



NatSCA

Natural Sciences Collections Association

<http://www.natsca.org>

Journal of Natural Science Collections

Title: Degrees of usefulness: How important are museum studies qualifications in recruitment to the museum sector?

Author(s): Jennings, R.

Source: Jennings, R. (2016). Degrees of usefulness: How important are museum studies qualifications in recruitment to the museum sector?. *Journal of Natural Science Collections, Volume 3*, 3 - 18.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/2223>

NatSCA supports open access publication as part of its mission is to promote and support natural science collections. NatSCA uses the Creative Commons Attribution License (CCAL) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/> for all works we publish. Under CCAL authors retain ownership of the copyright for their article, but authors allow anyone to download, reuse, reprint, modify, distribute, and/or copy articles in NatSCA publications, so long as the original authors and source are cited.

Degrees of usefulness: How important are museum studies qualifications in recruitment to the museum sector?



Rachel Jennings

Horniman Museum & Gardens, 100 London Road,
Forest Hill, London SE23 3PQ

Received: 21st Sept 2015

Accepted: 25th Nov 2015

email: rjennings@horniman.ac.uk

Abstract

There has been considerable debate in recent years about the value of museum studies courses, but little formal study. This paper is based on a piece of research conducted in 2013 as part of a Museum Studies MA course undertaken by distance learning at the University of Leicester. The research aimed to provide data on the level of demand for museum studies qualifications from employers, and how qualifications are used as a criterion in recruitment. An analysis of job adverts was undertaken, to discover what percentage request a museum studies qualification, and employers were surveyed on their opinions of courses. The results of this study indicate that employers do not place a high value on museum studies qualifications when recruiting, and that demand for these qualifications has fallen over the last decade. The implications of these findings on the future of museum studies courses and entry-level training for the sector are discussed.

Keywords: Museum studies; Qualifications; Entry-level training; Recruitment; Employment; Employers; Vocational training; Traineeships

Introduction

Museum studies courses have played an important role in the museum sector since they began in the 1960s. However, some feel that the role of courses has changed over time, from being providers of professional development to providers of pre-entry training, resulting in a change in focus from practical skills to a more generalised approach with greater emphasis on formal teaching, critical museology, and theory (Dubuc, 2011; Lorente, 2012). While some see this as a positive step, shifting attention onto social issues and audience needs (Lorente, 2012), many feel that museums are now at risk of losing vital collections-based skills and knowledge (Johnson, 2005; Creative & Cultural Skills, 2008; Creative & Cultural Skills, 2011; Poole, 2011; Conlin; 2012; Mulhearn, 2013). Some employers and students now question the value of museum studies courses as entry-level training for the sector (Anon., 2006; Davies, 2007; Ashby, 2014).

In the current poor economic climate, having a postgraduate qualification in museum studies could theoretically provide an advantage to job-seekers over their competitors (Nightingale, 2012). However, there has been an explosion in the number of museum studies courses available in recent years, with around 30 UK Higher Education institutions now offering postgraduate courses relating to museums and heritage management (Museums Association, 2015). The University of St Andrews and the University of Manchester report that their courses are oversubscribed, while the University of Leicester and Nottingham Trent University have both seen yearly increases in the number of students (Nightingale, 2012). In the academic year 2009/10, Creative & Cultural Skills (2011) reports that there were 5739 domestic students taking courses in cultural heritage subjects in the UK, 2536 at postgraduate level. There are now more graduates than there are jobs available, and this has created intense competition (Miller, 2008), with many entry-level posts being enormously oversubscribed (Anon., 2006).

The role of museum studies courses in the modern sector has not been extensively studied. Most previous studies have focused on students' opinions of their courses, and their employment status following graduation (e.g. Davies, 2007; Holt, 2010). Davies (2007) did also perform a survey of employers' views on museum studies courses. He reported that employers were generally pleased with the quality of employees they were able to recruit, but were unsure of the value and quality of museum studies courses, and some suggested that courses are out of touch with the sector.

However, no study of museum studies courses and employers has yet been performed that focuses exclusively on recruitment. There is also currently no quantitative data available on how many advertised posts require a museum studies qualification, and for what types of job they are most requested. Davies (2007) estimated that 25% of adverts request a museum studies qualification, but with no data to corroborate. This is an important issue: the number of museum studies courses and graduates is rising, but there is currently no data available to determine if there is a demand for them from employers.

This paper reports the main findings of a piece of research conducted in 2013 as the dissertation for a Museum Studies MA course undertaken by distance learning at the University of Leicester. The research was designed to build on that of Davies (2007), and to investigate an idea that seems to be pervasive among newcomers to the sector, namely that a museum studies degree is needed for a career in museums because 'most jobs ask for one'. This study aimed to test whether or not this is true, and also to discover what role museum studies qualifications play in recruitment to the sector: why do employers ask for them, and what value do they place on these qualifications?

Definitions

Before proceeding, it is useful to define what is meant by a 'museum studies qualification' in this context. 'Museum studies' is used here as a generic term to refer to any academic qualification relating to museums, galleries, or cultural heritage. As a number of course titles are available, it is convenient to combine them all under the banner of 'museum studies'. The 'museum sector' is discussed throughout this piece of work. This refers to museums, art galleries, and historic houses.

Methods

A three-strand approach was used to examine the issues identified above:

- Training and background research Collection and quantitative analysis of job adverts to examine what proportion of jobs advertised require a museum studies qualification, and for what types of roles
- Survey of employers' opinions on the use and importance of museum studies qualifications in recruitment.
- Short interviews with several survey respondents to gain a more in-depth insight.

