



Economic
and Social
Research Council



An investigation into the policies and practices of UK universities for applicants with criminal records

ESRC DTP Collaborative Studentship

University of Nottingham and Unlock, for people with convictions

The Midlands Graduate School is an accredited Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). One of 14 such partnerships in the UK, the Midlands Graduate School is a collaboration between the University of Warwick, Aston University, University of Birmingham, University of Leicester, Loughborough University and the University of Nottingham.

The University of Nottingham as part of Midlands Graduate School is now inviting applications for an ESRC Doctoral Studentship in association with our collaborative partner *Unlock, for people with convictions*, to commence in October 2020.

Criminal records can have multiple, negative 'collateral consequences' including restricted access to education, employment, housing, financial services, travel and wider participation in civil society. Over 11.7 million people in the UK have a criminal record on the Police National Computer. However, comparatively little is known about the impact of having a criminal record on admissions into UK universities. Unlock – an independent, award-winning charity for people with convictions, have documented some of the challenges facing existing and prospective students, and have sought to change admissions policies and practices.

This research is a unique opportunity to build on this work by carrying out systematic and in-depth analysis of policy and practice towards people with criminal records across UK universities. The PhD research will be supervised by Dr Nicola Carr and Dr Andrew Henley (University of Nottingham) and Dr Rachel Tynan (Unlock). It will focus on the following questions:

1. How do UK universities acquire criminal records during admissions processes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels - e.g. through student self-disclosure, or through discretionary/statutorily required criminal records checks (CRCs)?
2. For what purposes do UK universities use criminal records (e.g. gatekeeping, supporting students, reputation management) and what evidence exists regarding the efficacy of their approaches?
3. What are the impacts of CRCs on applicants to university degrees?

The student will undertake a multi-modal approach to this research beginning with a mapping exercise of admissions processes and criminal record checking procedures across UK universities. Semi-structured interviews will also be conducted with university admissions officers, key actors at national policy level and university applicants with criminal records to explore their experiences.

Through this research the student will produce original contributions to knowledge in an under-explored area which will support Unlock's policy and campaigning work on this issue. This project also has potential for broader policy impacts within higher education.

Application Process

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Collaborative Studentship application form [available online here](#) and email this along with a CV and covering letter to vicky.spencer1@nottingham.ac.uk. Shortlisted applicants will also be required to provide two references.

The University of Nottingham is a signatory of the Unlock [Fair Chance Pledge](#) and is committed to offering a fair chance to applicants with a criminal record.

Application deadline: Wednesday 4 March 2020

Midlands Graduate School ESRC DTP

Our ESRC studentships cover fees and maintenance stipend and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants. Support is available only to successful applicants who fulfil eligibility criteria. To check your eligibility, visit:

www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/

Informal enquiries about the research prior to application can be directed to Dr Andrew Henley (andrew.henley@nottingham.ac.uk).