

# Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR)

## 1.1. Study at CRESR

A PhD in CRESR is a unique experience. PhD candidates are treated as integral members of the CRESR team, located directly alongside staff in the Centre. Students benefit from and contribute to a thriving, collegiate research environment. CRESR has a strong commitment to academically rich, applied policy research which provides a particularly enriching research environment for postgraduate scholars, providing detailed day-to-day insights to the world of policy and practice through an academic lens.

## 1.2. About CRESR

The Centre and its members hold an enduring commitment to academic rigour through applied policy research, and has been recognised for its success in doing so through the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) in which CRESR's research is assessed under Unit of Assessment (UoA) 13: Architecture, Built Environment and Planning:

- 81 per cent of research was rated as world-leading or internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour
- over 50 per cent of research was rated as world leading in terms of impact

CRESR was ranked in the top quartile of UK institutions and the highest ranked post-1992 University.

CRESR produces high quality research in a number of areas including housing, regeneration, labour market studies, environmental sustainability and energy, and the Third Sector.

Each year the Centre successfully secures in the region of £1.5 million research income from a range of local, regional, national and international funding bodies. It works with central and local government, research councils, charitable trusts, and various other research bodies to deliver research of the highest quality.

## 1.3. The CRESR Postgraduate Programme

Continuing researcher development is a core component of a PhD at CRESR. Although it is expected that applicants will have already completed some research training, CRESR doctoral researchers will normally undertake additional research training in their first year, usually taking modules on the University's MA in Social Research Methods. The research environment for PhD candidates includes opportunities to engage with regular cross-Centre academic discussion groups; a high profile Seminar Series; research conferences and workshops hosted by CRESR; an annual doctoral research showcase; and a PhD Forum dedicated for discussion and development among other candidates. The University offers a range of researcher development modules and successful applicants will also have the opportunity to engage with a suite of networking and development activities led by

the ESRC White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership events. Candidates will therefore become part of a cross-institution cohort of high-achieving doctoral researchers with similar research interests. Doctoral researchers are also routinely provided opportunities to engage in teaching and research within the University, providing experience critical to future employability.

The Postgraduate Research Programme within CRESR is overseen by the Centre's Postgraduate Tutor, Dr. Will Eadson. It is a wide-ranging programme reflective of the diverse research interests of CRESR staff.

# Areas of Study

We welcome applications for full-time or part-time, fully funded PhD studentships, to start October 2020. Applications are invited that fit within one of the following seven broad research themes:

1. Cities and Infrastructure
2. Environmental sustainability and energy
3. Governing families
4. Housing
5. Labour markets
6. Spatial disadvantage
7. Voluntary and Community Sector

Applicants are encouraged to contact relevant CRESR staff to discuss prospective topic areas, proposals and methodologies.

## 2.1. Cities and infrastructure

Britain is one of the most urbanised countries in the world. Throughout the world, countries are urbanising at an unprecedented rate. The role of cities in processes of social and cultural development, population growth and economic agglomeration is beyond doubt. The prospects for cities and more dense urban forms to help use land more efficiently, foster new forms of creativity, interaction and social mobility, and reduce the ecological impact of human activity give cause for optimism. Yet, cities are disproportionately the locus of significant social, environmental and economic challenges, from crime to congestion, pollution to poverty. Cities are at the forefront of many of the big political and economic fissures of our time.

How can we best understand cities, their histories, functions and potential? What infrastructures -- be they transport, water, waste, communications, digital, social, and others -- are needed to ensure that we get the best from our cities, and they work best for us, our communities and our planet? How should we best pay for and govern our cities and their infrastructure? How do questions of urban life throughout the world circumscribe the policy possibilities of a national and international politics riven by division and fragmentation, austerity and the serious testing of the global neoliberal 'project'?

We welcome proposals that address these and other questions related to cities and infrastructure, including in the following areas:

- Rights, citizenship, participation and urban movements
- Sustainable transport futures
- Integrated infrastructure planning and governance
- Transport connectivity, mobility and social and spatial disadvantage

Successful applicants will receive the additional benefits of involvement with the White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership Cities, Environment and Liveability pathway.

For further information about undertaking a PhD in this area please contact **Professor Ed Ferrari** ([e.ferrari@shu.ac.uk](mailto:e.ferrari@shu.ac.uk), 0114 225 4824).

## 2.2. Environmental sustainability and energy

Environmental sustainability, energy affordability and energy security are global challenges at the heart of contemporary academic and policy debates about social, economic and environmental development. CRESR leads research agendas across a range of key areas relating to environmental sustainability and energy. A cross-cutting theme of this work is a focus on vulnerability in relation to people and/or places, for instance through work on fuel poverty, variable geographies of community energy, health impacts of cold homes, reaching the hardest to reach with energy advice and support, the implications of low carbon transitions for economically disadvantaged people/places and the future of urban green space. In particular, we would encourage PhD proposals that tackle one of the following topics:

- socially and spatially just urban sustainability transitions
- citizen engagement and energy/sustainability futures
- low carbon economic development and/or low carbon jobs and skills
- highly vulnerable groups and engagement with energy policies and initiatives
- user experiences of low energy buildings
- politics and geography of local and community energy / sustainability initiatives
- politics and governance of urban green space provision
- innovative qualitative methodologies for researching our relationship with heat and energy
- our changing relationship with heat and energy

We do however welcome PhD proposals that relate to any of our environmental sustainability and energy research areas, including those that explore links between these and other CRESR research themes.