Job Adverts

An archive of summary job adverts (short adverts summarising the role and person requirements, but often lacking a full job or person specification) was obtained from the Jobs Desk website run by the School of Museum Studies at Leicester University. This archive contained more than 35,000 worldwide adverts, covering an 11-year period (2002 to 2012). Due to the quantity of data, it was decided to examine a sample of the total set. Three years were chosen – 2002, 2007, and 2012 – to allow analysis of trends over time. The adverts for these years were entered into a database, and filtered to remove those that did not fit the requirements of this study.

Analysis was restricted to UK adverts in museums, galleries, and historic houses, and paid positions only. Posts that are not directly sector-specific were not included in the analysis, as these are unlikely to require a museum studies qualification, and would only distort the data. This includes administration and customer-service roles, academic fellowships, and research posts not directly involving collections. Conservation roles were also excluded, as this is a highly specialised discipline requiring specific qualifications.

Posts in libraries and archives were excluded, with the exception of the British Library, as it houses collections of objects that are curated and exhibited. Relevant posts in non-museum institutions such as The National Trust, English Heritage, and The National Trust for Scotland were also included, as were relevant posts in sector bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council England, and Museums Association.

The job adverts were analysed to determine how many required a museum studies qualification, both overall and for different types of role. The data was also examined for trends over time.

Survey of Employers

A questionnaire was designed to gather the opinions of employers on the role of museum studies qualifications in recruitment. The questionnaire was

aimed at UK museum and gallery professionals who are responsible for the recruitment and line-management of staff (see Appendix I for a blank copy of the questionnaire).

The questions were based on a number of sources, and were intended to gather a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data on some of the key issues surrounding museum studies qualifications and recruitment. The survey was designed to take no more than 10 minutes to fill in, to encourage participation and for ease of analysis.

The questionnaire was produced as an online survey. A link to the survey, with a brief introductory letter, was circulated to 26 different Subject Specialist Networks (SSNs). It was decided to contact prospective participants through Subject Specialist Networks because they represent a wide variety of disciplines within the sector, and a large number of people.

The survey was open for one month, between May and June 2013. On closing, 110 respondents had completed the survey, with a further 15 having partially completed it. Only completed surveys were analysed.

Interviews

Follow-up interviews were performed, to expand upon the key issues raised by the questionnaire in more detail. 43 of the 110 survey respondents (39%) indicated a willingness to participate in an interview. Ten people were approached, representing a range of job types and institution types, of which six consented to an interview.

The interviews consisted of four questions (Appendix II), and lasted approximately 10 – 15 minutes each. Three of the interviews were conducted via telephone, and the other three in person. Detailed notes were taken during each interview, and the interviews performed in person were recorded with consent and transcribed in full. Once all interviews were complete, the answers given by each participant were codified, and examined using content analysis in order to identify common themes among the responses.

Results

Job Adverts

10% of the jobs advertised on the University of Leicester Museum Studies Jobs Desk in 2012 requested a museum studies qualification, of which 7% were as an essential criterion (Fig 1). This is probably an underestimate, as the job advertisements analysed were largely short summaries, and missing data was a problem: 21% did not include a person specification at all.

A larger proportion of curatorial posts (18%) and collections or documentation posts (14%) required a museum studies qualification than the average for all job types. Around 10% of management and exhibitions posts advertised in 2012 required a museum studies qualification. This fell to 8% for education and outreach roles (Fig 1).

The proportion of posts requesting a museum studies qualification decreased considerably between 2002 and 2012, from 17% to 10%. This downward trend was even more dramatic in some job types: demand for museum studies qualifications fell from 32% to 18% in curatorial roles, and from 31% to 14% in collections and documentation roles (Fig 2).

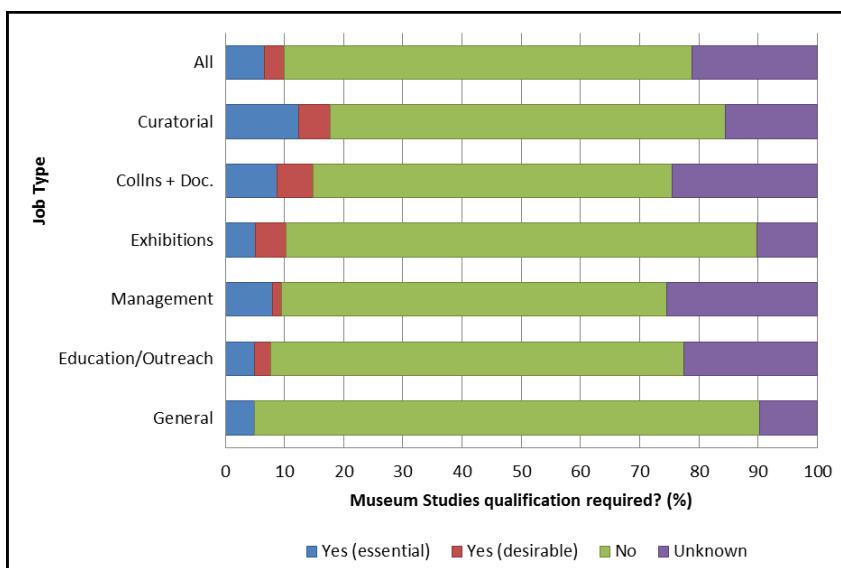


Fig. 1. Percentage of core roles advertised on the Museum of Leicester Museum Studies Jobs Desk in 2012 that requested a museum studies qualification.

