

# **ESRC PhD studentships in Health and Wellbeing**

The deadline for applications using the online form is **5pm, Friday 17th February, 2012**

## **What is it?**

The Health and Wellbeing pathway brings together key academics within the SWDTC who possess research and teaching strengths in the broad area of health and wellbeing – in particular lifestyle behaviours and public health. It directly addresses the ESRC Strategic Research Challenge of *Health and Wellbeing*, and is also relevant to the Challenge of *Understanding Individual Behaviour* as it will investigate socio-economic drivers of individual health behaviours and interventions needed to address these. It will make a major impact on understandings of the social science underpinnings of avoidable health problems, and build research capacity at the interface of biomedical and social sciences within and beyond academia.

This interdisciplinary pathway integrates the study of the interaction between three important lifestyle behaviours – nutrition, physical activity and substance use (i.e. smoking and alcohol consumption), and their impact on public health and risks for chronic diseases. In doing so it will generate a unique integration of research groups engaging in the latest critical thinking on disease risk determinants and correlates across the lifespan (personal, socio-cultural, environmental, psychobiological); behaviour change of individuals and societies; health inequalities; broader social, political and economic contexts in which research on health and wellbeing is carried out and applied in national and international policy making processes; and strategies to enhance collaboration between academia, industry, and third sector organisations to successfully improve public health indicators.

## Who is it for?

The Health and Wellbeing pathway will train social science researchers in the broad area of health and wellbeing – in particular lifestyle behaviours and public health. It seeks to prepare students with a range of skills to develop and evaluate interventions and strategies to improve health behaviour. Students from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds will be accepted into this pathway.

## What are the prerequisites?

Health and Wellbeing will offer both 1+3 and +3 studentships. Students applying for the 1+3 programme will have a high honors undergraduate degree or equivalent from a relevant discipline. Students applying for the +3 programme must have completed an ESRC recognised MRes or MSc programme with appropriate research training or equivalent by September 2012.

## What will I study in the first year?

Research training in this pathway will follow the SWDTC interdisciplinary format i.e. three core research training modules will be selected from the consortium's offerings in research design, data collection and data analysis; there will be one pathway specific module; and two modules will be selected from an open unit list. There is also a research dissertation. The core research training modules will include the new module called *Advanced Interdisciplinary Research Design*. This module will address the characteristics and challenges of 'doing' interdisciplinary research. It will be mandatory core training for this pathway.

The pathway specific module will be a custom-designed and co-convened core course entitled *Contemporary Debates in Lifestyle Behaviours and Public Health*. This course will draw on key elements of existing training in all three Universities and will be

taught by a cross- institutional team co-ordinated by designated pathway co-ordinators. Subject-specific training will draw on world class research expertise in exercise science and physical activity; behaviour change theory; epidemiology, mental/physical health and wellbeing; social/public health policy; substance use; and dietary behaviour. It will expose students to breadth of disciplinary enquiry, diverse theoretical perspectives, and full range of constituent specialisms. A wide range of existing open units from all three universities will be made available for students to choose from. These include topic specific courses on issues such as physical activity, tobacco control, and health policy, and translational units such as translating evidence into practice.

## **Who will supervise my thesis?**

All students will have two supervisors from different disciplinary perspectives on Health and Wellbeing. Students proposing cross-institutional supervision are particularly encouraged. These supervisors will convene joint meetings on a regular basis, and will attend the annual one-day workshop for all pathway students.

## **When would it start?**

Students will be expected to start on 1st October 2012

## **How many studentships are there in this pathway?**

Up to two studentships per year will be awarded on a competitive basis.

## **How do I apply?**

- Work out your substantive research topic.

- Contact the pathway lead at your preferred host University with a brief description of your proposed topic (no more than 1 page). We will then put you in touch with potential supervisor(s) for your topic.
- Write a 1000-word proposal
- Submit your proposal to your host University using their online application form.
- Notes on completing the application form for the Health and Wellbeing pathway:
  - In Section 1 enter 'Health and Wellbeing' next to programme
  - In Section 7 tick UK Research Council
  - Your 1000-word proposal should be included in Section 10
  - All applicants are required to provide two references.

## **Timeline**

- The deadline for applications via the online form is **5pm (BST), Friday 17th February, 2012**
- Applicants will be notified whether their application has been successful by the end of April
- Successful applicants will be expected to start in October 2012

## **What does an ESRC studentship**

**cover?** An ESRC studentship covers University tuition fees plus an annual maintenance stipend to contribute towards living expenses. Each studentship also includes a Research Support Grant

of £750 per year to encourage students to attend conferences and additional courses external to the University.