<b><i>Methodology and Creative Approach:</i></b>
What are the key methods or techniques you used in your project? Did your project involve any innovative or interdisciplinary approaches? If so, please describe them briefly.
<b><i>Themes and Content:</i></b>
What are the central themes or concepts explored in your project? How do these themes relate to the wider context of your field or discipline?
<b><i>Audience Engagement and Interaction:</i></b>
How does your project engage with its audience? Are there any interactive or experiential elements in your project?
<b><i>Outcomes and Contributions:</i></b>
What are the main outcomes or findings of your research? How does your project contribute to the field of creative practice or to a broader discourse?
<b><i>Reflection and Future Directions:</i></b>
What insights or reflections have you gained from this project? Are there any future directions or questions that your project has opened up?

### Simplified Questionnaire for 300 Word Contextual Statement

<i>Project Summary:</i> What is your project about in one sentence?
<i>Purpose and Background:</i> Why did you start this project? What background issue or question does it address?
<i>Methods and Materials:</i> What main methods, materials, or techniques did you use?
<i>Key Themes:</i> What are one or two key themes or ideas in your project?
<i>Audience Interaction:</i> How does your project engage with its audience?
<i>Main Findings or Outcomes:</i> What did you discover or achieve with this project?
<i>Personal Insight or Future Direction:</i> What is one important thing you've learned, or where do you want to take your work next?

### **300-Word Contextual Statement for "Octopuses and Other Sea Creatures"**

"Octopuses and Other Sea Creatures," immersive audio-visual installation in Portsmouth Cathedral, was a creative inquiry into reconfiguring our socio-environmental subjectivity in response to the ecological crisis. Drawing on Armstrong's (2009) call for an ontological shift towards compassion and companionship, and Guattari's (1995) advocacy for a mental revolution, this project aimed to transform audience perceptions of the ocean from an alien otherworld to an interconnected ecosystem, using the octopus as a metaphor for nature.

The installation's methodology was a blend of interdisciplinary arts and environmental activism. Central to this was the use of Becci Louise's 'Octopus Story' poems, which narrated the journey. Video artist Kim Balouch's projections created an undersea world, while Rusty Sherriff's live sonic landscapes provided an immersive auditory experience. The audience journeyed through three acts: an introduction to the undersea world, interactive learning with mini 'octopus wisdom' installations, and a climactic encounter with a metaphorical octopus, facilitated by 'The Diver'. This structure was designed to foster a transformative experience, promoting a symbiotic relationship with the marine environment.

The project's outcomes were multifaceted. It enhanced my reputation as a creative practitioner and refined my approach to community arts curation. The audience feedback ranged from awe and appreciation to confusion, indicating the diverse impact of immersive art. However, the predominant response was one of engagement and transformation, suggesting success in achieving the project's primary aim.

On reflection, I recognise the need for further skill development in theatrical performance to enhance future immersive experiences. This project has established my position in the city's arts community and has informed the development of a new project, an opportunity to further explore performance elements in audiovisual installations.

This project exemplifies how immersive art can catalyse a shift in environmental consciousness, contributing significantly to the discourse on art's role in addressing the ecological crisis.

[word count 299]