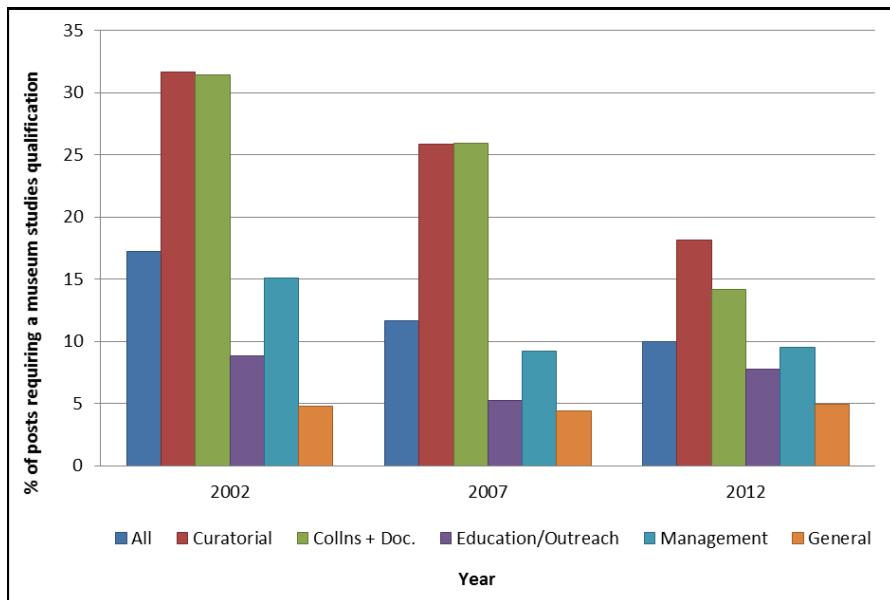
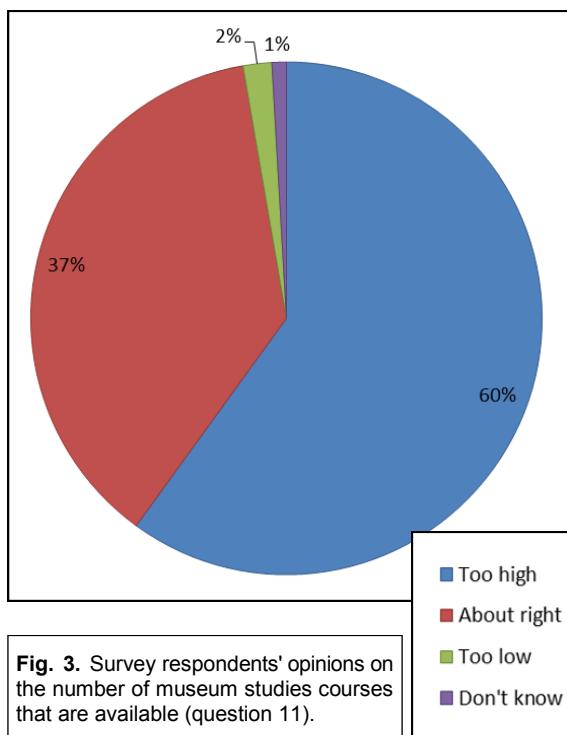


Fig. 2. Change in the percentage of posts requiring a museum studies qualification over time.

Survey

The employers surveyed had mixed opinions of museum studies courses. The majority (60%) felt that the number of courses available is too high, compared to 37% who stated that it is about right, and 2% who thought it is too low (Fig 3). 34% felt that museum studies courses are out of touch with museums, but 25% disagreed with this statement, and 41% were unsure (Fig 4).

37% of respondents thought that the ratio of theory to practical work in courses is too high, but a larger proportion (46%) felt that it is about right (Fig 5).



Hands-on experience is something that survey respondents felt strongly about. When asked what the role of work experience placements should be in museum studies courses, many stated that they should provide opportunities to put theory into practice. A number of respondents felt that courses encourage unrealistic expectations of what museum work is like, by focusing on best practice in idealised situations, and that placements should expose students to the realities of working pragmatically with limited resources. Some respondents also stated that students should undertake placements in at least two different types of institution to gain wider experience, and one suggested that more teaching should occur within museums.

The majority of survey respondents (73%) agreed that the purpose of museum studies courses is to prepare students for employment within the museum sector (Fig 6). Interestingly, a much higher proportion of respondents who had undertaken a museum studies qualification themselves felt this to be the case: 85%, compared to only 56% of respondents who did not have a qualification (Fig 6).

When it came to recruitment, the employers surveyed did not place a high value on museum studies qualifications. They were asked to rank four potential qualities in job candidates – museum studies qualifications, subject specialist qualifications, work experience, and transferrable skills – in order of importance. Work experience was felt to be the most important, followed by transferrable skills, a subject specialist qualification, and, lastly, a museum studies qualification (Fig 7).

