

Funded PhD studentship 2019

Further Particulars

Programme aims: BACP intends to provide financial support for applicants to pursue part time PhD research on a project agreed with BACP (details of the 2019 doctoral project areas below).

The BACP PhD studentship is paid at the rate of **£7,500 per academic year (under review), including part-time course fees, up to a maximum of five years.**

The aims for this BACP PhD funding programme are broadly to:

- 1) Facilitate high-level substantial research with potential for significant impact in areas/projects that have a broad commitment to social justice, and are relevant to the BACP strategic intents and BACP Research Department identified themes: Children, Young People and Families; Older Adults; Four Nations; and the evidence base for Humanistic Therapies.
- 2) Build a community of counselling researchers of the future by facilitating the growth of research expertise in BACP funded students.

For 2019 BACP is funding two studentships, one in each of the following doctoral project areas:

- **Brief 1: School-based Humanistic Counselling: using data from ETHOS**
 - This project must be located at Roehampton University
- **Brief 2: Counselling for older people**
 - This project can be pursued at any UK university

Further details are in Appendix 1; applicants should also consider the 'Top Tips' information (Appendix 2).

Definition of doctoral programme: The BACP studentships are for students who wish to enrol on a traditional research-only PhD programme. Professional doctorates in the areas of counselling, psychotherapy or clinical psychology - combining research with extensive classroom teaching, and engagement in learning competencies as therapists - are not eligible. Students must be able to comply with all attendance regulations at their chosen university (e.g. supervision meetings, research support training).

Eligibility

Essential

- Educated to Masters level (MA, MSc or MPhil) in a relevant discipline or equivalent research experience that demonstrates readiness for engagement in a doctorate
- Good record of educational achievement in relevant disciplines (e.g. undergraduate degree at 2:1 or First and/or MSc at Merit or Distinction, e.g. high grades for any research dissertation)
- Research training sufficient to provide the appropriate foundation for doctoral research engagement. This should include both quantitative and qualitative research training
- Evidence of aptitude for research through past engagement in research

Desirable

- Counselling practitioner training or equivalent (e.g. psychotherapy or applied psychologist) - practitioner training must be completed at the time of application
- Evidence of positive contact with potential doctoral supervisor(s) who are well suited to supervise the proposed research and who have capacity (workload) and willingness to do so
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Applicants must apply separately and satisfy all entry requirements at their chosen university.

Process of application

The application deadline is noon on 31 January 2019.

Applicants should submit a completed [application form](#) to BACP which includes an outline of their proposed doctoral research. Applicants for Brief 1: *School based Humanistic Counselling: using data from ETHOS*, must also apply via the Roehampton application portal at the same time as their BACP application <https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/graduate-school/degrees/>.

The University of Roehampton will review your application and consider whether to progress your application to the BACP selection process. Part of this process will include an initial shortlisting interview at the University of Roehampton in week commencing 18th February 2019.

Successful candidates will then be recommended to BACP for interview. BACP will conduct their own assessment of applications for the studentship and candidates successful at this stage will be invited to interview by a BACP panel. These interviews will take place on March 26 and 27 2019

Selection of candidates

Completed applications received by the deadline will be reviewed by a panel of 3-5 counselling and psychotherapy researchers including at least one representative from the BACP research department. Applications will be reviewed initially against the eligibility criteria and then against these criteria:

- Fit of proposal to the project brief
- Potential of project in terms of impact in the nominated research area
- Quality of candidate in terms of evidence of potential as a doctoral candidate
- Quality of doctoral proposal

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview which will focus on their proposed research project and their suitability for doctoral study. Applicants will also be asked how their research would contribute to 1) creating relevant impact for the counselling profession, and 2) creating for them an ongoing professional engagement/career as a counselling researcher.

Any studentship offer will be conditional on evidence of qualifications and satisfactory references.

Results of the interview process will be fed back to the candidates as soon as practical. News about the award of the studentships and the winners will be announced through BACP outlets.

Appendix 1

Brief 1: School-based Humanistic Counselling: using data from ETHOS

Project aim: The proposed project aims to utilise data collected as part of the Effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of school-based humanistic counselling in schools (ETHOS) trial, with the overall aim of understanding why school counselling may be effective for some young people and not for others.

Project rationale: One in ten children in Britain have been identified as experiencing a diagnosable mental health disorder. School-based humanistic counselling (SBHC) may help young people identify, address, and overcome psychological distress. ETHOS is a fully powered randomised controlled trial (RCT) which aims to evaluate the effectiveness of adding SBHC to usual pastoral care and to determine the process of change. A wealth of data has been collected as part of the trial. This project will aim draw on ETHOS data to explore why counselling is more effective for some young people than others. Of particular interest is how young people have experienced counselling and how that is associated with outcomes.

