

PhD Opportunity

Researching Teachers' Lives, Identities and Stories

Supervisory Team

Director of Studies: Dr. Tracy Wallis

Supervisors: Dr Gerard Doyle

Research Group: [Inclusion by Design Research Group](#)

The PhD Opportunity:

This PhD opportunity sits within the work of the Inclusion by Design Research Group at the University of Worcester and invites proposals that explore teachers' lives, identities and stories. The supervisory team is particularly interested in research that foregrounds teachers' lived experiences and professional biographies, and that takes seriously the meanings teachers make of their work, their values and beliefs, and their ongoing processes of becoming (Goodson, 2008).

The project is intentionally open and dialogic in nature. Applicants are encouraged to develop a focused research question in conversation with the supervisory team, drawing on shared interests in teachers' narratives, identity formation, and the social, cultural and institutional contexts in which teaching is lived and practised (Clandinin and Connelly, 1987; Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, 2004).

Indicative Research Focus

While applicants are not expected to arrive with a fully formed proposal, projects may engage with one or more of the following themes:

- Teachers' professional identities across different phases of education, including primary, secondary and teacher education.
- Teachers' life histories and career trajectories, including moments of transition, disruption or renewal.
- The role of values, beliefs and prior experiences in shaping teachers' pedagogical choices and sense of self.
- Teachers' stories as sites of knowledge, meaning-making and professional learning.
- Inclusion, marginalisation and belonging in teachers' lived experiences.

Projects may be situated within subject-specific contexts such as science education, English, or Multilingual Education or English as an Additional Language, though broader cross-curricular or professional themes are equally welcome.



Methodological Orientation

The supervisory team has expertise in qualitative, interpretive approaches and welcomes projects that are methodologically thoughtful and theoretically grounded (Mead, 1934, Goodson, 2008). Suitable methodological frameworks may include, but are not limited to:

- Interpretive and constructivist approaches to educational research.
- Symbolic Interactionism, with attention to meaning-making through social interaction.
- Life history research and narrative inquiry.
- Case study approaches focused on individuals, groups or professional communities.

Across all approaches, the supervisors are committed to ethical, relational research that allows teachers' stories to 'breathe' and resists reductive or instrumental accounts of professional life (Frank, 1995).

Who should apply

This opportunity would suit applicants who:

- Have a background in education, teacher education or a related field.
- Are interested in working closely with practising teachers, former teachers, mentors or teacher educators.
- Are motivated by qualitative, story-based or interpretive research.
- Wish to explore questions of identity, values and lived experience in educational contexts.

Applicants may be current practitioners, former teachers, or those working in teacher education or educational research. Both full-time and part-time study routes are available, and the project may be suitable for candidates considering a PhD or an EdD pathway.

References:

- Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C. and Verloop, N. (2004) 'Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20, pp.107-128.
- Clandinin, D. J. and Connelly, F. M. (1987) 'Teachers' personal knowledge: What counts as 'personal' in studies of the personal', *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 19 (6), pp. 487-500.
- Frank, A. W. (1995). *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*. University of Chicago Press.
- Goodson, I. (2008) *Investigating the Teacher's Life and Work*. Rotterdam: Sense.
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, Self, and Society*. University of Chicago Press.



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 2025 in which we ranked 3rd 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

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 Tracy Wallis: t.wallis@worc.ac.uk