

PhD Opportunity

The role of student social capital in opportunity gaps and awarding gaps in healthcare education

Supervisory team

Director of Studies: Professor Rebecca Stack

Supervisors: Professor Sandra Nicholson

Research Group: [Health Professions Education and Practice](#)

The PhD Opportunity

Social capital in educational settings often refers to the network of relationships and shared norms between groups of students which can lead to positive educational outcomes. For example, high social capital can allow individuals to access support, information, and collaboration opportunities, ultimately enhancing their learning. In healthcare educational settings a large proportion of learning is practical, collaborative and often involves interprofessional learning. This may lead to healthcare students needing to employ higher levels of social capital to maximise the utility of learning opportunities available.

Social capital may also influence the way that healthcare students (from a range of backgrounds) approach interprofessional learning sessions, interactive simulation session and role-play communications sessions. The impact that social capital may play in these learning scenarios is unclear, and the extent to which it may influence student outcomes is unknown. Furthermore, healthcare programmes often use flipped learning pedagogy, problem-based learning, which require high levels of social learning which may be challenging for students with lower social capital. Equally social learning opportunities may be influenced by social exclusion, personality types and other factors and therefore, a critical approach is required.

A PhD student working in this area may choose to take a critical approach to investigating the role of social capital in any of the following areas (including their outcomes):

- (1) Interprofessional learning opportunities between groups of healthcare students
- (2) Flipped learning curricular (particularly problem-based learning) in healthcare education
- (3) Simulation and skills-based learning; (4) work-based learning (placements) or
- (4) Informal opportunities students use to preparation for assessments.

Application Process

To begin the application process please go to:

<https://www.worc.ac.uk/research/research-degrees/applying-for-a-phd/>.

The Interview

All successful applicants will be offered an interview with the proposed Supervisory Team. You will be contacted by a member of the Doctoral 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 Conference Support Scheme to support the costs of presenting your research at an external conference.

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 3rd for overall research student satisfaction nationally. Key to our success in this area is the Doctoral 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 stations
- a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme for students and their supervisors
- a programme of student-led conferences and seminars

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 Professor Rebecca Stack r.stack@worc.ac.uk

