



Queen Margaret University

CENTRE FOR APPLIED
SOCIAL SCIENCES

PhD Bursary topics 2018

The Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS) conducts research into social issues that affect people's lives locally, nationally, and internationally. Its interdisciplinary approach produces research that has a theoretical and practical focus and that addresses issues of social relevance from different perspectives. Drawing on principles and research within social sciences, in the broadest sense, the work of CASS is designed to produce research that has real-world application across a range of areas and disciplines.

CASS invites applications for a three year, full-time QMU funded PhD studentship, commencing in September 2018, on the following topics:

BUR18-02: Animal-Assisted Therapy in Tourism, Events, and Leisure Contexts

BUR18-03: Exploring Eyewitness Identification Decision Making

BUR18-04: Neural Activity During Visuo-Spatial Bootstrapping: An Investigation of Event-Related Potentials during working memory tasks

BUR18-05: Scottish Approach to Public Services

Successful applicants will start in September 2018, and will receive:

- a full waiver of tuition fees;
- an annual stipend of £14,553 lasting 3 years for full-time study;
- a research budget of £2,000 to cover project expenses and travel.

As part of the bursary contract, the successful applicant will be asked to undertake a number of school duties (such as research and teaching support) for up to 360 hours over the duration of their bursary.

The deadline for applications is **Friday 30 March 2018**.

In addition to the bursary opportunity, the Centre would also welcome applications for self-funded students and encourages applicants to contact relevant potential supervisors to discuss their research proposals.

[Centre for Applied Social Sciences](#)

BUR18-02: Animal-Assisted Therapy in Tourism, Events, and Leisure Contexts

Due to increases in human leisure time, education, and recognition of the values associated with wellbeing, non-human animals are now incorporated into a range of experiential activities and environments, which encourage and enable humans to interact with animals in close proximity (Franklin, 1999; Markwell, 2015). Animals and humans now play a supportive role in each other's lives, contributing significantly towards mutual wellbeing. A close encountering between humans and animals can benefit from advancing understanding between both species and developing trust and bonded relationships through positive interspecies communication in order for both species amicably to coexist and develop supportive relationships.

Viewed through a post-humanist lens, this PhD explores the relationships of humans and animals with a focus on animal-assisted therapy and associated wellbeing in tourism, events, and leisure landscapes. Although there is a wealth of research on human-animal interactions in cross-disciplinary literature, such as psychology, it is still considered an emerging field of critical tourism, events, and leisure studies, which would benefit from further exploration and focus in scholarship (Helgadóttir and Sigurðardóttir, 2008). Methodological approaches would utilise multi-methods, primarily qualitative approaches, possibly incorporating creative methods, such as multispecies ethnography employing visual/video analysis and interpretation. This study would make an original contribution to an emerging field of research by developing innovative theoretical approaches to human-animal relational research, especially in the tourism, events, and leisure contexts. The research would be informed by and help to inform contemporary practices and assist in providing positive impacts on contemporary society with regard to fostering experiential learning and enhancing social development and relations through human-animal interactions. It has the potential to draw together cross-disciplinary understanding of human-animal relations for therapeutic benefit and associated mutual wellbeing.

Franklin, A. (1999). *Animals and Modern Cultures: A Sociology of Human-Animal Relations in Modernity*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Helgadóttir, G., Sigurðóttir, I. (2008). Horse-based Tourism: Community, Quality and Disinterest in Economic Value. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 8 (2): 105-121.

Markwell, K. (Ed.) (2015). *Animals and Tourism: Understanding Diverse Relationships*. Bristol: Channel View Publications.

Contact:

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[Dr Rebecca Finkel](#), email rfinkel@gmu.ac.uk

BUR18-03: Exploring Eyewitness Identification Decision Making

Assessing the reliability of eyewitness identification evidence is crucial for the administration of justice because of the prominent role that eyewitness evidence plays in the criminal justice system. However, the reliability of identification evidence can be rather easily compromised. Critically, eyewitness identification errors result in criminals avoiding apprehension and may result in innocent persons being wrongfully convicted (see for example, <https://www.innocenceproject.org/>).

A student signing up for this project will explore theoretical and practical issues in eyewitness identification decision making. Potential areas that a student on this project could explore include ways of measuring eyewitness reliability (e.g. how should confidence ratings for lineup decisions be obtained?), how different aspects of identification procedures relate to accuracy (e.g. following a simultaneous photo lineup with a sequential video lineup), or how eyewitness reports of their decision processes relate to their accuracy.

