

ESRC CASE studentship (Educational Disadvantage)

Cradle-to-Career School Designs: Learning from insider experiences

Project Description

This full time 3 year PhD studentship, starting in September 2018, is fully funded by the ESRC CASE studentship scheme [ESRC NWSSDTP](#) together with the [Manchester Institute of Education](#) at The University of Manchester and [Reach Academy Feltham](#).

CASE studentships involve a PhD student working in partnership with a professional organisation to undertake a study which has been designed to enhance the organisation's work. This creates an exciting opportunity for students to undertake a PhD which bridges between academic and professional concerns, having a direct impact in a professional context while also producing a PhD thesis.

The PhD will require the successful candidate to become an 'embedded researcher' based at Reach Academy Feltham (RAF). The appointed student will develop an in-depth ethnographic case study of RAF's distinctive cradle-to-career school design. This design is intended to address educational disadvantage by engaging with children's family and community contexts throughout their school career. The PhD will be supervised by Dr Kirstin Kerr and Prof Carlo Raffo from The Manchester Institute of Education, and closely supported by Luke Billingham, leader of 'Reach Hub' – the internal structure established by RAF to support its cradle-to-career design.

The studentship project

This studentship will be based in Reach Academy Feltham (RAF), in the London Borough of Hounslow. Established in 2012, RAF is an outstanding all-through free school, serving a highly disadvantaged area. It is at the fore-front of cradle-to-career school designs in the UK and has recently been show-cased in RSA's 'The Ideal School Exhibition'.

Emerging in poor urban neighbourhoods in the USA, and now increasingly in the UK, cradle-to-career school designs engage with barriers to learning in children's family, community, and wider socio-environmental contexts. The best known example of this kind of design internationally is the Harlem Children's Zone. Tailored to local areas, these designs aim to: (i) provide children with a seamless 'pipeline' of support, from pre-school to positive post-school destinations; (ii) improve children's outcomes across a range of domains, including health, education, housing, and material well-being; and (iii) enhance the capacity of children's family and community contexts to support better outcomes. RAF's own design has three strands of activity, focused on supporting: (i) school readiness, through antenatal, postnatal and early years development support; (ii) family strength and capacity, through wide-ranging parent and family support programmes; and (iii) post-school outcomes, through services to support learners' well-being, educational outcomes, and wider life chances.

The studentship project will require the successful candidate to develop a rich, ethnographic-style case study of RAF's cradle-to-career approach. This will involve the CASE student:

1. surfacing and scrutinising the understandings of the professionals leading RAF's cradle-to-career design, focusing on what this design is intended to achieve and how it anticipates doing so
2. exploring how a sample of children and their families engage with, experience, and are impacted upon by RAF's cradle-to-career design
3. supporting the professionals leading RAF's development through their engagement with the study's findings.

Person specification

Applicants must hold a Master's degree at merit level or above in a relevant social science or humanities discipline, such as education, social anthropology, social policy, or sociology. They must demonstrate a keen awareness of issues relating to the impacts of disadvantage on education and life chances, and of policy efforts to address these. Experience of working with schools, children's services or wider local authority services, in third sector organisations working with children and families in disadvantaged contexts, and/or in community development, is highly desirable. A high level of competence in qualitative data generation and analysis is essential as the study will involve the development of ethnographic style case studies.

The successful candidate must be DBS cleared.

The successful candidate must also be able to undertake the first six months of the PhD study in Manchester in order to engage in postgraduate research training and access the university's full range of services. He/she will subsequently be based at RAF, making regular visits to Manchester.

Candidates must satisfy the ESRC's academic and residential eligibility requirements and be UK (full award) or EU citizens (fees only). Find out more about eligibility [here](#) (see p2).

Financial support

The studentship covers academic fees, provides an annual Maintenance Stipend (£14,553 in 2017, exact rate for 2018 subject to confirmation from the RCUK), and access to a Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) for reimbursement of research related expenses including – but not limited to – conference attendance, training courses and UK fieldwork. In addition, RAF will provide financial support for regular travel to Manchester while based at RAF, and the purchase of essential equipment.

Further information

Further details about the project the successful candidate will be required to undertake can be found [here](#).

Applicants are strongly recommended to discuss their application with Dr Kirstin Kerr in advance of submission. Dr Kerr's contact details are: Kirstin.Kerr@manchester.ac.uk

The deadline for applications is 04.02.18. Interviews will be held at Reach Academy Feltham, and will take place in the week beginning 19th February.

Candidates invited for interview are expected to cover their own travel expenses.

Application

Apply by 4th February 2018 5pm GMT by emailing Christopher.kitchen@manchester.ac.uk the following:

- A full CV
- A personal statement outlining the applicant's suitability and interest to undertake the proposed project, paying particular attention to the proposal's substantive and methodological aspects.
- An example of a piece of academic writing produced by the applicant of 5,000-10,000 words. (Applicants may consider submitting two shorter pieces of c.5,000 if these deal separately with conceptual and empirical analyses.) This may be a chapter(s) from a Master's dissertation, in which case, an abstract or introduction outlining the context/aims/research questions of the study must also be included.
- The names and contact details of two academic referees who are able to comment on the applicant's suitability for PhD study and to undertake the advertised project.
- The name and contact details of an additional referee who can comment on the applicant's professional suitability to be embedded at Reach Academy Feltham.