

# PhD Opportunity

Training emotional competency in the workplace:  
Does 'one size' really 'fit all'?

## Supervisory team

Dr Sarah Davis, Dr Blaire Morgan, Prof Lynn Nichol

## Director of Studies:

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**Research Group:** [Interpersonal Relationships and Wellbeing Research Group](#)

## The PhD Opportunity

As a core focus for organisational Equality Diversity & Inclusion policies, the current drive to train emotional skills in the workplace shows no signs of abating. For instance, emotional intelligence has experienced a recent resurgence in popularity, being advocated as a way for organisations to achieve the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) through employee training (see e.g., United Nations, n.d.).

In addition, various social and emotional interventions that require emotional competencies (and elicit emotional responses), such as 'perspective taking' or sensitivity training, are encouraged as good organisational practice (Gifford et al., 2019). So far, research has focussed on evaluating the efficacy of such training at a universal level and has neglected the experiences of groups of individuals who may have different needs that are not best served by such 'off the peg' programmes. Indeed, in other settings, such as schools, and clinics, participation in psychosocial interventions has been associated with iatrogenic effects (Foulkes & Stringaris, 2023; Moos, 2012).

Through a multi-phase programme of research, this PhD will examine the scope of these practices within organisations across the UK, and the experiences of employees who are charged with overseeing, and undertaking, such trainings within the workplace.

## References

Foulkes, L., & Stringaris, A. (2023). Do no harm: can school mental health interventions cause iatrogenic harm?. *BJPsych bulletin*, 1–3. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjb.2023.9>

Gifford, J., Green, M., Young, J., & Urwin, P. (2019). Diversity management that works: An evidence-based view. In [https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/7926-diversity-and-inclusion-report-revised\\_tcm18-65334.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/7926-diversity-and-inclusion-report-revised_tcm18-65334.pdf). Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. Retrieved April 2, 2023, from [https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/7926-diversity-and-inclusion-report-revised\\_tcm18-65334.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/7926-diversity-and-inclusion-report-revised_tcm18-65334.pdf)

Moos, R. H. (2012). Iatrogenic effects of psychosocial interventions: Treatment, life context, and personal risk factors. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 47(13-14), 1592-1598.

United Nations. (n.d.). *The 17 Goals | Sustainable Development*. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

United Nations. (n.d.). *Unlocking your Emotions to Achieve the SDGs: Emotional Intelligence | United Nations*. <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/unlocking-your-emotions-achieve-sdgs-emotional-intelligence>

## Application Process

To begin the application process please go to:

<https://www.worcester.ac.uk/courses/psychology-mphilphd> and click on 'How to Apply' in the top menu. This PhD could be carried out on a part time or full time basis so please select the relevant application link. On the application form, please make it clear that you are applying for one of our advertised projects so we can direct it straight to the relevant people.

## The Interview

All successful applicants will be offered an interview with the proposed Supervisory Team. You will be contacted by a member of the Research School Team to find a suitable date. Interviews can be conducted in person or over Microsoft Teams.

## Funding your PhD

For information about Doctoral Loans please visit: <https://www.worc.ac.uk/study/fees-and-finance/doctoral-loans.aspx>

During your PhD you can access the Research Student Support Scheme to support dissemination costs associated with your research, up to £500 a year.

## Research at the University of Worcester

Research is central to the University's mission to make a difference in everything that we do. We are committed to delivering excellent research which extends the boundaries of human knowledge but which also improves people's lives by enabling better health outcomes, improving food security, developing environmentally sustainable solutions for crop production and socially sustainable solutions to our ageing population, enhancing public knowledge and understanding of the past and present.

The University hence focuses its research around five high-level challenges facing society, locally, nationally and globally:

- [Human Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [Sustainable Futures](#)
- [Digital Innovation](#)
- [Culture, Identity and Social Exclusion](#)
- [Professional Education](#)

The success of our research is reflected in our continuous improvement in external research assessment processes. In the most recent Research Excellence Framework, REF 2021, the University saw a near 50% increase in the scale of its research and 12% increase in quality, building on its performance in REF 2014 when it was the UK's most improved university in terms of Research Power, a combination of scale and quality.

### **Research Degrees at Worcester**

Our research students are central to our overall mission for research. They are working at the cutting edge of their disciplines and driving forward the quality of our research whilst enriching our research culture. We are looking to increase our research student numbers as a strategic imperative.

Our commitment to our students is reflected in the results of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2023 in which we ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> for overall research student satisfaction nationally. Key to our success in this area is the Research School, a focal point for all our research students.

It provides:

- day-to-day support for our students, both administrative and practical, through our dedicated team
- a Research Student Study Space with both PCs and laptop docking station
- a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme for students and their supervisors
- a programme of student-led conferences and seminars

### **Research Group**

#### **Interpersonal Relationships & Wellbeing Research Group**

The Interpersonal Relationships and Wellbeing Research Group draws together internationally renowned academics from across Psychology, Business and Criminology, with partners in Industry, third sector organisations and local government. Research activity is organised around four themes: Wellbeing for Life; Customer Interactions; People and Work; and Trauma and Violence Prevention.

We study interpersonal relationships, wellbeing and their inter-connectivity from an inter-disciplinary perspective, to generate applied, solution-focussed research. Our research explores how individual, social and environmental factors influence relationships and wellbeing within different contexts, such as in workplaces, schools and online spaces. We are interested in understanding how interpersonal relationships contribute to mental health (construed as both trauma/mental ill-health, and as wellbeing) and how they shape individual and team behaviour in consumer and organizational settings. In doing so, we explore both the 'dark' and 'light' side of relationships and human behaviour more broadly.

### **Widening Participation**

As part of its mission statement the University is committed to widening participation for its higher degrees. Although most candidates will have an undergraduate and/or a Masters degree, the University is happy to accept applications from candidates with relevant professional qualifications and work related experience.

**For further information** or an informal discussion on this project, please contact Dr Sarah Davis (Director of Studies) via email at [sarah.davis@worc.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.davis@worc.ac.uk)

### **Applications can be made at:**

<https://www.worcester.ac.uk/courses/psychology-mphilphd>