

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

National Lottery Support for Individual Artists Programme

Application Guidance Notes for

- China Artists Residency Programme – Digital Arts

Deadline for Applications: 12noon, 21 August 2025

Decisions: September 2025

Applications must be submitted on-line at www.artscouncil-ni.org/funding

Please Note: this programme is for residencies which will complete by **31 July 2026**



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Introduction

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is pleased to announce a new programme **the China Artists Residency**, in association with the Chinese Consulate (Belfast) and the following organisations:

- China Animation Comic Game Group (China ACG Group Ltd)
- School of Experimental Art and Technological Art, Central Academy of Fine Arts
- Academy of Arts & Design, Tsinghua University

We can offer up to a 30 days residency in Beijing.

Artists may apply for the residency at any time **from 1 October 2025 to 31 July 2026***

***Successful applicant(s) must communicate with the host in order to agree optimal timing for residency.**

These notes give information on who is eligible to apply to the programme and how to submit an application. It also describes how your application will be assessed, how payments will be made and what you will be asked to do if you are awarded a grant.

These Guidance Notes and the relevant application form are available on our website at [China Artists Residency Programme \(opens in a new window\)](#). They may also be requested in large print or other accessible formats if required. Please contact us at artgrants@artscouncil-ni.org if you need further assistance in this regard, including alternative language versions. You can also contact us at that address if you have any queries about any aspect of the programme or its application requirements. Further contact details for all our Artform staff can be found on the Arts Council Website [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Contact Us \(opens in a new window\)](#).

If you are d/Deaf, disabled, or neurodivergent, University of Atypical can provide support with completing your application. Due to the time needed to match you with the best advisor, it is likely that advice sessions will not start before Thursday 31 July. **Please contact University of Atypical as soon as possible to ensure sufficient time for the support process.** Phone: 028 90239450; Email: access@universityofatypical.org.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland welcomes applications from the widest possible range of individuals, representing all categories under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. **We particularly welcome applications by disabled artists and by artists from the generally unionist community as applications from both these demographics are currently under-represented across our programmes aimed at individuals.**

Is your proposal timeframe suitable?

The **China Artists Residency Programme** will only fund up to 30 days residency that will take place at any time between **1 October 2025** and **31 July 2026**. All eligible expenditure must be incurred within these dates. If this is not the case for your proposal, you should NOT apply to this scheme as the Arts Council will not meet any costs incurred or support a residency which falls outside this period.

How much funding is available?

The value of the residency is £5,000 which covers:

- This may be used towards accommodation in Beijing.
- Return Travel to China
- Travel Insurance costs and vaccination costs, if applicable
- The cost of the Visa which the artist must arrange
- Daily stipend of £25

The Host will cover:

- Internal transport to and from Beijing, organised in collaboration with host residency.

Eligibility

Who can apply?

Eligible applicants to the **China Artists Residency Programme** are as follows.

- **For the pilot year, Digital Arts ** is the selected artform for the residency. This year's Residency Programme is for Digital Artists working within the arts sector in Northern Ireland.**
- Employees of statutory bodies¹, undergraduates and postgraduates are eligible to apply but they must prove that the funds which they are seeking are for work/costs which are not properly the concern of their employer and/or are not related to their work or academic study. They must submit evidence of this in the form of a letter on headed paper from their Head of Department.
 - In the case of post-graduate students, the letter must clearly state the title of the student's PhD thesis and include a declaration by the Head of Department. This declaration must state "The project for which funds are being sought does not form part of any academic work undertaken in relation to the above-titled PhD nor will it be assessed as part of any academic course."
 - Applicants undertaking a Masters or a PhD must also include a separate statement which provides information on how the project applied for differs from their Masters or PhD work.

Please note: The Arts Council may use its own judgement in determining this matter.

Eligible applicants must also

- Have made a contribution to artistic activities in Northern Ireland for a minimum period of 1 year within the last 3 years.
- Live in Northern Ireland
(ACNI's budgets are limited and subject to extremely high demand. Our priority must be for artists living and regularly contributing to the arts within Northern Ireland. If you are primarily living in another region of the UK, Republic of Ireland or elsewhere (ie. you live in that region for the majority of the year), you should apply to the Arts Councils in the relevant jurisdiction. Where the Arts Council has concerns regarding this matter, we may seek further clarification from you with regard to this.)
- Be at least 18yrs old and not in secondary education.

