Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology (CREET)

Information for applicants

CREET Full-time Postgraduate Studentships

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<tr>
<th>Stipend:</th>
<th>Anticipated rate 2018 £14800 pa (pro rata)</th>
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<td>Closing date:</td>
<td>11 March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview dates:</td>
<td>April / May 2018</td>
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1 THE STUDENTSHIPS

Section 1.1: Studentship details

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<th>Studentships</th>
<th>CREET is offering fully funded, partially funded or self-funded full time studentships</th>
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<tr>
<td>Studentship type:</td>
<td>3 year full time PhD studentships, or 6 year part time self-funded places</td>
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<td>Reports to:</td>
<td>Director of Postgraduate Studies</td>
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<td>Location:</td>
<td>Walton Hall, Milton Keynes</td>
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Section 1.2: Studentships in CREET

The Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology (CREET) at the Open University is offering a limited number of full time fully funded and partially funded full-time studentships. Students who are awarded a fully-funded studentship receive a tax-free bursary covering three or four years study. The anticipated stipend for fully funded studentships for 2017-2018 will be £14,800, which is in line with Research Council norms. Funded students also receive an annual research training and support grant (currently of up to £1,000).

If you are able to identify a sponsor (such as a research organization, charity or company), who may be willing to fund 50% of a full studentship (fees and stipend), the Open University may consider contributing the other 50%

Applicants who are able to fully fund themselves are also very welcome to apply to CREET. This includes applications for part-time study. We are unable to offer funded part-time studentships. Applications will be considered for part-time PhD research in Childhood Studies, Education Futures and Language and Literacies but not in Technology Enhanced Learning.

There is currently a vibrant international community of students studying our PhD programme on campus. Successful candidates studying on a full-time basis will be expected to live in or within easy reach of Milton Keynes, to attend the University on a regular basis and fully engage with the research environment at the OU. If there are exceptional circumstances we may be able to apply for a residency waiver, however the expectation to fully engage with the research environment remains in place.

Section 1.3: CREET

CREET is one of the leading education research units in the UK. It is an internationally renowned centre of excellence, pursuing innovative and rigorous research that influences policy and practice. CREET research is multidisciplinary – drawing on cutting edge research in education, applied linguistics, childhood studies foreign and second language learning and technology enhanced learning and is united by:

- a focus on learning through diverse media in a wide range of social, cultural and disciplinary settings
- a radical, challenging approach to established orthodoxies in policy, pedagogy, theory and research methods and a commitment to social justice and widening participation
- a major thread of socio-cultural theorising

Research in CREET is situated at the intersection of social, technological and economic change. Central to CREET’s concerns is the conceptualisation of both contemporary and next generation educational practices and technologies. CREET’s development of evidence-based understandings of education involves interdisciplinary, innovative, multi-methodological forms of inquiry and working in partnership with key stakeholders.

Research Clusters and Research Groups

CREET research is organized within four clusters (see below). Each cluster comprises up to 3 research groups. (For more detailed information about the research groups follow the links below or see the CREET website.)
**Childhood Studies:**
Research in childhood and youth studies at the Open University is at the vanguard of contemporary thinking in the field. Our research encompasses children's and young people's experiences, thinking, representations, learning, development, inclusion and social participation. Of concern are the institutions and social practices that shape their lives, and the cultural and personal constructions of childhood and youth that mediate these processes. We draw on a range of approaches and research methodologies, including developmental psychology, childhood studies, sociology, education, anthropology, ethnography, as well as cultural studies, and cultural psychology.

Collectively, scholars in this group have significantly reappraised key questions such as 'What is a child' and 'what is a good childhood' in the context of growing social inequalities between children in different geographic locations. Amongst the important themes of our work are the challenges of poverty and abuse as experienced by children and young people beyond the UK. This work is particularly concerned with how theoretical insights can be applied at policy level and can have a beneficial impact on children's lives.

Research priorities reflect the diversity of childhoods (for example, in relation to social, economic and cultural contexts) and the diversity of children's lived experiences (for example, in relation to age, gender, parenting/family experiences, abilities, disabilities and mental health).

**Education Futures:**
The Education Futures Cluster brings together a network of researchers investigating teaching and learning in order to understand and shape more equitable, innovative and futures oriented learning opportunities in the 21st century. Research which is both theoretically rigorous and practically relevant is developed in formal and informal contexts in homes, primary and secondary schools, Higher Education and work–based settings. Whilst much of this is ethnographic in nature, some of it also seeks to involve teachers and others as co-participant researchers.

