

processfix

Spring newsletter 2026

Welcome

In this edition we are delighted to share a powerful story of creative leadership and systemic change from Professor Vida Middelgouw, Dean of the Doctoral School at University of the Arts London (UAL). Her vision for a more reflective, human-centred approach to doctoral progression resonates strongly with our belief that meaningful transformation begins with people, not processes.

This month's feature explores how UAL brought together a cross-disciplinary team of academics, professional services staff, and current and former doctoral students to reimagine a complex progression journey - shifting it from procedural to purposeful, and creating space for genuine academic dialogue and innovation.

Through the collaborative nature of a Processfix workshop, UAL demonstrates what becomes possible when diverse voices come together with curiosity, courage, and a shared commitment to improvement. It's a story of redesign, but also of culture: a move toward processes that support research, rather than overshadow it.

NEWSFLASH!

Milton Keynes, UK – March 2026

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Re-imagining doctoral progression at University of the Arts London

When Professor Vida Middelgouw took on the role of Dean of the Doctoral School at University of the Arts London (UAL), she brought with her a deep commitment to creative research and a bold vision for change. With over 25 years in the arts and a pioneering track record in Artistic Research Degrees, she understood that meaningful academic progress demands more than just process; it requires space for reflection, dialogue, and innovation.



Established in 2023, UAL's Doctoral School was designed to champion postgraduate research across the creative disciplines. But as the school grew, so too did the complexity of its PhD progression process. "The structure had become overly procedural," Middelgouw explains. "It was well understood, but it was taking precedence over meaningful engagement with the research itself."

Recognising the need for change, UAL embarked on a comprehensive review of its progression processes. The goal: to design an approach that was simpler, more transparent, and genuinely supportive of creative and critical enquiry. That's where Processfix came in. Recommended through academic networks, Processfix's collaborative, evidence-based approach resonated with the Doctoral

School's ethos. "Their rapid improvement workshops, combining mapping, data analysis and participatory discussion, promised an engaging approach that considered issues from all perspectives," says Middelgouw.

Over three intensive days, a cross-functional team of administrators, technologists, academics and research students came together for the Processfix-led workshop. The experience was energising and reflective. Using visual and physical mapping techniques, the team explored the doctoral journey from multiple perspectives, identifying pain points and opportunities for change.

Crucially, the Processfix method delayed jumping to solutions. Instead, it fostered shared understanding, first ensuring that by the time redesign discussions began, participants were aligned and ready to co-create a new model.

The most significant outcome? A complete reimagining of the first doctoral progression point, which had previously been one of the most administratively burdensome stages. The new model is designed to be more interpersonal and developmental, reducing paperwork while strengthening academic dialogue and support for practice research.

"This shift signals a broader cultural change," Middelgouw reflects. "It's about moving toward processes that are relational and reflective, not just bureaucratic. We're building a system that serves the research, rather than overshadowing it."

"It's about moving toward processes that are relational and reflective, not just bureaucratic"

The workshop concluded with a new process, clearly mapped, and an action plan including a one-year timeline for implementation and evaluation. As the new model is embedded into UAL's wider doctoral frameworks and digital systems, the team remains committed to continuous reflection and improvement.

For Processfix, the project exemplifies the power of co-creation in complex environments. For UAL, it marks the beginning of a more human-centred approach to doctoral education, one that balances structure with care, and process with purpose.

As Middelgouw puts it, "There's still work to do, but the commitment to see it through is strong. That, in itself, is a great outcome."

About us

Organisations rely on processes to get things done. Often these simply evolve over time and become inefficient ways of working. Processfix bring powerful, proven and behaviour-changing techniques to bear in a professionally facilitated environment.

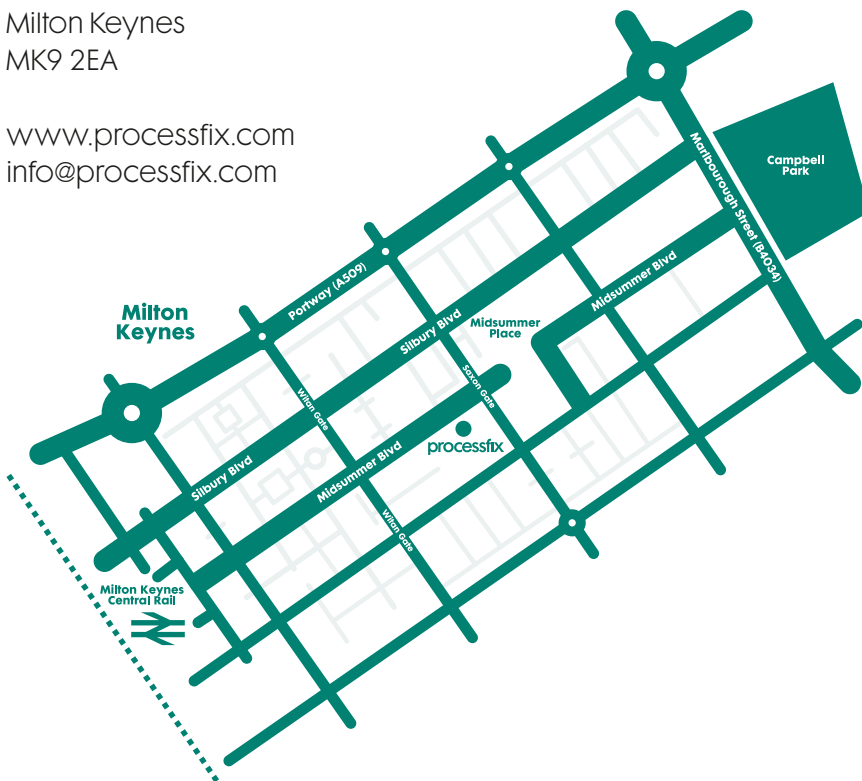
We focus on engaging your teams in their own improvement, empowering them to re-evaluate the way they do things and to develop new and improved ways of working that transform performance and deliver immediate results.

Whether you require rapid improvement workshop facilitation, an organisational wide process improvement programme or to develop and train your team. Processfix specialise in engaging your people, delivering immediate benefits and instilling continuous improvement across your organisation.

If you would like to find out how Processfix can benefit your organisation, please contact us at:

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And finally...

Nottingham Trent University [NTU] cuts the time from international scholarship application to award notification by 50%, accelerating decisions for students around the world.

"It was nice to be involved in something that was a positive experience, surrounded by people who were all on the same page and aiming for the same goal."

NTU Processfix workshop attendee,
18 March 2026

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