

PhD Opportunity

What Drives Social Pedagogy?

Supervisory team

Dr Carla Solvason, Professor Geoffrey Elliott, Dr Alison Prowle

Director of Studies:

Dr Carla Solvason

Carla Solvason has taught in primary schools, further and higher education. She currently leads the well-attended Social Pedagogy Research Group at the University of Worcester. Carla serves on the board of the Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network. She writes and edits extensively in the area of ethical education and research practices and is the Assistant Editor for Support for Learning.

Supervisors:

Professor Geoffrey Elliott

Geoffrey Elliott has taught in comprehensive schools, further, adult and higher education, and has undertaken a range of leadership roles during his career. He is Immediate Past President of the Association for Research in Post-Compulsory Education and has served on the Board of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education, and the Consultation Committee of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. He edits the international peer reviewed journal Research in Post-Compulsory Education and is currently Professor of Post-Compulsory Education at the University of Worcester specialising in education policy, leadership and lifelong learning.

Dr Alison Prowle

Alison has extensive experience of education, family, and community development, as researcher, practitioner and senior manager both in school and in local government. Alison had responsibility for a range of universal and preventative programmes including early years services, parenting and family support, integrated children's centres, play provision, pupil referral units and the education welfare service. Alison has researched extensively in the areas of parenting, disability and family support, trauma-informed approaches, and childhood adversity. Alison's research interests include researching with vulnerable populations, the impacts of forced migration and human trafficking on children and families, kinship care, multiple adversity and complex trauma.

Research Group: [Social Pedagogy Research Group](#)

The PhD Opportunity

A PhD student can focus upon one of the following topics:

- Social pedagogy as a solution to the current education crisis
- An exploration of the value that pedagogical approaches can offer HE
- An exploration of the role that social pedagogy can play in building communities

The Social Pedagogy ideology is both complex and diverse; as its basis sits within social work it is found within a range of specialist provision outside of the mainstream education sector. Although the role of Social Pedagogue is well established in other countries, it has only been recognised in the UK relatively recently. Therefore, there is a need to further explore its potentiality within a variety of settings, including schools, FE and HE as the main regulated provisions.

The relationship and nurture basis of such an approach has particular resonance with an education sector that has struggled to recover from the impact of COVID-19. The socially engaged approaches embedded within a social pedagogical approach take on particular significance in light of pressures of funding, accountability and rationalisation currently being played out at a policy and strategic level within the education sector.

Applicants are advised to indicate which of the three themes above is of interest to them and to orient their applications to this preference as appropriate.

Application Process

To begin the application process please go to [Education MPhil/PhD Webpage](#) 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 more 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 3rd 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

Social Pedagogy Research Group

Social pedagogy has people and relationships at its heart. The Social Pedagogy Research Group has a focus on carrying out education-based research with a social impact. We believe that by recognising structural inequity and our role in challenging this, we might achieve deeper levels of understanding of ourselves, develop advanced empathy toward others, and more clearly recognise the conditions for change needed in organisations and wider society.

Our aim is to make a social impact ourselves and in doing so support others to do the same with a commitment to ethical research exemplified by the respectful and ethical approach taken by all of its members; work closely and respectfully with our research partners to produce high quality research which, beyond the ethical prerequisite to 'do no harm' has a positive impact upon those involved; see and listen to the diverse or atypical and provide more effective opportunities for them to be heard and supported; supportive and secure relationships regarding the experience of the research respondent and an open environment where all contributions and suggestions are heard and valued.

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 Carla Solvason (Director of Studies) via email at c.solvason@worc.ac.uk