Relevant Readings

Dunning, D. & Stern, L. B. (1994). Distinguishing accurate from inaccurate eyewitness identifications via inquiries about decision processes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67, 818–835. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.67.5.818

Mansour, J. K., Lindsay, R. C. L, Brewer, N., & Munhall, K. G. (2009). Characterizing visual behavior on a lineup task. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 23, 1012–1026. doi:10.1002/acp.1570

Valentine, T., Darling, S., & Memon, A. (2007). Do strict rules and moving images increase the reliability of sequential identification procedures?. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 21, 933-949. doi: 10.1002/acp.1306

Wixted, J. T., & Wells, G. L. (2017). The relationship between eyewitness confidence and identification accuracy: A new synthesis. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 18, 10-65. doi: 10.1177/1529100616686966

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BUR18-04: Neural Activity During Visuo-Spatial Bootstrapping: An Investigation of Event-Related Potentials during working memory tasks

Visuo-spatial bootstrapping (VSB) is a label given to the observation that people remember random digits better when they are presented in a well-known visual pattern, like a phone keypad, even if they are recalled verbally. It represents a task which requires information held in discrete parts of the memory system to be linked together, and as such is a potentially highly useful task for understanding the functioning of working memory. Working memory is the name given to the memory system responsible for the moment-to-moment storage and manipulation of information, and is implicated in a range of important phenomena including attention and educational achievement. VSB has been extensively researched over recent years by a team including researchers from CASS and the Memory Research Group at QMU, but there is little agreement as to what the neural or physiological mechanisms supporting it may be – the only direct clue being work by Race et al (2015) who have demonstrated that patients with hippocampal damage maintain typical performance on the VSB task. This bursary topic seeks to begin to investigate the relationship between brain and behavior in the context of VSB by using an electrophysiological approach – specifically by studying event-related potentials (ERPs) associated with the VSB task. The essence of the PhD will be to develop and implement materials and procedures to enable an analysis of ERPs associated with the VSB paradigm. The supervisory team will include Dr Mario Parra Rodriguez at Heriot Watt University. Dr Parra Rodriguez has research interests in mechanisms underlying normal and abnormal human aging and runs a lab with extensive expertise in the collection and analysis of electrophysiological data.

Race, E., Palombo, D. J., Cadden, M., Burke, K., & Verfaellie, M. (2015). Memory integration in amnesia: Prior knowledge supports verbal short-term memory. *Neuropsychologia*, 70, 272–280. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2015.02.004>

Recommended Initial Reading

Darling, S., Allen, R.J., & Havelka, J. (2017) Visuospatial Bootstrapping: When Visuospatial and Verbal Memory Work Together. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 26 (1). pp. 3-9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721416665342>

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BUR18-05: Scottish Approach to Public Services

The establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 sparked a growing interest in public policy and administration in Scotland. With the first minority SNP Administration in 2007 a number of significant reforms took place within the Scottish Government. This led to what has become known as “the Scottish Approach” to Public Services (Elvidge, 2011; Housden, 2014).

More recently the concept of a distinctive ‘Scottish Approach’ to public services and policymaking has gained increasing interest (Cairney et al. 2016; Coutts and Brotchie, 2017; Ferguson, 2015). This approach to public services is seen to be underpinned by three key principles: 1) an assets-based approach; 2) co-production of services and 3) an improvement philosophy. Yet having now been established for over ten years it is appropriate to investigate the full impact of this distinctive approach to the practice of public service delivery.

In this doctoral research a case study approach (Yin, 2018) will be adopted to explore the ongoing development of the Scottish Approach to Public Services within one of the following specific settings:

- Social security
- Dementia-friendly communities
- Local government
- Police Scotland
- Higher education

The extent to which this represents a strategic approach to government will be assessed and lessons will be drawn for other administrations across Europe and beyond.

Cairney, P et al. 2016. “The ‘Scottish Approach’ to policy and policymaking: what issues are territorial and what are universal?” *Policy and Politics*, Vol. 44 (3), 333-350.

Coutts, P. and Brotchie, J. 2017. *The Scottish Approach to evidence. A discussion paper. Alliance for Useful Evidence*. Carnegie UK Trust.

Elvidge, J. 2011. *Northern Exposure. Lessons from the first twelve years of devolved government in Scotland*. Institute for Government. London

Ferguson, Z. 2015. *What is ‘the Scottish Approach’?* Alliance for Useful Evidence, (<http://www.alliance4usefulevidence.org/what-is-the-scottish-approach/>)

Housden, P. 2014. “This is us: A perspective on public services in Scotland”, *Public Policy and Administration*, Vol. 29 (1), 64-74.

Yin, R.K. 2018. *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th Edition, London, Sage.

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