Our work, which explores the interplay between theory and practice, contributes to knowledge expansion and seeks to make an impact upon the unfolding educational agenda at a systemic level, locally, nationally and internationally. Research foci include: teachers’ and learners’ identities and agency, pedagogy, creativity and creative teaching and learning, both within subject domains and across the curriculum, special educational needs provision, aspects of language and literacy in the 21st century, including digital literacies, independent reading and writing, and teachers’ literate identities form part of our ongoing research work. Additionally, there is a rapidly growing body of international research examining international education and development, teachers’ lives and histories, and the use and impact of mobile technologies and distance learning materials on teachers’ development as educators.

Research in Education Futures is organised around interrelated and engaging themes:

- Pedagogy and learning
- International education and development
- Literacy and creativity
- Inclusive education
- Informal learning;

**Language and Literacies:**
Researchers in Language and Literacies view language as a powerful social and cultural phenomenon. We adopt a socially oriented approach towards the study of language across the lifespan using a wide range of theoretical and methodological frameworks from applied linguistics, sociolinguistics and foreign and second language learning.

Our work covers a range of exciting research areas:

- Academic and professional literacies
- Communication in social and health care contexts
- Language and creativity
- Language and globalization
- Language and policy
- Language as a social semiotic in teaching and learning
- The teaching and learning of foreign and second languages in online and distance contexts
- Intercultural communication
- Open Educational Practices
- Language and social media
Technology Enhanced Learning:
Research from the Institute of Educational Technology (IET) is represented in the Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Cluster in CREET. Our main interests include innovative technologies in teaching and learning, learning analytics, Open Educational Resources (OERs), citizen science, participatory learning, accessibility of learning systems, learning design, technology-enhanced assessment, game-based learning, and understanding the changing experience of distance learning. Our expertise in these fields is world-renowned and our researchers carry out exciting projects. Funding reflects a diversity of sources such as the Leverhulme Trust, US-based Hewlett Foundation, the Nominet Trust, European Union research programmes, and the UK Research Councils. In 2013 IET was granted the first ever Regius Professorship in Open Education to mark the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee.

Research in TEL is organised into three programme areas:

- **Learning analytics** is a field emerging at the intersection of education research and analytic research. It involves the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of ‘big data’ related to learners and their contexts, in order to provide actionable intelligence that supports teaching and learning. We have unique research experience in this area and have taken an early lead in the field by developing and deploying analytics and publishing and presenting in this area.

- **Learning in an Open World** explores the impact that an increasingly ‘open’ technologically mediated learning environment will have on learning in the future. The research programme takes a particular position on the notion of “openness”; considering it from a broad perspective covering each major phase of the academic lifecycle: design, delivery, evaluation and research. It asks what the implications are for education in a world where content and expertise are often free and where services are shifting to the ‘cloud’.

- **Innovating Pedagogy** investigates developments in teaching and learning using the latest technologies and pedagogical innovations to define the future of learning. It aims to lead university research and development in Technology Enhanced Learning and inform OU innovations in teaching, learning and assessment. It asks questions such as: How can we facilitate effective learning in convivial environments that learners will want to return to again and again? And what can we do to make teaching a rewarding experience in the midst of constant change? The programme develops and evaluates new educational theories, methods, models, systems and technologies, informed by theories of technology-enhanced learning.

For further information about research at The Open University please have a look at the Research Degrees Prospectus.

**Section 1.4: Postgraduate research students in CREET**

**Supervisors**

It is expected that applications will be located within supervisors’ research areas. On submission, proposals will be forwarded to appropriate potential supervisors for consideration.

Studentship holders will be supervised by an experienced team from the Research Group in which the studentship is located. If appropriate to the research topic, a supervisor from another Research Group or Faculty can be asked to join the supervision team.

**Training and support**

CREET currently has 64 full-time PhD students, 7 part-time PhD students and 105 part-time EdD students. Full time students will have use of office space at Milton Keynes and will also be allocated computer facilities. There are opportunities for training through the Graduate School as well as within CREET.

Informal enquiries may be made to the Director for Postgraduate Studies by contacting WELS-Student-Enquiries@open.ac.uk.

**Note for Non EEA (European Economic Area) International Applicants**

All prospective non-EEA (European Economic Area) applicants will require a Tier 4 student visa to take up a place to study full-time in the UK. In order to obtain a student visa, students will need an unconditional offer of a place to study for a postgraduate degree at a recognized educational provider and will need to be able to demonstrate that they meet the financial requirements laid down by UK
Section 1.5: Person specification

In terms of qualifications, experience and expertise, it is essential that candidates have the following:

- A good degree at 2.1 level or above relevant to the area in which they are applying or
- A Master’s degree in a relevant area
- Knowledge of and some experience of using qualitative/quantitative research methods
- Commitment to disseminating research findings
- Good written and spoken communication skills. It is a requirement that all non-native English candidates demonstrate that they have passed the IELTS http://www.ielts.org/ or equivalent at B2 level.
- The ability to work collaboratively with supervisors
- The ability to work independently and manage time effectively to ensure completion within the funded period.

