



Education, engagement and inclusion in the search for life beyond Earth

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Host Institute: The Open University, UK
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Summary:

This project intends to investigate how academics working in cutting-edge astrobiology research and innovation are responding to the challenges of delivering inclusive education and/or engagement.

Project Highlights:

- Exploring inclusive approaches to education and engagement in the search for how and where life might be found beyond Earth
- Developing, delivering and assessing practical interventions that address cutting-edge research in astrobiology and its implications for society.
- Assessing the methodologies and methods used to develop inclusive approaches in education and engagement involving researchers, end-users and members of the public.

Overview:

Astrobiology is an emerging scientific field that asks questions around how and where life might be found beyond Earth. Using astrobiology research and innovation as a vehicle to explore issues of education,

engagement and inclusion, this PhD project will seek to investigate and increase our understanding of the systems, principles and practices used to co-create, support, and evaluate high-quality education and engagement for diverse citizens.

Much has been written over the past 40 years about the tensions between education and engagement (e.g. Bodmer et al. 1985; Wynne, 1991; Laurillard, 2004; Jenkins, 2006; Weingart and Joubert, 2019). In the main, this literature has focused on the theoretical and practical tensions between the underpinning principles for education and/or engaging various stakeholders, publics and end-users with research and innovation (e.g. Holliman, 2017).

More recently, attempts have been made to promote positive connections between education and engagement, e.g. through the RCUK-funded Schools-University Partnership Initiative (e.g. Holliman et al. 2018). In a similar vein, STFC's (2016) current, five-year Public Engagement Strategy (2016-2021) emphasises the need to be inclusive in engaging with diverse audiences in educational and other

Holliman, R. and Warren, C.J. (2017). Supporting future scholars of engaged research. *Research for All*, **1**(1), pp. 168-84, <http://oro.open.ac.uk/48223>.

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Wynne, B. (1991). Knowledges in context, *Science, Technology and Human Values*, **16**(1), pp. 111-21.

Further details:

Students should have a strong background in educational research or practice, and enthusiasm for cutting edge science and inclusive approaches.

Please contact Sarah.Davies@open.ac.uk for further information.

Applications must include:

- a cover letter outlining why the project is of interest and how your skills are well suited to the project
- an academic CV
- an application form and an Open University application form, downloadable http://www.open.ac.uk/students/research/system/files/documents/Application%20form%20-%20ukeu_0.docx
- contact details of three academic references

Applications should be sent to STEM-EEESPhD@open.ac.uk by 5pm on 30th September 2019

About us:

AstrobiologyOU has recently been awarded a £6.7m ‘Expanding Excellence in England’ award by Research England to grow capacity and capabilities. This will allow us to expand and bring together expertise in technology, international development and governance to address the scientific and governance challenges associated with the advancement of astrobiology and related space exploration missions. As part of this expansion we will be recruiting new PhD students who will span these discipline areas. Each studentship will play an important role in the growth of AstrobiologyOU.

The PhD candidate joining us for this project will be working in a vibrant interdisciplinary environment, alongside PhD students from STEM, Law and Governance, and Social Sciences. They will also be part of the wider OU student community, which is a friendly and supportive cohort, with regular social events organised through groups such as RocSoc, HookeSoc and the OU Club.