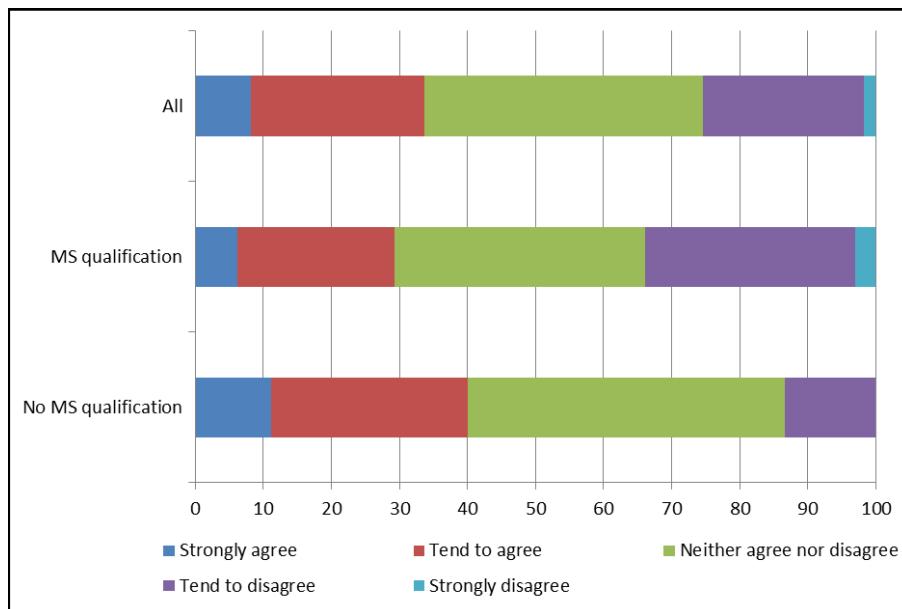


Fig. 4. Change in the percentage of posts requiring a museum studies qualification over time.

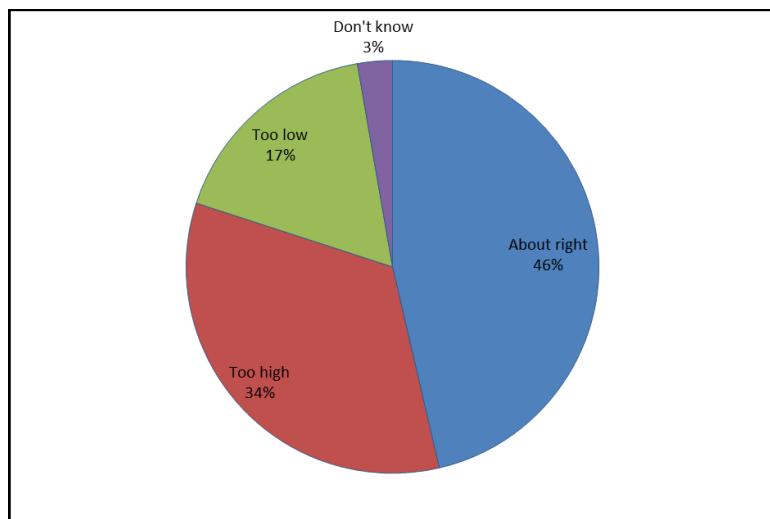


Fig. 5. Opinions of survey respondents on the balance of theoretical to practical work in museum studies courses (question 13)

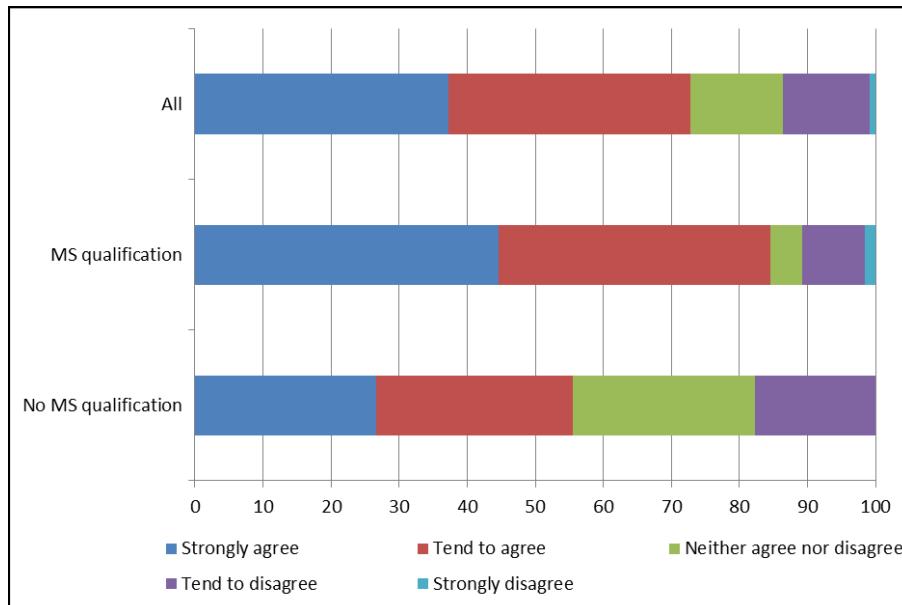


Fig. 6. Percentage of survey respondents agreeing and disagreeing with the statement 'The purpose of Museum Studies courses is prepare students for employment within the museum sector' (question 17).

