

## **Sheffield Institute of Education**

### **How to apply**

Applicants must email a [postgraduate application form](#) (including a 1500 word proposal) to [fdsresearch@shu.ac.uk](mailto:fdsresearch@shu.ac.uk) by 12 noon on Friday 24 February 2017.

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

Please note - GTA scholarship holders will be expected to contribute to the resourcing of the student experience during their second and third years of study, either through seminar teaching or some other form of student support. This forms part of the terms and conditions of the scholarship and there is no additional payment for it.

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

Fees are paid at home/EU levels only. 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 view our [eligibility criteria](#) before submitting an application.

### **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 conducted in person and none will be conducted by Skype.

Interview dates are provisionally scheduled for w/c 20 March 2017.

### **Research Areas**

There are seven research areas described below, where we would like to invite research proposals for PhD scholarships. Please note that we also welcome applications from other education research areas but we are currently focusing on developing new research in the areas listed below.

#### ***1. Higher education spaces and a sense of mattering***

The purpose of the research is to explore students' sense of mattering within the spaces and places of higher education. This topic will enable the candidate to develop an original empirical and theoretical contribution to knowledge by bringing together two currently under-researched areas of higher education. The first of these is space and place. While the literature on formal classroom space in higher education is reasonably extensive, it primarily focuses on technological affordances. There is a dearth of research on how students develop spatial practices for using, claiming and inhabiting non-formal and other higher education spaces in ways which enable them to develop a personal sense of mattering. The second under-researched area is the very concept of mattering. Here, the research will explore students' experiences of formal and informal higher education spaces through an expansive multi-dimensional notion of mattering which includes the affective and embodied dimensions currently missing in the existing literature on students and belonging.

For further information, or informal discussion, please contact Professor Jacqueline Stevenson ([Jacqueline.stevenson@shu.ac.uk](mailto:Jacqueline.stevenson@shu.ac.uk)).

#### ***2. The impact of the market in English higher education on widening participation***

Markets are a prevalent and dynamic feature of higher education (HE) systems worldwide. In the English system, marketisation has been encouraged by successive governments in a way that encourages institutional differentiation in the form of an entrenched hierarchy; this has negative impacts on rates of participation for people from various social backgrounds leading to underrepresentation and a social justice deficit. We encourage applications from people who are interested in the response of higher education institutions to marketisation and the consequent implications for widening access. Applicants may decide to investigate this problem using approaches which may include policy analysis, economic modelling, discourse analysis and critical realism.

For further information, or informal discussion, please contact Dr Colin McCaig ([c.mccaig@shu.ac.uk](mailto:c.mccaig@shu.ac.uk))

### ***3. Contextualising bullying and 'vulnerability' in the lives of LGBT and/or disabled young people***

Anti-bullying practice and advocacy often understands certain 'types' of young people, including lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans (LGBT) and disabled young people, as being 'at risk' or 'vulnerable' to bullying. At the same time, youth work provision and other support services are increasingly subject to 'targeted' (rather than universal) work. Such approaches essentialise and individualise 'vulnerability' as something 'within' a person, rather than a product of socio-cultural-political contexts. Combining our backgrounds in critical disability studies, critical psychology, and sociology, we are interested in proposals that examine and critique the notion of 'vulnerability', and how it is constructed and enacted in education and (youth) service provision. The suggested research approach is qualitative, within which arts-based and/or participatory methods could be adopted.

For further information, or informal discussion, please contact Eleanor Formby ([e.formby@shu.ac.uk](mailto:e.formby@shu.ac.uk))

### ***4. Mathematics education and social justice: an impact assessment of historicising the present***

There is an increasing awareness that current dominant discourses at best marginalise accounts of the recent past and more commonly simply leave them unacknowledged and unknown. This project will explore the impact of historicising the present on the capacity to envisage alternative futures.

The context is mathematics education and the cross-disciplinary project will build on a pilot project completed in December 2016 and funded by BA/Leverhulme. A three part study is envisaged: researching current historical understandings of mathematics teachers (survey + interviews); a small scale design intervention; an in-depth qualitative approach to evaluating the impact of the intervention.

For further information, or informal discussion, please contact Professor Hilary Povey ([h.povey@shu.ac.uk](mailto:h.povey@shu.ac.uk))

### ***5. How does informal talk and play support young children's mathematics learning?***

There is a growing research literature that focuses on ways in which young children's developing understanding of number and mathematics emerges from informal talk, play and activity, as opposed to arising from experience of formal instruction. We anticipate that the design and conduct of this project will be informed by one or more of:

- Observation and corpus linguistics studies that have examined the nature and volume of 'maths talk' arising in parent/teacher speech during informal play and activity, and the effects that this may have on children's learning.
- Practitioner research and observation that has examined the ways in which mathematical thinking emerges from (and can be reinforced during) different forms of play (free play, guided play, and so on).
- Intervention studies that have explored ways in which parents and teachers can be supported and encouraged to increase the quality and/or quantity of 'maths talk' during informal play and activity.

For further information, or informal discussion, please contact Dr Tim Jay ([t.jay@shu.ac.uk](mailto:t.jay@shu.ac.uk))

## **6. Primary mathematics in transformation**

You are invited to develop a proposal focused on current changes in English Primary mathematics education.

Current rapid changes raise many research questions: Possible areas for research are, but are not limited to:

- critical investigation of transnational informed policy
- mastery and teacher professional learning
- teacher and pupil classroom activity for example, use of multiple forms of representation/models or classroom communication
- changing materialities including textbooks
- inclusive pedagogies and the increase in all attainment teaching in primary schools
- specific strands of the mastery initiative e.g. researching a specific professional development/curriculum innovation
- pupil experience of changing pedagogies and practices, including specific groups of learners e.g. SEND identified learners

We encourage you to develop a proposal that will study a significant research question or questions in depth rather than attempting to address current changes as a whole. We have the expertise to supervise and develop your expertise in a wide range of qualitative and quantitative methodologies but would particularly welcome proposals informed by sociomaterial and/or sociocultural theory and that include observational methods.

For further information, or informal discussion, please contact Dr Mark Boylan ([m.s.boylan@shu.ac.uk](mailto:m.s.boylan@shu.ac.uk))

## **7. Investigating a 3D model of inquiry in secondary science classrooms**

Much of classroom inquiry degenerates to 'set piece investigations' where demands made by awarding bodies (either assessments or content load) drive progression through a series of stepwise constructions designed to collect marks and prevent failure rather than develop inquiry skills and knowledge (Bevins and Price, 2016). Therefore, to promote more authentic inquiry a model that identifies three dimensions: scientific knowledge; evidence generating and handling procedures; authenticity is required. The purpose of this research will be to collaborate with a sample of secondary science teachers to design and implement a three dimensional model of inquiry and evaluate its effectiveness and explore participating teachers' practice and perceptions of using inquiry in the science classroom.

We anticipate that the design and conduct of the study will be informed by intervention studies that have explored ways in which science teachers can be supported to implement classroom inquiry effectively. We envisage an in-depth qualitative approach to be adopted that will facilitate collaboration between the teachers and researcher while providing robust evidence of processes and effectiveness.

For further information, or informal discussion, please contact Dr Stuart Bevins ([s.bevins@shu.ac.uk](mailto:s.bevins@shu.ac.uk))

Please visit the [Sheffield Institute of Education](#) website for more information.