¹ A statutory body is a formally established organisation that is, at least in part, publicly funded to deliver a public or government service and which is regulated by government legislation. All schools, further education colleges and universities are statutory bodies under the Education Authority.

****What is Digital Art within the context of this programme?**

For this programme digital art is artwork that is created exclusively in the digital space; it can either exist in the digital space or be translated into a physical object or tangible experience through technology. Work that exists only in the digital space can be artwork that is consumed online or offline; the latter having some form of installation in a venue.

This grant programme does not cover the simple digitisation of art (in any artform) or performance and must relate to the development of your artistic practice and digital capability. Filmed performances, audio recordings or video capture of material that would be intended for in-person performance is not suitable as the output of a project proposal, and applications applying for such output activity will be rejected as ineligible. Such filmed or recorded elements *can* be used as assets within a piece of digital art, for example within animation, virtual experiences, or app development.

Who cannot apply?

- Applicants who have broken the conditions of any previous ACNI award and applicants who remain in breach of any previous letters of offer (regardless of the letter of offer date).

How to apply

Help with your application

These Guidance Notes and the relevant application form are available on our website at [China Artists Residency Programme \(opens in a new window\)](#). They may also be requested in large print or other accessible formats if required. Please contact us at artgrants@artscouncil-ni.org if you need further assistance in this regard, including alternative language versions. You can also contact us at that address if you have any queries about any aspect of the programme or its application requirements. Further contact details for all our Artform staff can be found on the Arts Council Website [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Contact Us \(opens in a new window\)](#).

NB: Officers' advice is restricted to general proposal eligibility and general advice on costs. Officers cannot give comment on written proposals until a full application has been submitted. (Please note also, that it is only on submission of the full application that a final determination of eligibility can be made.)

Making an application

You must apply using our online system. We will not accept applications in hard copy or by email. You will find a link to the China Artists Residency Programme at [China Artists Residency Programme \(opens in a new window\)](#).

If you are d/Deaf, disabled, or neurodivergent, University of Atypical can provide support with completing your application. Due to the time needed to match you with the best advisor, it is likely that advice sessions will not start before Thursday 31 July. **Please contact University of Atypical as soon as possible to ensure sufficient time for the support process.** Phone: 028 90239450; Email: access@universityofatypical.org.

- Online applications may be edited, saved and returned up to the closing date.
- You must submit all mandatory enclosures associated with the application at the same time as your application, ie. they must be uploaded to your online application prior to its submission. These enclosures are listed on the Attachments page within the online application and are detailed below.
- **Please ensure that you leave sufficient time to upload all documents to the system as there can be long delays as the closing deadline approaches and the system will shut down at 12noon precisely on the closing date, 21 August 2025.** If your complete application is not **fully** uploaded when the system closes, your application will not be accepted.
- If you submit your application by the closing deadline, you will receive an automated email advising that your application has been successfully submitted to the system. **If you do not receive this email, your application has not been submitted.**

Please remember that it is your responsibility to ensure that we receive the application form and uploaded enclosures by the closing time and date.

Mandatory Enclosures

Before you submit your application, you **must** upload the mandatory enclosures as listed below.

Important information on these documents can be read below from page 8 onwards.

Mandatory documents
• Artistic CV
• Statement explaining how you would benefit from an artistic residency in China
• Artform-appropriate support material
• IF applicable: Letter from Head of Department regarding employment/academic assessment/study
• IF applicable: Masters/PhD statement

Please note: there will also be an interview process as part of the application process, either in person or online.

Please keep in mind the following important points:

- All mandatory enclosures must be in the accepted formats listed on page 8 below. We cannot accept documents in other formats.
- **The total size of all your uploaded documents should not exceed 25 Mb.**
- You must submit **all** necessary enclosures with your application form. If any enclosures are missing, your application will be ineligible.
- If you submit an enclosure in a format which we do not accept or which is corrupted or which we cannot open, the enclosure will be considered missing, and your application will be ineligible.
- Do not compress files into one zip file. Files must be uploaded as individual documents.
- **All data must be PC compatible.** If non-PC compatible data is supplied, your application will not be assessed. For example, if using a MAC, it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that any enclosures uploaded to the online application are PC compatible.
- Unless explicitly stated as permissible in the Mandatory Enclosure details below, the submission of weblinks or website addresses in lieu of enclosure documents is not acceptable and will result in your application being made ineligible.
- Use of Dropbox or similar cloud-based storage is not permitted as ACNI cannot access sites of that nature.