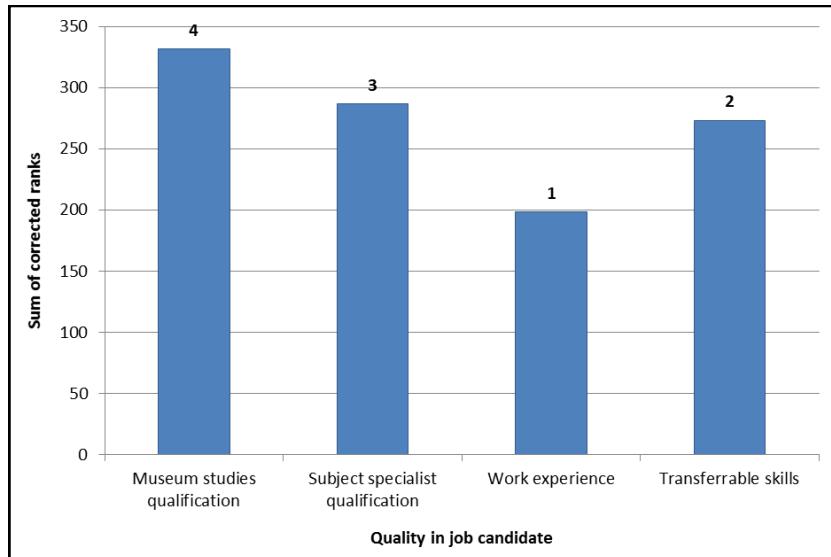


Fig. 7. Preferred qualities in job candidates: aggregate ranks, after correction for ties (question 5).

The majority of employers surveyed do use museum studies qualifications as a criterion when recruiting: 34% stated that a qualification is always or often required, 32% that it is sometimes required, and 35% said that they rarely or never ask for a qualification (Fig 8). When asked the reason for the inclusion of museum studies qualifications as a criterion, only 10% stated that it is because the qualifications prove candidates have a certain level of knowledge and skills, and 24% that the qualification is essential to the post. 36% stated that qualifications are requested because they provide evidence of passion and commitment to the sector, and 17% of respondents stated that museum studies qualifications are used to filter and reduce the number of candidates (Fig 8).

Interviews

There were mixed opinions among the six employers interviewed on whether or not museum studies courses provide the right skills and knowledge. Two felt that courses provide a good basic level of priming in museum theory, and valuable practical experience through placements, but three of the interviewees felt that courses don't provide enough practical experience. Four of the interviewees echoed the survey respondents, in stating that they think courses raise the expectations of students unfairly, and provide an unrealistic view of what working in museums is really like.

The employers had mixed views on the importance of museum studies qualifications in recruitment. Two felt that courses can be a useful criterion, as

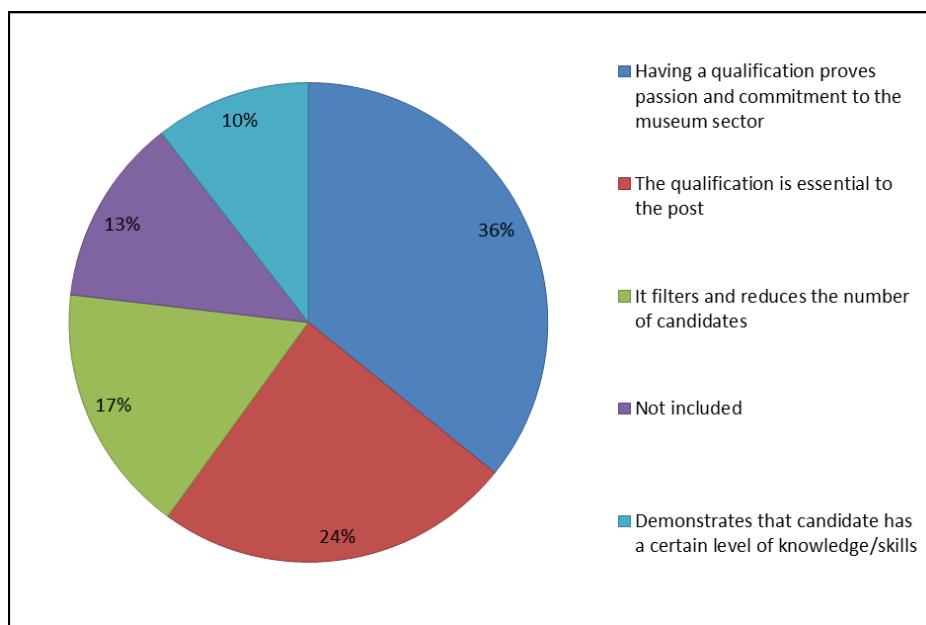


Fig. 8. Reasons given by survey respondents for the inclusion of a museum studies qualification in recruitment (question 7).

they demonstrate a theoretical grounding and a certain level of practical experience through placements. However, two interviewees stated that they thought the main reason employers request a museum studies qualification is to 'weed out' candidates when there are too many applicants, and that courses have little value beyond this. Three of the employers stated that practical experience is more important than whether or not a candidate has a museum studies qualification:

'When I look at an application form, I will always go to their actual work experience first. I would check that they've got a degree in a relevant subject, and I might note that they've got a museums qualification, but that wouldn't be one of the top priorities for me...although a museums qualification is useful in lots of ways, it's not something that I would necessarily shortlist somebody on.'

When asked what qualities they think are most important in job applicants, the most common responses were:

1. Enthusiasm
2. Willingness to learn
2. Team-working skills
3. Ability to engage with objects
3. Knowledge of collections management and conservation
3. Experience of working with the public

None of the interviewees discussed qualifications among the qualities that they look for in candidates.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that museum studies qualifications are less important in recruitment than they are generally perceived to be. A low proportion of core museum posts advertised in 2012 requested such a qualification: only 10% of those analysed. As already noted, this is probably an underestimate, but it provides a baseline that can be improved upon with additional data. This figure is also lower than the estimate of 25% quoted by Davies (2007). The data presented here does demonstrate that there has been a decline in demand for museum studies qualifications from employers over the last decade, particularly in curatorial, collections and documentation roles. While museum studies qualifications were still requested

for these job types more frequently than average in 2012, demand had fallen by around half since 2002.