Successful applicants will receive the additional benefits of involvement with the White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership Cities, Environment and Liveability pathway

For further information about undertaking a PhD in this area please contact **Dr Will Eadson** ([w.eadson@shu.ac.uk](mailto:w.eadson@shu.ac.uk) / 0114 225 4173) or **Dr Aimee Ambrose** ([a.ambrose@shu.ac.uk](mailto:a.ambrose@shu.ac.uk) / 0114 225 4665).

## 2.3. Governing Families

Members of CRESR have extensive experience researching the complex lives of highly disadvantaged families and the social policies that govern them.

Whether socio-economically disadvantaged families are viewed as having 'needs' or 'problems'; whether they are seen as primarily 'troubled' or 'troublesome' shifts and changes along with the solutions put forward. Such families are positioned by and subject to a plethora of governing practices within the UK social policy landscape. This includes the high profile and controversial 'troubled families' programme in England and a recent proliferation of models of working said to be 'trauma-informed'.

The increasing attention paid to the role of 'family' (usually mothers) in containing social risks and as a mechanism for improving outcomes for children, has brought with it greater intervention by the state, new functions for statutory welfare services as well as an increasing role for the voluntary sector. The family is therefore positioned at the centre of competing policy fields. Of particular interest to academics in CRESR, is how interventions from social care and housing policy work to support and/or discipline family life. Their respective policy goals and underpinning welfare principles are far from harmonised and often contradictory, such that rather than supporting family functioning they exacerbate adversity. The institutional frameworks governing homeless mothers separated from their children, for instance, is all but silent on issues of 'family' and situated outside frameworks of family support.

Against a backdrop of dwindling state service provision and neoliberal governing practices, we invite proposals for PhDs which pay attention to the ways in which social policy and governance impact on the most disadvantaged families. We are particularly interested in PhDs which are broadly concerned with critically evaluating:

- The evolving role of the state, policy and governance in the private lives of multiply disadvantaged families
- The part played by different welfare services in supporting or disciplining families, in particular the troubled families programme.
- The way in which families and mothers in adversity are differentially positioned by social policy (housing and child welfare).

Successful applicants will receive the additional benefits of engagement with the White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership Cities, Environment and Liveability pathway.

For further information about undertaking a PhD in this area please contact Dr. Sadie Parr ([s.parr@shu.ac.uk](mailto:s.parr@shu.ac.uk) / 0114 225 2904)

## **2.4. Housing**

In an era of on-going housing crises, the need to better understand interactions between housing, policy and society has never been more acute. For 30 years the CRESR housing team has been at the forefront of housing research in the UK, particularly in relation to disadvantaged people and places. Recent work has included research focused on: homelessness and complex needs; the impact of welfare reform on housing access and affordability; housing market analysis; and housing and care. We welcome proposals that fall broadly within Housing Research Team interests. This includes but is not restricted to:

- the dynamics of private rented housing in the UK and its role in providing affordable housing
- inter-generational living
- community-led housing
- the interface between housing, austerity and welfare reform
- homelessness (including in relation to: complex needs; gender; and identity)

Successful applicants will receive the additional benefits of engagement with the White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership Cities, Environment and Liveability pathway.

For further information about undertaking a PhD in this area please contact Dr. Kesia Reeve ([k.reeve@shu.ac.uk](mailto:k.reeve@shu.ac.uk) / 0114 225 4519)

## **2.5. Labour markets and welfare reform**

CRESR is at the forefront of research highlighting the impacts of ongoing welfare reforms on people and places. The team has explored the effects of benefit sanctions on disadvantaged groups; measured the economic impact of welfare reforms across the UK; and monitored the impact of housing benefit change. Moreover, we have recently played a key role in a major 5 year ESRC-funded study of the efficacy and ethicality of welfare conditionality in England and Scotland (see [www.welfareconditionality.ac.uk](http://www.welfareconditionality.ac.uk)). Welfare reforms have increasingly restricted eligibility for benefits; made claiming 'digital by default', imposed a 'contractual ideology' on those seeking work; changed welfare from an entitlement to a conditional right and increased the severity and use of benefit sanctions. It is in this context that recent conceptualisations have focused on the punitive and violent, rather than regulatory, nature of reforms. We welcome PhD proposals in the following areas:

- British welfare reform including international and historical perspectives.
- Policy maker justifications of reforms and their 'street-level' implementation.
- The lived experience of reforms and notions of agency.
- The emergence of the 'digital welfare state' and the implications for vulnerable individuals and communities.
- The transformation of the relationship between the individual and the state.

