



ESRC Grand Union Doctoral Training Partnership: Health and Wellbeing Pathway

Pathway Title	Health and Wellbeing
Host faculty	Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies
Key words	Health, inequalities, diversity, social justice, lifecourse
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.

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 address 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 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'.

Please see [Appendix 1](#), at the end of this document, for a full list of themes and topics. Please see <http://www.open.ac.uk/health-and-social-care/main/research/postgraduate-student-community> for more information about the student community.

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 pathway 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 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)
- +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 Chances 4 Change. 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, 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 Lindsay O'Dell (Lindsay.odell@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 research-degrees-WELS@open.ac.uk by 5pm on 20 January 2017

Appendix 1: Topics and themes

Topics and themes for the 'Grand Union' studentships in health and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing research at The Open 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 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'.

The list below details examples of topics within each theme. The aim is to provide indicative topics/issues within each theme. Applicants can take one of these topic ideas or propose their own.

Ageing and later life

- Interrelationships of place (social, spatial and symbolic) and wellbeing (defined very broadly not discipline specific) with reference to older adults and later life
- Biomedical and psychosocial aspects of ageing and also long term conditions
- Healthcare professionals' (doctors, medical students, nurses, student nurses) attitudes towards older patients in healthcare settings
- Ways to improve digital health literacy skills of older people – for accessing, interpreting and synthesising health information across multiple sources (i.e. Websites, Apps) while also evaluating the credibility of these sources
- Technologies, everyday care and frail older people (especially those living with dementia) Issues around experiences of ageing and the social construction of ageing, especially those using narrative / biographical kinds of approaches
- LGBT issues in later life
- Sexuality in later life
- Disability and health in later life
- Long-term conditions, both physical and mental in later life.

Children, young people and families

- Child and family health, including parenting, chronic illness, pain management, childhood obesity and health promotion
- Perinatal mental health
- Child development (early years)
- Childhood disability
- Young men, gender identity and well-being
- Health and well-being of young fathers
- Boys/young men and mental health
- Adolescent mental health (including intervention studies and workforce development projects)

- Youth justice; young people's experience of imprisonment; race, ethnicity and identity
- Young women and social media, in particular the use of selfies by young women and girls to curate their identity
- Health advice around parenting (e.g. MMR vaccination, breast feeding, sleeping) and mothering more broadly
- Integrated approach to mental health services, including those for children and young people
- Global childhoods, especially involving ethnographic work, representations of childhood and histories of childhood
- Parenting a disabled child

Death and dying

- Remediating death, dying, and bereavement on social media
- Narratives of illness, death, and dying
- Multimodality in media(tized) representations of death and dying in the wake of global events or crises
- Choice to end life and the criminal law in England and Wales
- Treatment and end of life decisions for patients with disorders of consciousness
- The fear of death
- Death and dying vis a vis animals (particularly euthanasia), and links to the high suicide rate in the veterinary profession. This could broadly be extended to professionals (medics etc) working with death and dying in humans and animals, and ethics.

Living with disability and/or long-term conditions

- Ethical issues in disability sport
- Health and social for people with learning disabilities, including sexual/reproductive health, community care/family support, co-production
- Research methods for learning disability research, including life stories, inclusive approaches, historical perspectives
- Critical autism studies
- Neurodiversity including NT, autism and ADHD
- Abuse/maltreatment in sport and sportspeople living with chronic illnesses
- Story-telling and creative representations
- Decisions and dilemmas in Care and Place when living with disability
- Technologies for social interaction and wellbeing in dementia
- Can video communication technology (e.g. videophones and skype) help maintain relationships and wellbeing in dementia, when families and friends are living apart?
- The experience and impact of physical and psychological long-term conditions.

Sexual and reproductive health

- Reproductive technologies
- HIV and sexual citizenship
- Social psychological aspects of attempts to reduce anti-microbial resistance to STIs through mass media campaigns
- Sexualities, subjectivities and space (especially bi+ and trans).



Cross cutting themes and issues

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':

- Power and affect in institutional interaction (e.g. doctor/nurse-patient interactions)
- Concepts of normality, and the ways in which the distinctions between normal, abnormal and pathological are made
- Conceptual understandings of place and wellbeing
- Capability approaches to thinking about wellbeing/quality of life.
- Care and carers
- e-therapies (including computerised cognitive behavioural therapy) for minority groups
- Family and couple therapy and well-being
- Identifying and monitoring patient safety concerns in healthcare settings
- Attitudes towards vulnerable patient groups
- The nature of leadership needed to bring about innovative forms of health service, achieving better integration between community and hospital care
- Integrated care for people with long-term conditions, particularly the frail and elderly
- Recognising that Internet of Things (IoT) and wearable ubiquitous computing (e.g. wearable activity tracking and monitoring technologies, sensors) have the potential to connect people, data and devices and to provide valuable research data for advances in healthcare and for remote healthcare
- Accessibility, digital and data literacies, privacy and ethical issues of IoT and wearable ubiquitous computing for self-monitoring and self-management of health Digital health literacy projects, and the learnability and educational aspects of digital health-related communications and public engagement
- Digital (medical) education initiatives for healthcare staff to support learning at anytime and anywhere through simulations such as in virtual reality and 3D virtual worlds, and for development of their digital skills
- Social nudity and wellbeing
- Being transgender and transgender being
- Well-being and happiness
- People's understandings of and experiences of illness and/or wellbeing
- Contested conditions, medically unexplained symptoms and the meaning and practice of self-management
- The nature of wellbeing
- Ethics, particularly in respect of role occupancy (e.g. parent, colleague, health practitioner) (children, young people and families)
- Family and couple relationships, and in the concept of salutogenesis
- Ways to promote health and well-being in counselling and psychotherapy
- Global health, nutritional and health inequities across the life course
- Dual tasking whilst driving, and the associated implications for safety and wellbeing. Specifically visual perception and attention and how they can be negatively affected by dual tasking whilst driving, with resultant driving performance/accident risk of phone users being similar to drunk drivers.