The observed decline in demand may be partly due to a loss of confidence in the quality and relevance of teaching due to the proliferation of courses in recent years. The employers surveyed acknowledged that museum studies courses do have positive outcomes for students, providing a theoretical grounding in museum practice and practical experience through work experience placements. However, they expressed reservations about the quality of course content, and were uncertain of the value of museum studies courses to the sector as a whole. This echoes sentiments expressed by Davies (2007) and Creative & Cultural Skills (2010).

The majority of employers stated that they do ask for a museum studies qualification when recruiting at least some of the time, but it was not a high priority in terms of qualities sought in potential employees. Of far more importance were experience, enthusiasm, and transferrable skills. When asked why they include museum studies qualifications as a criterion in recruitment, only 34% gave reasons that were role-related (that it is essential to the post, or because it proves candidates have a certain level of knowledge and skills). The majority of survey respondents used museum studies qualifications as either a marker to demonstrate commitment to the sector (36%) or as a tool to 'weed out' candidates when shortlisting (17%). This is highly problematic, because it leads to employers overspecifying roles simply to reduce the number of applicants. With many roles being heavily oversubscribed (Anon., 2006), this is understandable, but it is also unethical and discriminatory to include as an essential requirement a criterion that is not essential to the role. Employers are obligated to ensure that their recruitment process is fair and transparent. Also, while undertaking a museum studies qualification does provide good proof of a candidate's commitment to the sector, it is not affordable for all. Course fees are rising year-on-year, and at a fast rate: between 2011 and 2015, course fees at 11 UK Higher Education institutions rose by between 11% and 74% (see Table 1). For example, the EU full-time student fees for the MA Museum Studies course at University College London (UCL) has risen from £5,170 in 2011 to £9,015 for entry in 2015 (Museums Association, 2011; University College London, 2015a).

Limitations of this study

This piece of research was a small-scale study produced for a dissertation, and as such has some

Course Provider	Course	2011 fee	2015 fee	% Increase
Bishop Grosseteste University	Heritage Education MA	£4,000	£6,750	69%
City University London	Culture, Policy & Management MA	£6,000	£9,000	50%
Courtauld Institute of Art	Curating the Art Museum MA	£5,625	£8,220	46%
University of East Anglia	Museum Studies MA	£4,500	£7,150	59%
Ironbridge International Institute for Cultural Heritage	Heritage Management MA (2011) / International Heritage Management (2015)	£4,650	£6,840	47%
Kingston University, London	Curating Contemporary Design MA	£5,305	£5,900	11%
University of Leicester	Museum Studies MA	£5,110	£6,835	34%
University of Lincoln	Design for Exhibition & Museums MA	£4,150	£6,880	66%
University College London	Museum Studies MA	£5,170	£9,015	74%
Norwich University College of the Arts	Curation MA	£3,900	£5,500	41%
Nottingham Trent University	Museum and Heritage Management MA	£4,300	£5,100	19%

Table 1. Postgraduate course fees for museum-related courses, for full-time EU students, compared between 2011 and 2015 (2011 fees as reported by Museums Association, 2011; 2015 fees as published on course providers' websites [Accessed 25 October 2015]).

limitations. Only a single source of data was used to analyse job adverts, and as already discussed, missing and incomplete data were a considerable problem because full adverts with person specifications could not be obtained. The data showing a decline in demand for museum studies courses should also be treated with caution, as only three years were examined out of a data set spanning 11 years. One or more of the years analysed could have been anomalous, possibly due to economic factors. However, this study provides the first real data available on the number of jobs requesting a museum studies qualification, and as such represents a valuable step forward. Further research examining new job advertisements from multiple sources over a period of time would resolve these issues.

The data gathered from employers through the survey and interviews cannot be treated as representative of the views of the museum community as a whole, as it is a small, self-selected sample. Those who agreed to participate may have done so because they hold particularly strong views about museum studies courses, whether positive or negative, and so bias is a possible factor in their responses. This could be resolved by circulating the survey more widely to obtain a larger number of responses, and performing a larger number of interviews.

Conclusion: The future of museum studies?

Despite placing little value on museum studies qualifications in recruitment, the majority of employers surveyed saw the primary purpose of courses as preparing students for work in the museum sector. Employers view courses as entry-level training, but appear to have little confidence that students are being provided with the knowledge and skills that they need to enter the sector. But, as already noted, not all courses aim to provide entry-level training: some have shifted their focus towards critical museology and theory (Lorente, 2012). If a museum studies degree is intended to prime students for museum work, greater dialogue may be required between employers and course providers to ensure that the needs of the sector are met. The future of museum studies courses could see closer collaboration between course providers and museums, with more hands-on teaching occurring within a museum environment (Johnson, 2005; Davies, 2006; Holt, 2006; Leitch, 2006; Creative & Cultural Skills, 2008; Dubuc, 2011).

An alternative to museum studies courses as a route into museum employment is a traineeship or internship. These vocational schemes usually focus on core skills such as curatorial and collections management practices, and often offer a bursary towards living expenses. This makes them a more affordable route into museums than museum stud-

ies courses, and they have proven popular: a traineeship scheme advertised at the British Museum in 2012 was 300 times oversubscribed, with over 1300 applications received for 20 places. Other traineeships offered in the same year also reported being hugely oversubscribed (Steel, 2012).

