

Housing, regeneration and labour markets

How to apply

Applicants must email a [postgraduate application form](#) to fdsresearch@shu.ac.uk by 12 noon on Friday 29 January 2016.

At this stage, you only need to include the names and contact details for referees and do not have to request references.

Please note - GTA scholarship holders will be expected to contribute to the resourcing of the student experience during their second and third years of study, either through seminar teaching or some other form of student support. This forms part of the terms and conditions of the scholarship and there is no additional payment for it.

Successful applicants who are studying for a Master's qualification must complete their course of study before taking up their PhD place.

Scholarships are open to home/EU applicants only. Where English is not your first language, you must show evidence of English language ability to the following minimum level of proficiency: an overall IELTS score of 7.0 or above, with at least 7.0 in each component or an accepted equivalent. Please note that your test score must be current, i.e. within the last two years.

For full details on the eligibility criteria, see: www.shu.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility

Selection process

Successful applicants will be required to attend an interview where you will be asked to talk through your research proposal. All interviews will be in person and none will be conducted by Skype.

Interviews dates are provisionally scheduled for 18 and 19 February 2016.

Research Areas

Applicants are encouraged to contact relevant CRESR staff to discuss prospective topic areas, proposals and methodologies.

Project 1: Life in social housing: insider accounts in an age of reform

The role and function of social housing in England is being recast. Government has embarked on a radical programme of reform. This has included changes to the way that social housing is funded, how people access the sector, and the types of tenancies that are granted. On-going reforms to the social security system, including major changes to Housing Benefit, are also having a direct and substantial impact on social landlords and tenants. Promotion of the Right to Buy in the housing association sector, through the offer of large discounts to sitting tenants financed by the sale of the most valuable council housing stock, will further reshape the size and profile of the sector and raise questions about its very future.

This reform programme draws inspiration from a "revisionist critique" of social housing, which portrays the sector as an agent of social exclusion promoting welfare dependency and undermining self-sufficiency by distancing people from paid work: social housing is deemed part of the problem, rather than the solution. This critique is consistent with the dominant framework of welfare policy now installed in the UK. This framework demonizes public welfare as a major factor underpinning the reproduction of poverty, places increasing conditionality on access to reduced assistance, while emphasising individual responsibility for resolving social exclusion, principally through engagement in paid work. It is

underpinned by a commitment to the neo-liberal priority of transferring control from the public sector to the private market.

This programme of study would seek to venture beyond the cocktail of stereotype and contentious assertion that has driven reform of social housing in England in recent years and test the logics of reform through analysis of the lived experiences of social tenants. In doing so, it will follow in the footsteps of previous studies that have sought out the views and opinions of tenants and revealed insider accounts that challenge institutional "truths" about the sector.

Key themes will include:

- the role and function of social housing as a social good in the lives of tenants
- the relationship between housing tenure and work
- the shifting reality of life in social housing following major reforms impacting on the sector
- the impacts of reform on the situations, opportunities and well-being of social tenants.

The Director of Studies for this study would be Professor David Robinson. For further information about undertaking a PhD in this area please contact David (d.robinson@shu.ac.uk / 0114 225 6264).

Project 2: Older people, housing need and independent living

The need for solutions that allow older people to make an active choice to live independently for as long as possible is increasingly to the fore in discussion about how to meet the housing needs of an aging population. Older people do not inevitably follow a pathway from ordinary general needs housing through to a care home with nursing. Many people continue to live independently and never move into specialist housing or a nursing home. Indeed, specialist provision only ever meets the needs of a minority of older people.

Housing has a key role to play supporting and assisting older people to live independently. Housing support and assistance services (repairs, maintenance and adaptations) help to ensure that older people are living in safe, appropriate housing that promotes health and well-being. The focus is on ensuring that housing is fit for purpose and that it is easier and safer for older people to stay in their own home and live independently as long as possible. New housing can provide flexible and adaptable accommodation that ensures a suitable living environment for people as their needs change in later life, thereby promoting independent living. This involves building to lifetime homes standards, developing a mix of dwelling types (including smaller properties) and creating age-friendly neighbourhoods. Collaboration and joint-working between housing, health and social care is essential to effectively meet the needs of older people. This includes promoting independent living, improving well-being and reducing the chance of hospital admission.

The key role that housing policy, provision and practice has to play in meeting the needs of older people is surprisingly under theorised in academic debate and largely neglected in national and local policy debates. This programme of study will address this lacuna, focusing on the neglected issue of housing need within the population of older people in England and exploring associated social and economic externalities.

