

# PhD Studentship

The influence of Emotional Intelligence on attentional biases for emotion and stress reactivity in adolescence

Closing date: Friday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2016

Interview date: May 2016 (date TBC)

## Supervisory team

### Director of Studies:

Dr Sarah Davis, Senior Lecturer Psychology, Institute of Health & Society, University of Worcester

### Supervisors:

Dr Berenice Mahoney, Senior Lecturer Psychology, Institute of Health & Society, University of Worcester

Dr Pamela Qualter, Reader in Developmental Psychology, University of Central Lancashire

## Context

Emotional intelligence (EI) captures individual differences in perceiving, regulating and understanding self and other-relevant emotions (Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2009). Some research suggests that EI may afford protection from the adverse effects of stressors (e.g., minimal mood deterioration, heart rate variation etc) and promote better mental health (Ciarrochi, Dean, & Anderson, 2002; Davis & Humphrey, 2012; Laborde, Brüll, Weber, & Anders, 2011; Mikolajczak, Roy, Luminet, Fillée, & de Timary, 2007). However, it is unclear *how* EI exerts this beneficial effect. It is possible EI influences differences in attentional biases which are pivotal to both early emotion regulation (through orienting; rapid detection of threat) and later effortful coping (threat evaluation; strategy selection) processes. This research will systematically examine the role of EI in attentional processing of facial emotion in adolescents across a series of studies. The project will utilise portable eye-tracking technology to examine patterns of visual fixation and scanning, alongside other physiological measures (e.g., electrodermal activity) to indicate processes underpinning stress reactivity in adolescents. Findings will be of theoretical but also practical significance given the continued interest in training EI via school-based programmes to promote wellbeing (e.g. Durlak et al., 2011).

## Further Reading

Ciarrochi, J., Dean, F. P., & Anderson, S. (2002). Emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between stress and mental health. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 32(2), 197-209.

Davis, S. K., & Humphrey, N. (2012). Emotional intelligence as a moderator of stressor - mental health relations in adolescence: Evidence for specificity. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 52(1), 100-105.

Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions. *Child development*, 82(1), 405-432. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x

Laborde, S., Brüll, A., Weber, J., & Anders, L. S. (2011). Trait emotional intelligence in sports: A protective role against stress through heart rate variability? *Personality and Individual Differences*, 51(1), 23-27.

Martins, A., Ramalho, N., & Morin, E. (2010). A comprehensive meta-analysis of the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and health. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 49(6), 554-564

Mikolajczak, M., Roy, E., Luminet, O., Fillée, C., & de Timary, P. (2007). The moderating impact of emotional intelligence on free cortisol responses to stress. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 32(8-10), 1000-1012.

Zeidner, M., Matthews, G., & Roberts, R. D. (2009). *What we know about emotional intelligence: How it affects learning, work, relationships, and our mental health*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

### **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.

### **The Institute of Health and Society**

The successful candidate will join the Institute of Health and Society, a dynamic, multi-professional department that has experienced dramatic growth in recent years, particularly in research output. Staff in the Institute contribute to the development of knowledge and practice by engaging in a wide range of research and consultancy activities. Working in collaboration with different disciplines and with other universities, private industry and the public sector, research is always grounded in the aim of achieving real-life benefits.

Dr Sarah Davis has research expertise in emotional intelligence and adolescent mental health whilst Dr Berenice Mahoney is interested in individual differences in psychological health and predictors. Dr Pamela Qualter has an interest in exploring the role of emotional intelligence in social development and social engagement.

### **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

### 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 quantitative research methods, and interest in the psychology of individual differences;
- 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.

#### Desirable:

- Education to Masters Degree level in Psychology or other relevant discipline;
- Experience of appropriate research methods and skills;
- Ability to contribute to research study design;
- Full UK Driving Licence.

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 successful applicant will need to undergo full Disclosure & Barring Services (DBS) check.

#### The Interview

The interview will provisionally be held in May 2016, date to be confirmed. 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 this project, please contact Dr Sarah Davis (Director of Studies) via telephone on +44 (0)1905 855372 or by email [sarah.davis@worc.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.davis@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