The primary outcomes for the trial were psychological distress measured using the Young Person's Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (YP-CORE) and costs evaluated using the Client Service Receipt Inventory (CSRI). Secondary outcomes included psychological difficulties, levels of depression, anxiety and self-esteem, well-being, school engagement, educational outcomes and achievement of personal goals. Process measures of the working alliance, Rogerian 'core conditions', and adherence to person-centred competences were also used. Additionally, qualitative interviews with participants, parents, and school staff have looked to identify the mechanisms of change in SBHC. Comprehensive details of the study can be found at [this link](#).

Project design: In terms of project design, applicants are free to propose quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods designs. Process-outcome studies, which looked at the relationship between particular processes within the counselling (e.g., use of self-disclosure by therapists) and outcomes, or systematic case studies, may be particular suitable methodologies to adopt. Applicants should propose a robust study design that meets the project aims. As a doctoral-level project, there is an expectation that applicants will generate further data for the study: for instance, through conversational analysis of transcripts or through coding sessions using an observer-rated measure. Applicants should provide a full explanation as to how their selected project design is best suited to meet the overall aim of the project.

Please note: Due to the nature of this studentship utilising data from an existing trial undertaken at the University of Roehampton, the successful applicant will be expected to register as a PhD student at the University of Roehampton and will be supervised by Professor Mick Cooper (Principal Investigator on the ETHOS trial). It is expected that applicants will contact Professor Cooper to discuss the proposed project and suitability to undertake a PhD at Roehampton prior to submitting their application form. Please contact the research department at BACP in the first instance research@bacp.co.uk. The successful applicant will be required to attend 24 sessions of a student development programme, a small number of which can be done online. Additionally, regular face-to-face supervision meetings will be located at Roehampton.

Brief 2: Counselling for older people

Project aim: This project aims to explore the effectiveness of and perceptions towards counselling for older adults with depression

Project rationale: BACP have identified three key areas to focus on more deeply in the next five years, one of which is Older People. BACP have pledged to explore the role of counselling in improving the lives of older people, and promote the value of talking therapies to this group. The applicant will liaise with BACP throughout their PhD to work towards these goals.

Previous research has demonstrated that psychological interventions are effective with older adults, however there is a lack of research in this area. IAPT data indicates that older adults have better outcomes than younger adults after receiving a form of psychological therapy (NHS, England). However, far fewer older adults present to IAPT services for treatment than the younger population. Research has explained that physical barriers (e.g. lack of transport or poor mobility) may inhibit older adults from accessing care (Age UK, 2017).

There is a need for more research into the effectiveness of counselling for older adults with depression. Additionally, we need to understand more about older adults' perceptions of counselling and any barriers to access. This research, therefore, aims to address some of the gaps in our knowledge around counselling for older adults.

Project design: The first component of this PhD will address the question: is counselling effective for older adults with depression? Applicants are invited to propose quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods designs that provide an insight into the effectiveness of counselling in older adults with depression.

The second component of this PhD will explore perceptions of older adults towards counselling and any barriers to access.

The applicant is free to determine the focus for the study, for example whether that be older adults with dementia, and/or their carers, or older adults resident in care homes, or GP settings etc.

Applicants who have experience of working with or conducting research with older adults are particularly encouraged to apply.

Appendix 2

Top Tips

Based on the experience of applications to the BACP PhD studentships to date, the following tips may be useful.

- ***Do seek advice about the appropriate scope of a PhD proposal***; there is no one definition but a PhD is three-years of full-time work so it is potentially equivalent in scope to three MSc projects (doctoral projects may involve 2-3 or more separate studies). Another distinction is in terms of the level of the work. Do consult the Higher Education doctoral descriptor; also consult with potential supervisors/other PhD students.
- ***Do consider the extent to which the research question is congruent with the proposed methodology***, for example in terms of epistemology.
- ***Do provide sufficient detail about what you would plan to do*** (methodology) as this is your specific project plan which BACP is deciding whether to fund. In particular be clear about the planned sample, who you plan to include and the proposed N.
- ***Make a clear statement about the potential value of your project for BACP*** and for the broader research area. This is not only about arguing that your project speaks to a gap in the literature but also about demonstrating that the proposed project will have significant impact.

You may find this MOOC on researching and writing a high-quality PhD proposal useful: <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/research-question>