

PhD Studentship

Dementia and Sports reminiscence, memory and nostalgia: Engaging with the cultural dimensions of sport as a means of improving community engagement for people living with dementia.

Closing date: Wednesday 7th June 2017

Interview date: Tuesday 27th June 2017

The University of Worcester is seeking to grow its interdisciplinary research capacity in Dementia Studies and the socio-cultural aspects of sport, exercise, and the body. In particular, the University wishes to strengthen its research on the varied roles that the cultural dimensions of sport (in particular, sporting reminiscence, memory and nostalgia) may have in the (re)construction of identities, communities and experiences of individuals with dementia. To this end, the University of Worcester is offering a full time 3-year fully-funded PhD studentship in the following area: Dementia and Sports reminiscence, memory and nostalgia: Engaging with the cultural dimensions of sport as a means of improving community engagement for people living with dementia.

Supervisory team

Director of Studies:

[Dr Simon Evans](#), Association for Dementia Studies, Institute of Health & Society, University of Worcester

Dr Simon Evans (DPhil) is Principal Research Fellow and Head of Research with the Association for Dementia Studies at the University of Worcester. His research interests focus on contributing to the evidence base for improving quality of life for people living with dementia and those who support them. His publications span a range of topics including housing, health, social care, climate change, research ethics and public engagement with research.

Supervisors:

[Dr Shirley Evans](#), Association for Dementia Studies, Institute of Health & Society, University of Worcester

Dr Shirley Evans is a Senior Research Fellow in the Association for Dementia Studies. Her research is focused on: peri-diagnostic/post-diagnostic support in dementia; dementia outcomes and measures; assistive technology and information and communications technology for people with dementia; people with dementia as learners. She is currently an investigator on the ESRC funded MEETINGDEM project which seeks to implement and evaluate the Meeting Centres Support Programme (MSCP, an innovative way of supporting people with mild to moderate dementia and their families) in the UK, Italy and Poland.

[Dr Geoffery Z. Kohe](#), Institute of Sport & Exercise, University of Worcester

Dr Geoff Kohe's research is in the areas of sport history and public memory, organisational politics, young people's experiences of Physical Education and the Olympic movement, and the History of Sport and physical cultures. He has recently published work examining issues around historical aspects of sport cultures, sport history and digital technology, Olympic

legacies, sport and physical education/physical activity policy, sport stakeholder relationships with the central government, and national identity and sport. He is co-editor (with Professor Derek Peters) of *High Performance Disability Sport Coaching* (2016, Routledge).

The Project

There is a small but growing body of activity around sporting reminiscence with older people including those with dementia <http://www.sportingmemories.org/> (Clark et al. 2015). Reminiscence is used to help encourage people to remember events from their past, using triggers such as songs and photographs. People with dementia engage better with a stimulus that has some personal meaning for them (Solari and Solomons, 2011). In line with similar sport memory initiatives within and beyond the UK, the University of Worcester has been working with a local premier league football club and an NHS Trust to bring together groups of people diagnosed with dementia in a structured programme to provide stimulation and social engagement. Clinical outcome measures collected through routine practice at the Trust suggest improvements in cognitive functioning for those attending. In addition there has been a significant level of engagement and fun. They have been very successful particularly in attracting men to attend, often a hard group to engage in therapeutic activities, and there is a waiting list to attend. The groups have proved very popular with no attrition in attendance over the course of the group. Feedback from participants and family carers is positive.

There have been additional unexpected benefits to those attending and to the wider community. A feature of the programme has also been having guest ex-players. This has proved very popular with the people attending the group and the ex-players themselves – who are often of a similar age to participants. 18 months into the programme a decision was made to transfer the groups from NHS premises to the hospitality suite at the football ground. This has enhanced the experience of the group further by providing tours of the grounds, visiting the changing rooms and pitch as well as being able to see the extensive range of memorabilia that the club holds. Complimentary tickets are available for participants and their carers and support staff for a game during the programme and has given some participants confidence to re-start attending games following supported visits to break down barriers of travel, orientation and lack of familiarity. As a result a number of group members have started to attend matches independently.

It also appears to be helping to address some issues around stigma and community understanding of dementia. The young coaching staff at the club who have become involved with the programme now see this as an important part of their community out-reach. These staff, who would primarily engage with school students and younger people with physical disabilities and intellectual disability, are now embracing people living with dementia as members of their community who they can have a significant impact upon. Plans for 2017 include the offer of a follow-on monthly “Dementia Café” (social event) at the stadium for a larger number of people with dementia and family carers. This will be provided by the club itself with minimal input from the NHS Trust. There is also the possibility that those attending the social events could start to improve their physical fitness via low intensity movement activities such as ‘walking football’. At a time of increased criticism and scrutiny regarding the sustainability of the NHS and its support for civic initiatives, scholarly examination of local and national initiatives driven by community groups, organisation and/or individuals is timely and of value.

Football is an almost universal interest that brings people together (Carone et al, 2012). It is a national game where clubs have their own identities, sense of community and culture. It is intergenerational and aims to be inclusive with many initiatives challenging race, age, disability and gender. Football reminiscence has been shown to have promising positive benefits for men with dementia, such as increased sociability, confidence and communication

beyond the sessions (Scholfield and Tolson, 2010; Tolson and Scholfield, 2012; Carone et al, 2014); Watchman et al, 2015), though there is a need to for more robust evidence. There are a number of initiatives across the UK, with a particular intensity of activity in Scotland as well as Merseyside, which indicate that a regional approach may maximise impact.