Full-time students normally study on campus and are required to live within easy commutable distance from Milton Keynes.

Section 2: Applying for a Studentship

Section 2.1: How to apply

**Application form**

Complete the application form. The form has been designed to give the information needed at this initial stage and allows candidates to be considered in an even-handed way. The application form can be found at http://www.open.ac.uk/postgraduate/research-degrees/how-to-apply/mphil-and-phd-application-process or email WELS-student-enquiries@open.ac.uk.

Email a copy of your application and research proposal to WELS-student-enquiries@open.ac.uk.

**Research proposal**

Applicants must send with their application form a research proposal of approx. 2000 words explaining the nature of their interest in the subject, with details of any previous work in this area or any related areas.

Email to WELS-student-enquiries@open.ac.uk

Candidates are advised to read the full details on How to Apply in the Research Degrees Prospectus http://www.open.ac.uk/postgraduate/research-degrees/how-to-apply/mphil-and-phd-application-process

**References**

Two academic referees should be nominated. Please provide full contact details in the Referee section of the application form, stating any reservations you may have about our approaching them.

Please be advised that the WELS/CREET Postgraduate Office is responsible for requesting references from your referees.

**Where to send it**

Email the application and research proposal to WELS-student-enquiries@open.ac.uk to arrive by the closing date.

Once completed, you must add an e-signature or type your name and date on the application form to confirm that the information and any attachments are correct.

Section 2.2: Selection process

**Eligibility**

Please see person specification in section 1.5

Non EEA (European Economic Area) International Applicants should look at the current requirements of the points-based immigration system which can be found at http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyingintheuk/adult-students/

**Closing date**

11 March 2018
Pre-applications enquiries
If you have any queries about the role and nature of the studentships prior to applying, please contact:
The Director of Postgraduate Studies, Dr Lindsay O’Dell through WELS-student-enquiries@open.ac.uk.

Shortlisting
Shortlisting will be completed as soon as possible after the closing date.

Interviews
Interviews will be held during April/May 2018. Candidates will be asked to provide a copy of a recent piece of academic writing, which is entirely their own work.

Disabled applicants
The Open University welcomes applications from disabled people. A map and access guide for the disabled indicating routes to buildings, lift access and reserved parking on campus is available on request.

Recruitment procedures
The appointment process reflects the University's and WELS/CREET's commitment to Equal Opportunities and the need to ensure these principles are reflected in all aspects of the appointment procedure.
If you have any comments or concerns about any stage of the recruitment process, please email Dr Lindsay O'Dell, on Lindsay.ODell@open.ac.uk. If, after this, you still do not feel that your concerns have been addressed, please contact Professor Regine Hampel, Associate Dean, Research Excellence: regine.hampel@open.ac.uk.

Selection and interview
Applicants are shortlisted for interview on the basis of the following criteria:

- appropriate qualifications
- the quality of the proposal
- fit with CREET research
- availability of two appropriate supervisors

The interview panel usually consists of the Director of Postgraduate Studies, the Associate Dean (Research) or the Associate Director for IET (where appropriate), one or more prospective supervisors and possibly an invited member of staff who may have a particular interest in the application concerned. At interview, the panel will discuss your research proposal and may ask you to expand on aspects of the proposal. Information is also sought concerning your previous training in research methods, (i.e. the nature of any taught courses you have taken in research methods, final-year project and/or masters' dissertation work). The research proposal and interview performance are evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Fit with CREET research
- Entry level subject knowledge (i.e. knowledge of theoretical and recent research literature pertaining to the proposed research area)
- Rationale for the proposal (i.e. the relationship between the proposed design of the research, the research questions and/or hypotheses and the proposed method of analysis)
- Knowledge and understanding of proposed research methods (i.e. why certain methods have been proposed in comparison with alternatives)
- Feasibility of the design (i.e. the scope and context of the research; proposed sampling methods; data collection methods and possible sources of bias)
- Knowledge and understanding of the relationship between analysis, interpretation and theory
- Knowledge and understanding of the ethical considerations that need to be taken into account in the conduct of the research
- Knowledge and understanding of the process of research and knowledge generation (i.e. the need for research to be generalizable and replicable).