The Director of Studies for this study would be Professor David Robinson. For further information about undertaking a PhD in this area please contact David (d.robinson@shu.ac.uk / 0114 225 6264).

Project 3: From social landlords to private landlords: the commercialisation of housing associations

A number of recent developments - including the credit crunch, the ensuing economic downturn, austerity, and welfare reform - have made the financial climate within which housing associations operate highly challenging and far from favourable. This has prompted many to review the way they operate. In addition,

it has also placed pressure on them to become more commercially oriented. This was an important finding of the CRESR led evaluation of the Direct Payment Demonstration Projects (DPDP) for DWP:

'Landlords are going to have to have a good look in the mirror ... we're going to have a good think about the way we operate ... we may be forced into a particular role ... we may be forced to act more commercially...and we may have to tell tenants: "you either pay up or you go"... we don't want to do this but this is something that we are having to give a lot of thought to.' (DPDP landlord)

This proposed study would be concerned with exploring the extent to which social housing landlords have become more commercially oriented and, especially, how this process has played out. In doing so, attention will focus on how landlords have reconciled (or not) the tension between their traditional social function and the need to adopt a more hard-headed commercial approach in order to protect income streams.

The Director of Studies for this study would be Professor Paul Hickman. For further information about undertaking a PhD in this area please contact Paul (p.g.hickman@shu.ac.uk/ 0114 225 3073).

Project 4: Urban Low Carbon Transitions

The growing awareness of the need to drastically reduce carbon emissions has created pressures and opportunities for local authorities, businesses, communities and individuals in Western states. Such a transition requires cities to be restructured in a wide range of ways. We invite proposals that seek to uncover the impacts of different elements of urban-scale restructuring that such low carbon transitions imply, in particular in terms of the built environment, energy infrastructure, or the local economy more broadly. We are especially interested in the potential and impact of low carbon restructuring on economically vulnerable people and places. We are open to any proposals that consider this broad area of interest and we would be particularly interested in projects that consider one of the following themes:

- economic geographies of low carbon transitions
- the policy/politics of low carbon urban energy infrastructure
- local/regional governance of low carbon transitions
- user perspectives of the low carbon built environment
- economic geographies of low carbon transitions

The Director of Studies for this study would be Dr Will Eadson. For further information about undertaking a PhD in this area please contact Paul (w.eadson@shu.ac.uk/ 0114 225 4173).

Project 5: Community self-help in an age of austerity

In an uncertain and volatile post-crisis age of austerity - that "policy of cutting the state's budget to promote growth" (Blyth, 2013: 2) - there is an urgent need to understand how this has adversely impacted upon the geographies (e.g. the extent, rationales, social embeddedness, and barriers to participation) of community self-help. In particular, it is envisaged that a rich empirical research strategy, consisting of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies (e.g. Household Work Practice Surveys and Time Use Surveys) and paying particular attention to the complex experiences of deprived households and communities, is needed to fill this critical gap in knowledge and understanding.

Utilising a mixed-methodological framework, and undertaking this research across higher-and lower income households, will encourage important empirical findings to emerge that demonstrate how everyday livelihood tactics have been adapted in ways that have (i) weakened or dismantled, thus adversely affecting a household's ability to maintain a quality of life (ii) have acted as forms of resistance and resilience (iii) have led to new patterns of alternative engagement which contain the seeds of renaissance and transformation. In this way the research will realise the potential of interpreting community self-help both "as a strategy for survival and a model for society" (Burns, et. al 2004: 6)

Exploring the material and social coping strategies at the household (self-provisioning) and wider community (mutual aid) has great relevance across a range of inter-disciplinary academic, policy making and public communities. It is anticipated that the conceptual and theoretical framework used to interpret the research findings will engage community self-help in ways that seek to promote future visions of work and organisation that embrace social justice and sustainability. In this narrative community self-help should be critically envisioned as (a) complement to the market and the state (Cumbers, 2012) and (b) as offering viable alternatives to the market and the state. To these ends a critical engagement with the literature that addresses "post-capitalism" (Ward, 1982; White and Williams, 2014) "diverse economies" (Gibson-Graham, 1996; Williams and Windebank, 2002) and "degrowth" (D'Alisa et al, 2014) is strongly encouraged.

The Director of Studies for this study would be Dr Richard White. For further information about undertaking a PhD in this area please contact Richard (richard.white@shu.ac.uk/ 0114 225 2899).

Queries

Any enquiries should be emailed to fdsresearch@shu.ac.uk

More information about our research can be found on the [Graduate School website](#).