



ESRC Grand Union Doctoral Training Partnership – Innovation in Learning Pathway

Pathway Title	Innovation in Learning
Host institution	The Open University
Host faculty	Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies
Key words	Openness, inclusion, innovation
Supervisory team	To be determined according to topic

Pathway highlights

This pathway is dedicated to supporting research into innovative approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. Its focus is on initiatives which strengthen openness, inclusion and wellbeing in the digital age, particularly where these cross the boundary between formal and informal learning. Areas of research strength include the use of appropriate technologies for educational and professional purposes, research into children's digital lives using visual and child-led participative methods, creativity and technology in learning.

Overview

The Innovation in Learning pathway is hosted by the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS), in partnership with the Open University's Institute of Educational Technology (IET), which together form the Centre for Research in Education and Education Technology. The Centre's vibrant Research Environment was scored 100% 4* and its research was ranked 2nd in the UK for 'Research Power' in REF 2014. The Centre is home to a large and growing community of doctoral researchers, including a substantial cohort of Leverhulme Doctoral Scholars. It offers a cohesive research community with many opportunities for interdisciplinary, collaborative and participatory research. The Centre's interests link closely to research expertise in the Oxford Internet Institute and the Learning and New Technologies Research Group at Oxford's Department of Education, creating opportunities for co-supervision and shared events.

The pathway welcomes and encourages interdisciplinary research in areas as diverse as openness and inclusion, sports fitness and obesity education, the uses of learning analytics, MOOCs and the educational mainstream, open educational practices and international teacher development, the educational uses of social media and mobile devices.

Areas of interest encompass:

- technology enhanced learning (learning analytics, innovation, openness)
- technologies for inclusion (assistive technologies for disabled learners)
- child-led research (e.g. digital storytelling)
- creativity and technology





- language and translation technologies
- technologies for social and global justice

Specific research topics currently available:

- life histories: technology, learning disability and the 'good life'
- what (and how) children learn about food from the digital media
- personality and technology: how translators use digital tools
- mapping the landscape of open and engaged research
- learning and international development: connecting the individual with the collective
- MOOCs for the continuing professional development of school teachers
- using eye-tracking to research language learning and teaching
- transitions from compulsory to post-compulsory education: effective Assistive Technology support

Training and skills development

The training of doctoral researchers in the Innovation in Learning pathway will be guided by a process of Training Needs Analysis, to identify individual needs and enable the development of personalized training plans. What follows is a short summary of training opportunities available to researchers in the pathway:

Core research methods training is provided by the Open University's Graduate School. It comprises four modules providing an introduction to research philosophy, design and ethics, dealing with qualitative and quantitative research methods, and engaging with the theory and practice of interdisciplinarity.

Advanced research methods training will be tailored annually to meet students' current and future needs. It draws on a wide span of disciplinary and interdisciplinary expertise and is provided by experienced research academics or specialist trainers. The training offered includes: structural equation modelling, discourse analysis, ethnography and visual and participatory research methods.

Subject-specific research methods training will build on established expertise and training provision within WELS. It will follow two broad strands. The first will teach the elements of learning analytics; data mining; learner modelling; inferential statistics; social network analysis; information visualisation, context capture and modelling. The second will deal with qualitative methods, including: critical discourse analysis; multimodal transcription and analysis; corpus analysis; online ethnography; introspective research methods; eye-tracking.

Structure

There are two main routes into and through the Innovation in Learning pathway



Entry level qualifications	Structure of provision	FT / PT / Distance
BA/BSc (Hons) First Class in Education Studies, Languages, Psychology, Philosophy, Computer Science, or another appropriate discipline.	+4	FT (4yrs) or PT (6yrs)
MA/MSc with Distinction, in Education Studies, Languages, Psychology, Philosophy, Computer Science, or another appropriate discipline.	+3	FT (3yrs) or PT (6yrs)

Knowledge exchange, internships and careers

WELS and IET host a wealth of initiatives in which knowledge transfer and exchange are of central importance. Two striking illustrations are provided by the TESSA and TESS-India projects and by the Centre for Policing Research and Learning. The former explore the use of open educational practices for teacher development in Sub-Saharan Africa and India. The latter works in a highly collaborative way, with a partnership of 12 UK police forces, to create and use knowledge through both research and education to improve policing. These and other projects offer opportunities for both short- and long-term research placements. Current examples of externally-funded studentships predicated on engagement with various branches of industry include the Royal Dutch Shell/Energy Institute studentship in Learning from Incidents and the Globe Theatre/Deutsche Bank studentship in Playing Shakespeare. Doctoral researchers in WELS and IET are actively encouraged to take advantage of placements, mobility awards and internships and have done so recently at CERN, at *Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin* and at the *Universitat de Barcelona*. Attention is paid, throughout their period of registration, to enabling students to undertake training and gain experience that will equip them for a successful future career.

Further reading

Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison, *Research Methods in Education*, seventh edition. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Mike Sharples *et al.*, *Innovating Pedagogy 2015*, Open University Innovation Report 4. Downloadable here: http://proxima.iet.open.ac.uk/public/innovating_pedagogy_2015.pdf

Further details

Prospective students should have a strong background in Educational Studies, Social Science, Humanities (including Languages), or Computer Science.

Please contact: CREET-Student-Enquiries@open.ac.uk



Applying for a studentship

- Applications should include a cover letter outlining why the project is an important area of study, how your background relates to the proposed research topic and why you wish to study at the Open University;
- An outline research proposal of no more than 1,000 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 referees, at least two of which should be academic;
- an Open University application form, downloadable from <http://www.open.ac.uk/students/research/sites/www.open.ac.uk.students.research/files/documents/Application%20form.docx>

Applications should be sent to CREET-Student-Enquiries@open.ac.uk by 5pm on 20 January 2017