- Links to any subscription service that requires a login to access are not permitted. If you provide any such links, the enclosures will be deemed missing, and your application will be made ineligible.

Detailed guidance on mandatory enclosures

Further information on all mandatory enclosures is detailed below. If you have any queries about any of the documents, please contact the Arts Council of Northern Ireland by email at artgrants@artscouncil-ni.org.

Mandatory Enclosure	Guidance on Enclosure
Artistic CV	<p>Starting with the most recent examples of your practice – this should include prizes, nominations, awards, commissions, major exhibitions/ performances, publications, etc.</p> <p>NB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not provide unnecessary narrative. - Please note web links to the applicant’s website or to examples of artistic practice are not acceptable.
Statement	Statement explaining how you would benefit from an artistic residency in China.
Artform-appropriate Support Material	<p>These will be examples of your work as an artist.</p> <p><i>Unless explicitly permitted below in relation to your project’s artform, the submission of weblinks or website addresses in lieu of artform-appropriate support material is not acceptable and will result in your application being made ineligible.</i></p> <p><u>ACCEPTABLE FILE FORMATS</u></p> <p>All data must be PC compatible. If non-PC compatible data is supplied, your application will not be assessed. For example, if using a MAC, it is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure that any enclosures uploaded to the online application are PC compatible.</p> <p>We can accept ONLY the following file formats:</p> <p>Image files (JPEG, GIF, TIFF, PNG)</p> <p>Sound files (MP3, WMA)</p> <p>Video files (QuickTime – AVI, MOV, MP4, WMV)</p> <p>Text files (DOC, DOCx, PDF)</p> <p>Spreadsheet files (XLS, XLSx)</p>

Mandatory Enclosure	Guidance on Enclosure
Artform-appropriate Support Material continued	<p>DIGITAL ART</p> <p>Artists must provide 2 examples of their work – this may include, literary, 2D render or audio / visual moving image clips of their work up to 5 minutes duration.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>2 weblinks to examples of their work is acceptable. The links must be directly to the clips; not to a general website. Please remember that you provide links at your own risk. If a link or website is not working correctly or you provide a clip to a general website page and not a specific clip, your application will be deemed ineligible as critical support material has not been made available.</p>
Letter from Head of Department/ Supervisor	<p>IF you are an employee of a statutory body, an undergraduate or postgraduate, you must submit evidence of this in the form of a letter on headed paper from your Head of Department or supervisor stating that your proposal is not part of your professional or academic employment and/or the work is not related to and does not form part of under-graduate/post-graduate study and is not intended to be assessed as part of any academic course.</p> <p>IF you are a post-graduate Masters or PhD student, the letter must clearly state the title of the student’s PhD thesis and include a declaration by the Head of Department. This declaration must state “The project for which funds are being sought does not form part of any academic work undertaken in relation to the above-titled PhD nor will it be assessed as part of any academic course”.</p>
PhD or Masters Statement	<p>IF you are Masters or PhD student, you must submit a statement which briefly describes the subject of your post-graduate thesis and sets out how the project applied for differs from your Masters or PhD work</p>

After you submit your application

- The Arts Council will undertake an eligibility check on your application. In the event of missing information, your application will be deemed as ineligible and will not proceed to assessment. If ineligible, the Arts Council will issue an email advising reasons for ineligibility.
- During the eligibility checking process, the Arts Council will publish a monitoring form to your application account and issue an email notification advising of same. Completion of the monitoring form is not mandatory and will not affect the eligibility and/or assessment of your application. **However**, we would strongly encourage all applicants to complete and submit the monitoring form as monitoring can assist us to deliver better public services and continuous improvements.
- Eligible applications will be assessed by an Arts Development Officer, based on the information provided in the application form and enclosures.
- Officer assessments will be subject to a moderation process.
- The Arts Council will contact you with the final decision by letter by email. If rejected, the Arts Council will provide you with detailed reasons for the rejection.