At the end of the interview, the panel chair will explain the admissions procedures and give a brief overview of supervision practice and research training provision. It is important that, if offered a studentship, you are fully informed of what is involved in undertaking full-time PhD study in CREET and that this information feeds into any decision you make about acceptance.

Section 2.3: Preparing your proposal

Developing your outline research proposal
As part of your application you need to submit a research proposal indicating a possible topic or area that you would like to research. Don’t worry if your ideas are not fully defined at this stage. If you are admitted,
your supervisors will provide help and support in refining your initial area of interest. It is almost certain that your original outline will be amended in the early stages of the work itself. Your research proposal, however, is an important part of your application. It enables selectors to assess your knowledge of the proposed field of study and your ability to frame a project conceptually and propose an appropriate methodology.

Content of research proposal
Your proposal should be no more than 2,000 words long and should include the following. [Word lengths for each element are indicated in square brackets]:

1. Your name and the title of your thesis

2. The importance of your project [100 words]
   Explain clearly why the project is worth pursuing. Is your interest a personal one? Have recent advances in the area made a previously unresolved problem solvable? Would resolving the problem you have identified help to answer some larger question? Does the issue that you would like to investigate have some urgent practical importance? Whatever the answer may be, it would be good to include some motivation for your project. Be concise.

3. A review of the literature [1000 words]
   Indicate some of the literature that you are going to use. You do not need to give a long bibliography. Instead summarize and critically appraise the key articles or books you regard as particularly relevant to your project. Explain how they relate to your proposal. Do they contain an argument or position you intend to attack or defend, or an idea that could help you to answer your question?

4. The question [50 words]
   You should state clearly and precisely the question, or set of questions, that you intend to address. Bear in mind that a research thesis is not a book. A book can address a series of loosely related topics, but a thesis is more tightly focused. Research proposals – including successful ones – are almost always over-ambitious, but the more broad-ranging a proposal is, the harder it is to see how a coherent thesis might develop from it.

5. A conceptual framework and rationale [350 words]
   Outline the theoretical framework within which your research is positioned. Link this if you can to the literature you have reviewed, and the methodology you plan to use. For instance, you may plan to take an ethnographic approach, to carry out an intervention study, or to capture objective data and subject them to statistical analysis. This section should explain why and how the approach you plan to use will fit your topic and the problem you are addressing.

6. Methodology [250 words]
   Are there questions which need to be answered before you can answer your main research questions? Outline how you intend to provide an answer to your question(s). Which data sources will you use? How do you plan to collect data (e.g. by observation, interviews, a survey, a corpus)? Describe the process you will use to analyse the data. Will the analysis involve using specialist software?

7. Ethics and safety [150 words]
   What ethical issues does your research raise? Are human participants involved? How will you secure their consent and safeguard their confidentiality? Does the project involve risk? How will you mitigate this?

8. Hypothesis [100 words]
   At this stage you will not be able to give the answer to your research question/s. But you may already have a hunch about what it is likely to be. If so, state it briefly here, in the form of a hypothesis. If not, omit this section.

9. References
   List the publication details of all the works you have referenced in your proposal. Use a standard referencing format (e.g. Harvard). This should help us to understand the literature you are familiar with. The reference list is not included in the word count.
Additional information
As indicated above, your project is likely to develop under the guidance of your supervisors. You are not committed to everything that you say in your proposal; only to producing the thesis that develops out of it. Please do not worry if you do not know exactly how your thesis will develop: you can signal areas you are uncertain about, or try out a particular line that may be modified later on.
If you are awarded funding for your PhD from an external body, you may be requested to adapt your proposal in line with its requirements. Your supervisors will provide support and guidance in this event.

Suggested reading


3 BENEFITS AND FACILITIES
The following provides information about some staff benefits and facilities. Full details are available on appointment.

| Facilities                                      | Catering facilities at Walton Hall provide meals, snacks and drinks |
|                                                | Open University Club (offering a number of club and society events, sports and social outlets) |
|                                                | Library |
|                                                | Shop selling general provisions |

| Local education facilities                     | Information on local schools can be obtained from the Learning and Development Directorate, [Milton Keynes Borough Council](tel:01908 691691) on 01908 691691. |

| Nurseries                                      | There are a number of nurseries in the Milton Keynes area including one on site at Walton Hall, the Open University Mulberry Bear Day Nursery [Mulberry Bear website](http://www.mulberrybear.co.uk) and Pre-School. There is a waiting list for some age groups and an early application is advised. Since the Mulberry Bear is independent of the Open University, appointees cannot be guaranteed a place for their child. For further information telephone the Mulberry Bear on Milton Keynes 01908 653867. There is also a Borough of Milton Keynes nursery at nearby Kingston where the University has reserved places. |