

# PhD Opportunity

Living with allergy during the transition to secondary school

## Supervisory team

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**Research Group:** [Living Well with Long-Term Conditions Research Group](#)

## The PhD Opportunity

Allergy, the immune system's hypersensitive reaction to typically harmless substances, can be severe and lead to a potentially life-threatening reaction or anaphylaxis (Turner et al, 2019). Allergy prevalence is a global "major public health issue" (Sánchez-Borges et al, 2018, p.1), and one of the most common chronic conditions in Europe (Muraro, 2015).

The UK particularly faces an allergy crisis. UK allergy rates amongst adults and children are some of the highest in Europe (APPG, October 2021; Sigurdardottir et al, 2021). Allergy can develop across the lifespan but is common in childhood and can become lifelong (Chan et al, 2020; Wasserman & Wason, 2001). Allergy prevalence is difficult to estimate, especially among children (Grabenhenrich et al, 2020). Nevertheless, estimates suggest proven and undiagnosed allergy prevalence among UK school age children is high (APPG, 2021), and 10% of primary school age with proven or undiagnosed allergic multimorbidity (Sigurdardottir et al, 2021).

For these children and their families, living with allergy has health, economic, and psychosocial costs (Grabenhenrich et al, 2020; Subramanain et al, 2021; Walker, 2007). Importantly, allergy's adverse impact on children's educational attainment and school experience is robust (e.g., Champaloux & Young, 2015; Fong et al, 2018; Newman et al, 2022; von Kobyletzki et al, 2017). Consequently, understanding factors influencing management of allergy in children is important (BSACI, nd).

Adult carers (parents and schoolteachers) implement a young person's allergy management action plan including strategies in the event of severe or potentially life-threatening anaphylactic reaction (NICE, 2020; 2018). Research on ways of avoiding and responding to allergy-related medical emergencies among young people focuses on two transition points (Kaplan, 2022; Sanagavarapu, 2017; 2016; 2012): the transition to school, and from adolescence to adulthood. Yet, UK research on children's transitions from primary to secondary school is sparse (Newman, 2022) despite known psychosocial challenges this transition represents for children in general (Coffey, 2013).

We are looking for a PhD student to develop a qualitative or mixed methods study to enhance our understanding of the experiences of children living with proven and undiagnosed allergy before and after the transition from primary to secondary school. This multi-disciplinary, collaborative study will run across both UW, NHS, and school environments, offering an opportunity for the successful applicant to develop an applied, impactful research study which could inform policy and practice within schools and NHS Trusts.

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## 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 station
- a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme for students and their supervisors
- a programme of student-led conferences and seminars

### **Living Well with Long-Term Conditions Research Group**

Approximately 15 million people in England, representing 1 in 4 adults, have one or more long-term conditions (LTCs). A LTC is an illness that cannot be cured but may be controlled with medicines or other treatments. People living with LTCs face considerable challenges around the management of their long-term physical and mental health.

The 'Living Well with Long-Term Conditions' Research Group aims to facilitate the development and implementation of high-quality research and knowledge exchange, targeted at helping people with long-term conditions and their families to live well.

### **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 Bere Mahoney (Director of Studies) via email at [b.mahoney@worc.ac.uk](mailto:b.mahoney@worc.ac.uk)