If you receive an award

Letter of Offer

Following the decision, Arts Council will issue successful applicants with a contract outlining the conditions attached to the award and the specific purposes for which the award can be used.

- You will not be able to incur expenditure until you have received your letter of offer from the Arts Council. You should take this into account when planning your proposal.
- It is important that you read the letter of offer and enclosed conditions carefully before signing and returning it. The letter of offer will set out what you may spend the grant on and by what date the proposal must be completed.
- **If there are any changes to your agreed project from the original application, you must inform the Arts Council immediately in writing before incurring any proposal expenditure.** If you don't tell us about changes you may have to repay the award, and this will affect decisions on any future applications you might make.

How payments will be made

Payments are normally made in stages of 90% and 10%. Each stage will have specific conditions attached to it; your letter of offer will set out these specific conditions and you must comply with them prior to the drawdown of each tranche of funding.

The Arts Council will make payments to UK-based bank accounts in the applicant's name only, or to joint accounts where the applicant is a named account holder. Payments are by BACS transfer only. You will need to complete and return the BACS form issued with your letter of offer.

Post project monitoring

At the conclusion of your project, you will have to submit an End of Project Report and provide a final income and expenditure account for the project, in addition to evidencing the appropriate use of Arts Council and National Lottery branding throughout the course of project delivery. The project report will include:

- Details of the how the project has benefited you
- Evidence of appropriate use of Arts Council and National Lottery branding where relevant
- An evaluation of the project – was it successful? Did you meet your aims? etc.

We may discuss with you how this information is to be collected.

Post project monitoring – Verification

Your project may also be subject to verification by an ACNI staff member. This will ensure that the project grant has been spent in accordance with your letter of offer. It is therefore important that you retain all the project documentation to evidence this.

How we will make our decision

Assessment Stages and Criteria

There are 3 stages to the assessment process. An application must be rated as *Fundable* at Stage 1 in order to proceed to Assessment Stage 2. Assessment Stage 2 will determine which applicants will be invited to the interview stage.

Why might an application be considered *Not Fundable*?

If, in the view of the assessor and Moderation, the application does not demonstrate

- a sufficient quality of artistic practice by the applicant; or,
- the proposal is not of sufficient artistic quality or innovation; or,
- the proposal lacks critical detail

Stage 1	Criteria	Assessed Against
	S1.1 Evidence of the quality of the applicant's artistic practice	Artistic CV and work submitted
	S1.2 Artistic quality / innovation of the proposal and its detail	Information provided by written responses within relevant sections of the application form and relevant mandatory enclosures where appropriate ²
	Criteria	Assessed Against
Stage 2	S2.1 Evidence of the applicant's contribution to the arts	Artistic CV and work submitted
	S2.2 Evidence of how the proposal may enhance the applicant's artistic or professional development	Information provided by written responses within relevant sections of the application form and relevant mandatory enclosures where appropriate
	S2.3 Evidence of how the proposal may enhance the applicant's career	Information provided by written responses within relevant sections of the application form and relevant mandatory enclosures where appropriate

Please note an interview will also form part of the application process. It is anticipated interviews will take place on Thursday 18 September 2025. Should this date change, the Arts Council will advise as soon as possible.

The decision process

All applications will be assessed by an Arts Development Officer against the criteria as listed above, taking into account the programme's aims and priorities. Assessors will consider applications using their professional judgement, based on the information provided within the application, knowledge of the wider arts landscape, and the competitive context in which all applications are evaluated.

All assessments are then considered at a Moderation meeting at which final funding decisions will be made.

Is the Arts Council decision final?

There is a review procedure, which is available on the website and will be issued to any unsuccessful applicants upon request.

Other Information

For more information about the Arts Council of Northern Ireland go to the Arts Council Website [Arts Council of Northern Ireland \(opens in a new window\)](#).

If you have any queries about the programme or need any help or advice completing the application, please contact the Arts Development Officer relevant to your artform. A list of ACNI's Arts Development Officers and their contact details can be found at [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Contact Us \(opens in a new window\)](#).

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