

# 2 PhD Studentship opportunities in the area of adult mental health with a focus on student suicide prevention

Closing date: Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016

Interview date: Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016

The University of Worcester is seeking to grow its research capacity in relation to adult mental health; in particular it wishes to strengthen its research in areas including student suicide prevention, student wellbeing and mental health promotion, postvention support for family, peers and university staff.

Demand for mental health services at universities is increasing and there are particular pressures on university students which can impact on their mental health. 33% of students have been found to have had suicidal thoughts – double the figure (17%) for the general population (NHS Centre for Health and Social Care, 2007). As such, it is of particular concern that students do not always know how to access mental health support within, or outside, their university and may also have concerns about the type of support likely to be available to them whilst they are at university. The Office of National Statistics state that 112 full-time students took their lives in 2012 and the impact on peers, family and the wider university community is devastating.

18 months ago, the University of Worcester established a multi-agency 'Suicide Safer' project with Worcestershire County Council Public Health, Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust, and Community First to introduce new services and support for students. We are now working closely with the National Union of Students and Student Minds to take preventative action in relation to student suicide.

The University of Worcester is now partnering with the James Wentworth-Stanley Memorial fund to undertake research to develop our understanding of student suicide, to explore cause and prevention, as well as the needs of peers, family and university staff when a suicide occurs. We now invite applicants to submit a research proposal in one of the following areas:

- An investigation into current student suicide prevention and response strategies across a selection of UK universities (Studentship 1)
- A qualitative exploration of the perspectives, experiences and needs of three groups affected by student suicide: 1) peers 2) family, and 3) university staff (Studentship 2).

### Studentship 1:

The programme of research aims to provide insight into the current status and potential variability of University policy and practice in relation to student suicide. University strategies will be evaluated against national guidance and insight into both consistency and divergence from such frameworks will be supplemented by examination of staff perception of the issues associated with implementation of a comprehensive University strategy.

A mixed methodology will be employed, incorporating:

- Quantitative assessment and evaluation of University policy and practice against existing national guidance; and
- Qualitative exploration of University staff perception of the issues, facilitators, and barriers associated with development and adherence to guidance-informed strategies within Universities.

Exemplars of good practice will be identified alongside insight into the facilitative and obstructive issues associated with enacting such practice.

The supervisory team will include,

[Professor Lisa Jones](#) (Director of Studies), Professor of Psychological Medicine, [Mood Disorders Research Group](#), Institute of Health & Society  
[Professor Jo Smith](#), Professor of Early Intervention (EI) and Psychosis, Institute of Health & Society

### Studentship 2

The programme of research aims to qualitatively explore the perspectives, experiences, and needs of three groups affected by student suicide: 1) peers, 2) family, and 3) University staff.

The research will provide insight into the met and unmet needs within each of these groups in terms of University postvention, ranging from initial notification to follow-up information and support.

In addition, perceptions of the unique context and challenges that transition to University may represent will be explored, alongside what constitutes 'duty of care' and the pastoral responsibilities of Universities to their students.

The supervisory team will include:

[Professor Eleanor Bradley](#) (Director of Studies), Professor of Health Psychology, Institute of Health & Society  
Dr Ben Rosser, Institute of Health & Society

### The University of Worcester

Research at the University of Worcester has grown significantly over the last 10 years. This growth is most clearly shown in the outcomes of the Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014). Worcester was the most improved University in the UK based on Research Fortnight's "Research Power" measure, reflecting a more than four-fold increase in the number of staff submitted compared to RAE 2008 and a commensurate increase in the quality of the research. As a consequence of its REF 2014 submission, Worcester's QR income for 2015-16 is up by 341% from 2014-15.

The University is committed to further developing its research profile in the coming period, through a strategic approach to its support for and investment in research. As part of this investment it is funding a number of full-time PhD studentships in its areas of particular research strength.

### Institute of Health & Society

The [Institute of Health & Society](#) brings together academics and researchers from across a wide range of disciplines but with a shared focus of enhancing the health and well-being of society through its education and research. Its transformational research seeks to address some of the major issues within health professions, local services, community and beyond. By pulling together academics working across disciplines to tackle important, social, scientific and environmental challenges, this research is having an impact on people's lives and helping to expand the institute's base of world-leading research.

Areas of particular research strength are: Dementia Studies, Domestic Violence and Abuse, Mental Health and Palliative Care. The Mood Disorders Research Group is a core component of the University's mental health research.

### Research School

The Research School is a focal point for all our research students. It provides:

- day-to-day support for our students, both administrative and practical, through our dedicated team
- a Research Student Study Space with both PCs and laptop docking station
- a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme for students and their supervisors
- a programme of student-led conferences and seminars

### Details of the studentship

During the period of your studentship you will receive the following:

- a tax free bursary of £13,863 for a period of 3 years
- a fee-waiver for 4 years at the UK/EU fee rate (Please note: applicants from outside the EU are welcome but will need to pay the balance of fees for non-EU students (approx. £7000 per year)
- a laptop
- use of the Research Student Study Space in Research School
- access to the Research Student Support Scheme to cover costs and expenses related to your research

You will be expected to play an active role in the life of both the Research School and of the Institute of Health & Society. You will be given opportunities to gain experience in learning and teaching within the Institute under the guidance of your Director of Studies.

## Qualifications needed

### Essential:

Applicants should have or be able to evidence:

- A First or Upper Second (2.1) Honours Degree, or expect to receive one by October 2016.
- A sound understanding of, and interest in, mental health and well-being.
- Experience of appropriate research methods and skills;
- Ability to contribute to research study design
- Computer literacy;
- Ability to organise and meet deadlines;
- Good interpersonal skills;
- Ability to work independently and contribute to a team;
- Commitment and an enthusiastic approach to completing a higher research degree
- Full UK Driving Licence

### Desirable:

- Education to Masters Degree level in a relevant area;
- Experience of relevant research analysis software (e.g SPSS, NVivo)

As part of its mission statement the University is committed to widening participation for its higher degrees. Although most candidates will have an undergraduate and/or a Masters degree, the University is happy to accept applications from candidates with relevant professional qualifications and work related experience

### The Interview

The interview will provisionally be held on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016. All successful applicants will be interviewed. You will be asked to make a short presentation on a topic related to the study. You will also be asked to provide an example of your written work (e.g. a dissertation) ahead of the interview.

**For further information** or an informal discussion on Studentship 1, please contact Professor Lisa Jones (Director of Studies) by email at [lisa.jones@worc.ac.uk](mailto:lisa.jones@worc.ac.uk). For Studentship 2, please contact Professor Eleanor Bradley (Director of Studies) by email at [e.bradley@worc.ac.uk](mailto:e.bradley@worc.ac.uk).

### Application forms are available at:

<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/researchstudentships>

Completed application forms should be sent by email to: [research@worc.ac.uk](mailto:research@worc.ac.uk) or sent via post to: Research School, Jenny Lind Building, Henwick Grove, St Johns, Worcester, WR2 6AJ