To date there has been little systematic research on the significant processes at an individual or at a community level of engagement in this sort of innovation. The focus of this PhD would be to understand these processes more clearly in order to help other clubs and NHS Trusts replicate this work. We are interested in supporting a PhD candidate who can work with the networks we have developed through a full-time studentship to investigate any aspect of this process.

The project may interrogate the mechanisms by which sport reminiscence projects might be developed and sustained, and understand the benefits and pitfalls of sport/reminiscence/dementia relationship. Some questions which could be tackled include: What are the roles of nostalgia and popular memory in shaping individual reminiscence for those with dementia? In what ways do current sports reminiscence projects engage with the cultural dimensions of sport to improve the social experiences for those with dementia? What are the perceived benefits and challenges of undertaking sports reminiscence in community settings? What factors are significant in the engagement in this activity for people diagnosed with dementia, their families, health care staff, football club staff and professionals? Are there lessons to be learnt from football-related initiatives that might be applied in other sports settings to improve community engagement? In what ways might digital and social media technologies be used in sports reminiscence contexts to facilitate memory making and nostalgia processes and ultimately engage people with dementia?

The student will be expected to develop a PhD study which makes a unique contribution to knowledge.

The studentship will have the opportunity to draw upon the interdisciplinary expertise and internationally leading research of the supervisory team (see below). In addition, the studentship will be incorporated into and the existing activities of the Association for Dementia Studies and the Sport, Exercise and the Body Research Interest Group within the Institute of Sport & Exercise and Institute of Health, as well as the wider research student community. This is the second studentship in this area that we have funded.

It is also expected that the candidate will make connections to key stakeholders within the region with regards to local/regional councils, migrant communities and related support groups/networks, Dementia service providers, and sport, leisure, and physical culture groups.

Further reading available on request

The University of Worcester

Research at the University of Worcester has grown significantly over the last 10 years. This growth is most clearly shown in the outcomes of the Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014). Worcester was the most improved University in the UK based on Research Fortnight's "Research Power" measure, reflecting a more than four-fold increase in the number of staff submitted compared to RAE 2008 and a commensurate increase in the quality of the research. As a consequence of its REF 2014 submission, Worcester's QR income for 2015-16 is up by 341% from 2014-15. The University is committed to further developing its research profile in the coming period, through a strategic approach to its support for and investment in research. As part of this investment it is funding a number of full-time PhD studentships in its areas of particular research strength.

Association for Dementia Studies

The [Association for Dementia Studies](#) (ADS) was established in 2009 as a designated research centre at the University of Worcester under the leadership of [Professor Dawn Brooker](#). We are a multi-professional group of educationalists, researchers and practitioners who are expert in the field of person-centred dementia care and support. [People with dementia, their families and their carers](#) inform the work of ADS at all stages. Our aim is to make a substantial contribution to building evidence-based practical ways of working with people living with dementia and their families that enables them to live well. We do this primarily through [research, education](#) and scholarship. We have an active group of PhD students in Dementia Studies including being an Alzheimer's Society Doctoral Training Centre focusing on the Arts and Dementia.

The Institute of Sport & Exercise Science

The [Institute of Sport & Exercise Science](#) aspires to develop a national and international reputation for research in related disciplines and areas, embracing all forms of research with a focus on applied research and knowledge transfer. Its Sport, Exercise and the Body Research Interest Groups is a novel collaborative research enterprise that critically explores social issues associated with Sport, Exercise and the Body; to support research that is interdisciplinary, theoretically sound and embedded in empirical evidence; and to increase the appreciation of high quality socio-cultural research.

Research School

The Research School is 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

Details of the studentship

During the period of your studentship you will receive the following:

- a tax free bursary of £13,863 for a period of 3 years
- a fee-waiver for 4 years
- a laptop
- use of the Research Student Study Space in Research School
- access to the Research Student Support Scheme to cover costs and expenses related to your research

You will be expected to play an active role in the life of both the Research School and of the Institute of Health & Society. You will be given opportunities to gain experience in learning and teaching within the Institute under the guidance of your Director of Studies

Qualifications needed

Essential:

Applicants should have or be able to evidence:

- (or expect to receive) preferably a MA/MSc in the Sociology or Psycho-social aspects of Sport/Sport Studies/Physical Education fields or a closely related and relevant discipline OR Masters level study in psychology, sociology, dementia studies or a closely related and relevant discipline
- A First or Upper Second (2.1) Honours Degree with a relevant social science background such as Psychology, Sociology, Sport Studies or Physical Education, or, a closely related and relevant discipline such as Public Health or Education
- Proficiency in oral and written English;
- Computer literacy;
- Ability to take initiative on the project and organise and meet deadlines;;
- Good interpersonal skills;
- Ability to work independently and contribute to a team;
- A high level of commitment and an enthusiastic approach to completing a higher research degree
- Experience in the use of qualitative and quantitative research skills and methodologies within psycho-social/psychological/sociological /health domains

Desirable:

- Masters Degree level experience of appropriate research methods and skills;
- Ability to contribute to research study design;
- Full UK Driving Licence

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

The Interview

All successful applicants will be interviewed. The interview normally lasts around 3 hours in total and includes a meeting with the project supervisor(s), a chance to talk to some of our full-time students and an opportunity to view the campus and Institutional facilities. You will be asked to make a short presentation on a topic related to the study. You will also be asked to provide an example of your written work (e.g. a dissertation) ahead of the interview.

For further information or an informal discussion on this project, please contact Dr Simon Evans (Director of Studies) via telephone on +44 (0)1905 55 5250, or by email at: simon.evans@worc.ac.uk

Application forms are available at:

<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/researchstudentships>

Completed application forms should be sent by email to: research@worc.ac.uk or sent via post to: Research School, Jenny Lind Building, Henwick Grove, St Johns, Worcester, WR2 6AJ