Successful applicants will receive the additional benefits of engagement with the White Rose Social Sciences Doctoral Training Partnership.

For further information about undertaking a PhD in this area please contact Professor Del Roy Fletcher ([d.r.fletcher@shu.ac.uk](mailto:d.r.fletcher@shu.ac.uk)) / 0114 225 3487

## **2.6 Spatial inequalities**

Spatial inequalities are a critical policy challenge given the way they undermine economic development, social cohesion, environmental wellbeing and reduce life chances for millions of people across the UK and beyond. CRESR has a national reputation in research on spatial disadvantage and policies to tackle inequalities between places. This includes longstanding expertise in researching the experiences of residents living in low income neighbourhoods, evaluating the impacts of large-scale regeneration programmes, exploring the governance of spatial disadvantage, and understanding the determinants of spatial inequalities. We are also at the forefront of current debates around the potential for devolution and 'inclusive' growth to address spatial inequalities in the UK. We would welcome empirical or theoretical PhD proposals from a range of disciplinary and methodological perspectives that seek to develop new knowledge around some aspect of: the experiences of households in poverty in disadvantaged areas; the opportunities and challenges presented by new forms of sub-regional governance; the economic geography of

poverty and disadvantage; the impacts of spatially targeted policies; and the ways in which communities themselves understand and respond to economic and social change.

Successful applicants will receive the additional benefits of involvement with the White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership Cities, Environment and Liveability pathway

For further information about undertaking a PhD in this area please contact Dr Richard Crisp ([r.crisp@shu.ac.uk](mailto:r.crisp@shu.ac.uk) / 0114 225 3073)

## **2.7 The voluntary and community sector**

Over the past twenty years the voluntary and community sector in the UK has moved from the margins to the mainstream in policy terms, with the sector now considered a significant player in the reform of health, social care, children's services and welfare, as well as increasing recognition for the potentially transformative role it plays in communities and for people facing multiple disadvantage. Under austerity, and the social and economic challenges leading to and moving beyond Brexit, many voluntary and community organisations face heightened expectations and deeper struggles - meeting increasing demands amidst highly constrained resources. CRESR has one of the largest groupings of academics in the UK researching the interface between the sector and public policy at local and national level.

We welcome proposals for qualitative, quantitative or mixed-methods studies from a range of theoretical perspectives that seek to explore the varied and contested roles, experiences and value of the voluntary and community sector at the nexus of policy, communities and multiple disadvantage, linked (but not limited) to the following broad topics:

- Funding and finance in the voluntary and community sector, including social investment
- Commissioning and public service markets
- Collaboration, partnership working and co-production
- The role of the sector in mitigating the effects of welfare reform and addressing inequalities
- Campaigning, advocacy and policy influence
- The changing role of the voluntary sector's infrastructure
- Management, leadership, governance and accountability of voluntary and community organisations

Successful applicants will receive the additional benefits of involvement with the White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership pathway on Civil Society, Development and Democracy.

For further information about undertaking a PhD in this area please contact Dr. Rob Macmillan ([rob.macmillan@shu.ac.uk](mailto:rob.macmillan@shu.ac.uk) / 0114 225 2929) or Dr Ellen Bennett ([ellen.bennett@shu.ac.uk](mailto:ellen.bennett@shu.ac.uk) / 0114 225 6643).

# How to apply

Applicants should check the [DTP website](#) for Eligibility Criteria for these scholarships.

Applicants must email a postgraduate application form <https://www.shu.ac.uk/study-here/how-to-apply/research> (including a 1500 word proposal) to [fdsresearch@shu.ac.uk](mailto:fdsresearch@shu.ac.uk) by **17:00 on 29 January 2020**.

We strongly recommend that you contact the potential named supervisor to discuss and develop your research proposal before submitting your application form.

Please indicate clearly in your email that you would like to be considered for a White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership scholarship.

At this stage, you only need to include the names and contact details for referees and do not have to request references.

Successful applicants who are studying for a masters qualification must complete their course of study before taking up their PhD place.

Where English is not your first language, you must show evidence of English language ability to the following minimum level of proficiency: an overall IELTS score of 7.0 or above, with at least 7.0 in each component or an [accepted equivalent](#). Please note that your test score must be current, i.e. within the last two years.

Please note that students must be resident close to the University at which they are registered and we would expect there to be direct contact between the student and supervisor. This applies to full-time and part-time students.

Any application enquiries should be emailed to [fdsresearch@shu.ac.uk](mailto:fdsresearch@shu.ac.uk)

## Selection Process

Successful applicants will be required to attend an interview where you will be asked to talk through your research proposal. All interviews will be in person and none will be conducted by Skype.

Interview dates are provisionally scheduled for week commencing 10th February 2019.