The focus of traineeships of practical experience appears to be attractive to employers: the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) programme 'Skills for the Future' reports that 76.5% of the first cohort completing their traineeships between 2010 and 2013 were employed in the heritage sector within six months of completion, 24% of them at their host institution or a partner institution (Heritage Lottery Fund, 2013). The employment rates of those completing traineeships also compare favourably with museum studies graduates: the University of Manchester reports that 63% of MA Art Gallery and Museum Studies graduates in 2013 were employed in the sector within six months of graduation (University of Manchester, 2015). 52% of UK full-time Museum Studies MA students at Newcastle University graduating between 2011 and 2014 were employed in the sector within six months (Newcastle University, 2015), and UCL report that 90% of Museum Studies MA graduates are employed in the sector within six months of graduation (University College London, 2015b).

'Do I need a museum studies degree?' is a question that many new entrants to the sector ask themselves at some point. The answer is complicated: qualifications provide valuable professional development, and can give you a foot in the door by helping you through the shortlisting process. However, employers do not always request qualifications for the 'right' reasons, and are generally much more impressed by practical experience and enthusiasm. The future of entry-level training may lie in widening routes into museums, and greater investment in vocational training. This would greatly benefit the sector, and those who work in it.

Acknowledgements

Thanks must go firstly to my colleagues for all their help and support, and for giving me the idea for this research. Special thanks go to Paolo Viscardi, for being an honest sounding board and for providing much-needed advice.

Thanks also go to members of the faculty in the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester: Jim Roberts, for kindly supplying me with the archive of job adverts, and my dissertation supervisor, Alison Duce, for her support and advice.

I must also thank everyone who took part in my survey or circulated it to others, and all who offered to participate in interviews, for their generous and extremely valuable contributions to my research.

References

- Anon. 2006. *Entry level jobs symposium at UEA*. [Online], <http://www.museumsassociation.org/news/12268> [Accessed 7 April 2013]
- Ashby, J. 2014. *Does a museum studies degree help you get a job in museums?* [Online], <http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/museums/2014/10/16/does-a-museum-studies-degree-help-you-get-a-job-in-museums/> [Accessed 27 July 2015]
- Conlin, J. 2012. Ditch the reticent object and all its master narratives. *Museums Journal* 112 (12): p.21
- Creative & Cultural Skills. 2008. *The Cultural Heritage Blueprint: A workforce development plan for cultural heritage in the UK*. London: Creative & Cultural Skills.
- Creative & Cultural Skills. 2010. *Creative & Cultural Skills: Sector Skills Assessment for the creative and cultural industries. An analysis of the skills needs of the creative and cultural industries in the UK*. London: Creative & Cultural Skills.
- Creative & Cultural Skills. 2011. *The Qualifications Blueprint: A qualification strategy for the creative and cultural industries*. London: Creative & Cultural Skills.
- Davies, M. 2006. Just the job. *Museums Journal* 106 (5): pp.16 – 17.
- Davies, M. 2007. *The Tomorrow People: Entry to the museum workforce. Report to the Museums Association and the University of East Anglia*. [Online], <http://www.museumsassociation.org/ca/reviews/13582> [Accessed 6 March 2012]
- Dubuc, É. 2011. Museum and university mutations: the relationship between museum practices and museum studies in the era of interdisciplinarity, professionalisation, globalisation and new technologies. *Museum Management and Curatorship* 26 (5): pp.497 – 508.
- Heritage Lottery Fund. 2013. *Interim Evaluation of Skills for the Future, Cohort 1: Project manager and trainer surveys*. [Online], <http://www.hlf.org.uk/skills-future-evaluation> [Accessed 15 November 2015]
- Holt, J. 2010. Learning curves. *Museums Journal* 110 (6): pp.32 - 35.
- Johnson, N. 2005. Wanted: new breed of curator. *Museums Journal* 105 (6): pp.16 – 17.
- Leitch, S. 2006. *Prosperity for All in the Global Economy - World Class Skills. Final Report*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
- Lorente, J-P. 2012. The development of museum studies in universities: from technical training to critical museology. *Museum Management and Curatorship* 27 (3): pp.237 – 252.
- Miller, S. 2008. New entrants to the museum world need to help themselves if they want to get ahead. *Museums Journal* 108 (3): 18.
- Mulhearn, D. 2013. Facing Extinction. *Museums Journal* 113 (4): pp.24 – 29.
- Museums Association. 2011. *Postgraduate fees table*. [Online], <http://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=323698> [Accessed 19 October 2015]

- Museums Association. 2015. *Courses guide: Developing a career in museums*. London: Museums Association.
- Newcastle University. 2015. *Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education*. [Online], <https://international.ncl.ac.uk/careers/secure/dlhe/reporting/index.php> [Accessed 26 October 2015]
- Nightingale, J. 2012. Starting out. *Museums Journal* 112 (10): pp.30–35.
- Norfolk Museums Service. 2014. *Learning from the Past – Skilled for the Future. The impact of the training programmes at Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse and the Museum of East Anglian Life*. [Online], <http://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/view/NCC159383> [Accessed 2 August 2015]
- Poole, N. 2011. *The Rise and Fall of the Curator*. [Online], <http://www.collectionstrust.org.uk/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-curator/> [Accessed 19 April 2013]
- Steel, P. 2012. Traineeship initiative is 300 times over subscribed. *Museums Journal* 112 (4): p.5
- University College London. 2015a. *Fee Schedule: Post graduate Taught 2015-16*. [Online], http://www.ucl.ac.uk/current-students/money/2015-2016_fees/2015-16_postgrad_taught [Accessed 19 October 2015]
- University College London. 2015b. *Museum Studies MA*. [Online], <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/graduate/taught/degrees/museum-studies-ma> [Accessed 25 October 2015]
- University of Manchester. 2015. *MA Art Gallery and Museum Studies Alumni*. [Online], <http://www.alc.manchester.ac.uk/icp/postgraduate-study/agms/alumni/> [Accessed 25 October 2015]
- Woolf, F., & Betjemann, N. 2012. *Strengthening Our Common Life: Final Evaluation Report*. Felicity Woolf Associates and Consultancy.

