



Ensuring the social legitimacy of animal research ESRC DTP Collaborative Studentship

University of Nottingham and RSPCA

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.

University of Nottingham as part of Midlands Graduate School is now inviting applications for an ESRC Doctoral Studentship in association with our collaborative partner, RSPCA, to commence in October 2019.

The studentship will focus on the topic of animal research, with the aim of comparing 'public' expectations around animal research governance with current UK policy. The project focuses on the public imaginaries of animal ethics committees known as AWERBs (Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Bodies), and explores how the democratic legitimacy of scientific practice is constructed.

The use of animals as laboratory models is credited with producing life-saving medicines, human health and biological knowledge. However, the practice has a long history of high profile critique by social movements, particularly in the UK. The continued use of animals relies upon a 'tacit social contract between citizens, scientists and the state' (Davies *et al* 2016). This social contract depends on a system of governance, designed to ensure that animals are used only where no alternative exists. One key part of this governance is the system of local ethical review managed by AWERBs. Stakeholders, including the RSPCA, are keen to improve the way AWERBs operate. Several guidance documents have been produced, and new initiatives established. However, there is currently a lack of understanding about how AWERBs are viewed by publics, and therefore whether and how they help support the wider social contract between biomedical science and society. We anticipate that the student will draw on insights from literature in medical sociology, science and technology studies, and ethics, and will carry out focus groups with publics from across the UK.

Applicants must have a minimum of a good undergraduate degree (2.1 or higher) in a social science discipline, and we welcome applicants with a higher degree in a relevant discipline. Applicants should have experience or demonstrable interest in the social scientific study of science and medicine, human-animal relations, or ethics and we would welcome applicants with demonstrable experience of relevant research methods, including qualitative research.

For more background information on the project, and details of the supervisors and support available, [please see here](#).

Application Process

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Collaborative Studentship application form [available online here](#) and email this, together with a CV and two references to Veronica.Blake@nottingham.ac.uk.

Application deadline: Monday 4th March 2019 at 5pm

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/.

Prior to application, informal enquiries about the research project, or the School of Sociology and Social Policy at Nottingham, can be directed to Pru.Hobson-West@nottingham.ac.uk.