



Economic
and Social
Research Council



Advancing Business Competitiveness Through Management Standards and Certification

ESRC DTP Collaborative PhD Studentship

Aston University and United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS)

The [Midlands Graduate School](#), an accredited Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP), is proud to announce the availability of an ESRC Doctoral Studentship. **Aston Business School** as part of Midlands Graduate School is now inviting applications for this prestigious ESRC Doctoral Studentship, in collaboration with our partner [United Kingdom Accreditation Service \(UKAS\)](#), to commence in October 2024. We are seeking candidates with a strong background in quantitative social science or related fields, including economics, business and management studies, innovation, internationalisation, social statistics and applied mathematics. A master's degree is not mandatory as comprehensive postgraduate training will be provided as part of the DTP programme. The successful candidate will benefit from the supervision of Professor Cher Li and Professor Jun Du at the Centre for Business Prosperity, Aston Business School, alongside collaborative input from UKAS.

Project Overview

Advancing Business Competitiveness Through Management Standards and Certification

The research project addresses the pivotal role of standards and certification in bolstering UK businesses, focusing on management, productivity, innovation, performance and internationalisation. It employs extensive business-level data to critically evaluate the role of accredited certification and international standards in amplifying the UK's export potential and business performance. Positioned at the intersection of economics, business strategy and industrial policy, this project will bridge critical knowledge gaps, generate impactful research while offering the PhD candidate an unparalleled opportunity for substantial academic and professional growth. In close collaboration with UKAS, the project is dedicated to devising robust strategies and policies, guiding the UK industry adeptly through the post-Brexit economic landscape. The research methodology may encompass a broad spectrum of techniques including panel data analysis, policy evaluation, causal inference, text analysis and field experiments, among others. While prior familiarity with these methods is beneficial, comprehensive postgraduate training will be provided to equip the candidate with the necessary skills.

Placement Activities

The PhD candidate will have multiple placement opportunities at UKAS, merging academic research with practical industry and policy applications. The placements will encompass rigorous economic analysis, data management, applied research, policy advisory, dynamic knowledge exchange, comprehensive capacity building and active stakeholder engagement, ensuring a rich, professionally rewarding experience.

Interested applicants should

- Complete the Collaborative Studentship application form [available online here](#).
- Upload a CV and cover letter with your application. Shortlisted candidates will be contacted to provide transcripts and two references.

Application deadline: 17:00 BST, 31 May 2024 (Friday), interview to take place shortly after.

Support Offered

Our ESRC studentships cover fees, a maintenance stipend, and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants. **Support is available to applicants with home fee status only.** To check whether you are eligible to be classed as home applicant, visit: www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/.

For informal enquiries, please contact Professor Cher Li (C.Li@aston.ac.uk). More project details are available on MGS website:

https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/mgsdtp/collaborativeandjoint/li_aston_-_collaborative_advert_2024.pdf.

Embark on a transformative journey with the Midlands Graduate School and contribute to shaping the future of UK's business competitiveness. We look forward to your application!

Project Partners

Aston Business School



The PhD candidate will be based in the Economics, Finance and Entrepreneurship Department of Aston Business School. Aston Business School belongs to an elite group of global business schools that hold the gold standard 'triple crown' accreditation from AACSB, AMBA and EQUIS. Our vision is to be a global leader in practice-led teaching and impactful research aimed at benefiting students, professions, for-profit and social enterprises as well as regional and national society. Our mission is to enhance enterprise and enterprises. We develop individuals to perform better within enterprises and the professions, and to create successful new ventures. We support business leaders in enhancing their organisations' performance and growth. We advise policymakers on ways to improve society and the economy. Our impactful research creates new knowledge and skills that further these aspirations.

Research at ABS focuses on delivering excellence, innovation and impact. Our departments and research centres collaborate to advance our understanding of key business disciplines and issues. In the latest Research Excellence Framework, 100% of our research achieved 3* or 4* ratings. We pride ourselves on our teaching, which has been recognised by being awarded Gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) – the highest possible accolade and the benchmark used by the government to evaluate the quality of university teaching.

For more information on the Economics, Finance and Entrepreneurship Department, please visit [here](#). For more information on our research centres, please visit [here](#).

United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS)



As the UK's National Accreditation Body (NAB), the only organisation recognised by the government for the assessment of testing, inspection, certification and other bodies against international standards, UKAS plays a crucial role in ensuring organisations can demonstrate competence, integrity and impartiality. UKAS' involvement in international accreditation groups such as EA, IAF and ILAC, provides for mutual recognition of accreditation and accredited services. This reduces the need for multiple assessments of suppliers, and, as a consequence, helps to reduce barriers to trade for organisations who hold UKAS accreditation or certificates issued by a UKAS accredited body.

The collaboration with UKAS will provide the PhD project with industry-specific insights and practical applications in accreditation, aligning with the project's objectives to improve UK businesses' export competitiveness through management certification and standards post-Brexit. UKAS's involvement will ground this research in real-world challenges and inform the development of robust, evidence-based strategies to enhance the UK's accreditation services further.