Appendix I: Sample copy of questionnaire

Museum Studies Qualifications: Employers' Perspectives Survey

11/05/2013

Dear participant,

Through this questionnaire I will gather data for my research project 'Degrees of Usefulness: How Important are Museum Studies Qualifications in Recruitment?'. The research seeks to develop a better understanding of the role that museum studies courses play in recruitment, and how important having a museum studies qualification is to gaining employment in the museum sector. Through this questionnaire I will be able to find out about the attitudes of employers towards museum studies courses and graduates. The outcomes of this survey will be presented in my dissertation for the University of Leicester distance-learning Museum Studies MA degree course, and may be published in the Museums Journal or similar publication in due course.

The questionnaire is administered to personnel in UK museums, galleries and other heritage institutions who are responsible for the recruitment and management of staff. The questionnaire should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

Please note that your responses will be fully anonymised, and no identification information will be gathered. Any details you provide that might be used to identify people, places or situations will be suitably modified to protect your and others' identities.

By completing and returning the questionnaire, you agree that:

- Your responses are interpreted and used for the purposes stated above
- Any presentation of your responses will be fully anonymised
- As responses will be anonymised and I will not have access to your individual responses, it may not be possible to withdraw from the study once you have completed the questionnaire.

If you have any questions about the ethical conduct of this research please contact the Museum Studies Research Ethics Officer, Giasemi Vavoula, gv18@le.ac.uk.

If you are happy with the above and have the time and willingness to assist, please select 'I agree' below, and proceed with the questionnaire.

I agree

Thank you for your participation.

Rachel Jennings
Museum Studies MA student (distance-learning)
School of Museum Studies
University of Leicester

1. What type of institution do you work for?

- National Museum
Local Authority
Trust
Private

Other (please specify) _____

2. What is your job title and in which department do you work?

3. Are you responsible for line-managing staff, and if so how many?

4. Do you have a Museum Studies qualification?

- Yes
No

5. Please rank the following as to their importance in a job candidate?

1 = most important, 4 = least important. Please rank the options 1 - 4, using each number once.

	1	2	3	4
Museum Studies qualification	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Subject specialist qualification	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transferable skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. When recruiting new staff, is a Museum Studies qualification included in the person specification for entry-level posts in your institution/department?

Choose the one option that most applies:

- Always Rarely Often
Never Sometimes

7. When a Museum Studies qualification is included, is this because:

Choose the one option that most applies:

- The qualification is essential to the post
Having a qualification proves passion and commitment to the museum sector
It filters and reduces the number of candidates
Other (please specify) _____

8. How do you prefer candidates to have taken a postgraduate qualification?

- Full-time
Part-time
Distance Learning
No preference

9. Would you be willing to provide support for staff wanting to take a Museum Studies qualification while working?

Yes (go to q. 11)

No (go to q. 10)

10. What factors influence this decision?

Lack of time

Lack of money

Feel it is unnecessary

Other (please specify) _____

11. Do you think the number of postgraduate Museum Studies courses available is:

Too high

About right

Too low

12. Do you think that the increase in the number of Museum Studies graduates over the last few decades has aided the professionalisation of the sector?

Yes

No

Don't know

13. Do you think the balance of theoretical to practical work in Museum Studies courses is:

Too high

About right

Too low

14. What do you think the role of work experience placements should be in Museum Studies courses?

15. Do you currently host student placements?

Yes

No (go to q. 16)

16. Would you be willing to host student placements and if not why?

Yes

No _____

17. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

'The purpose of Museum Studies courses is prepare students for employment within the museum sector'

(Paraphrased from Davies M., 2007. *The Tomorrow People: Entry to the museum workforce. Report to the Museums Association and the University of East Anglia*)

Strongly agree Tend to agree
Neither agree nor disagree Tend to disagree
Strongly disagree

18. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

'Museum Studies courses are out of touch with museums'

(Paraphrased from Davies M., 2007. *The Tomorrow People: Entry to the museum workforce. Report to the Museums Association and the University of East Anglia*)

Strongly agree Tend to agree
Neither agree nor disagree Tend to disagree
Strongly disagree

19. Would you be willing to participate in a telephone interview to discuss these issues further?

Yes (go to q. 20)
No

20. If yes, please provide a contact email address:

You have now finished the survey. Thank you very much for your participation, it will make a valuable contribution to my research.

The questionnaire will be open until the beginning of June, after which I may contact several people who have indicated that they are willing to participate in a telephone interview. If you decide that you would rather not be contacted, please let me know.

Rachel Jennings
Museum Studies MA student (distance-learning),
School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester

Appendix II. Interview questions

Question 1. As an employer, what qualities do you think are most important in a job applicant?

Question 2. How important do you think museum qualifications are in recruitment, and why?

Question 3. There's been a lot of debate in the literature over the past few years about whether or not museum studies courses adequately prepare students for museum work. From your experience as an employer, do you find that graduates have the right skills and knowledge when they come in to work, and do you think that courses provide enough practical experience?

Question 4. In the current climate, do you think that museum studies qualifications will become more or less important in the future.