ESRC Grand Union Doctoral Training Partnership – Health and Wellbeing Pathway

Pathway Title | Health and Wellbeing
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Project Code | 
Host institution | Brunel/OU
Host faculty | Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies
Key words | Health, inequalities, diversity, social justice, life course
Supervisory team | To be determined on individual basis

Pathway highlights

The health and wellbeing pathway at the Open University is hosted by the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies in association with the university-wide strategic research area of health and wellbeing. The research community for interdisciplinary social science based research in health and wellbeing consists of over 90 academics. The pathway is built around a focus on issues of health, wellbeing and social justice. At the Open University there is a particular focus on inclusive and participatory research (and innovative methodologies) with groups seen to be ‘vulnerable’ and ‘hard to reach’ across the life course. A key focus of our work has been research with individuals but we also have expertise in population-level health research.

The pathway will equip students to address health and wellbeing as complex, dynamic and fluid phenomena across the life course, and to use established and innovative social research methodologies to address these challenges. It provides training that students will need to research current and emerging health and wellbeing challenges relevant to diverse communities and stakeholders.

Overview

Health and wellbeing research at the university is organised thematically into a number of overlapping areas across the life course: ageing and later life; children, young people and families; death and dying; living with disability and/or long term conditions; and sexual and reproductive health. Applications are invited for PhD projects in topics linked to one or more of these thematic areas, or one of the cross-cutting areas of research interest including: care and caring; mental health and wellbeing; affect and power; technologies for health and wellbeing; and concepts of ‘normality’ and ‘abnormality’.


Training and skills

The training provided for the health and wellbeing pathway will equip students with skills to understand and interrogate health and wellbeing through an interdisciplinary frame, to draw on a range of methodologies, epistemologies and research skills to address significant challenges and issues in health and wellbeing research and practice. The training consists of core skills as well as advanced and subject specific training tailored to the student’s specific area of study. Students will be expected to attend both general research training and subject specific training. For students without relevant research skills, they will be expected to
pursue a +4 programme and will be provided with core research methods training. In addition students will be encouraged to be actively involved in student-led activities, faculty research groups and seminars across the three universities.

**Structure**

The health and wellbeing pathway is provided through two routes:

- +3 in which students will have already completed a Masters in a relevant area of health and wellbeing (such as sociology of health, health psychology, anthropology, gerontology, disability studies, demography) or a general social sciences research Masters
- +4 in which students undertake additional research training

Please indicate which of these two routes you are applying for. If you are unsure which is the best option for you please contact us and we can discuss this with you.

Students are able to study this pathway on either a full-time or part-time basis.

**Knowledge exchange, internships and careers**

Students are encouraged to undertake an internship (of between one and three months in duration) during their studies. There are also opportunities for other knowledge exchange activities (such as research visits, seminars etc.) with organisations such as public sector and third sector organisations. The Open University has links with a wide range of local and national organisations including Willen Hospice, Spinal Injuries Association and Public Health England. Students with existing professional experience and/or networks relevant to their research will be encouraged to sustain and develop these during their studies.

**Further details:**

Prospective students should have a strong background in an area of health and wellbeing relevant to their area of study, indicative areas include: sociology of health, critical health psychology, anthropology, public health, demography, health economics, epidemiology, childhood studies, gerontology; but may also include experience through practice.

If you have any questions about the relevance of your previous academic or work experience, or the suitability of your proposed project, please contact Philippa Waterhouse Philippa.waterhouse@open.ac.uk

**Applying for a studentship:**

- Applications should include a cover letter outlining why the proposed project is an important area of study, how your background relates to the selected research topic and why you wish to study at the Open University;
- An outline research proposal of no more than 2,000 words, covering research topic and methodology. General advice on the proposal can be found here: http://www.open.ac.uk/postgraduate/research-degrees/how-to-apply/mphil-and-phd-application-process;
- an academic CV that includes contact details of three academic referees;
an Open University application form, downloadable from
http://www.open.ac.uk/postgraduate/research-degrees/how-to-apply/mphil-and-phd-application-process

Applications should be sent to WELS-student-Enquiries@open.ac.uk