



Centre for  
Organising Health  
and Care Research

## COHCR Seminar

**Speaker:** Professor Graeme Currie, Professor of Public Management at Entrepreneurship & Innovation Group, Warwick Business School

**Time:** Thursday, 24 April 2025, 12:00 – 13:00

**Location:** In-person at WBS in Room 1.003

**Register:** Email [cohcr@wbs.ac.uk](mailto:cohcr@wbs.ac.uk) to register your place

### Low Status Professionals and Permanent Liminality: The Enduring Case of Independent Pharmacists

**Bio:** Graeme has always been concerned to generate a virtuous relationship between research income, building capacity amongst those that work with him to progress their academic careers, publication outputs, and most importantly impacting health and social care challenges. His work is thus necessarily interdisciplinary, particularly reaching across to clinical academics with whom he loves working, and collaborative with NHS and social care organisations. This has allowed him to draw down significant funding to support large scale research, including that associated with successive rounds of translational health research centres called CLAHRCs/ARCs funded by the National Institute of Health Research and leading a succession of studies funded by the National Institute of Health Research, and most recently the ESRC EXIT Study, focused upon delivery of care at different ends of the age spectrum, children and frail older patients. Increasingly, associated with this, he has engaged in large scale funded international studies, for example in India and Australia. While policy and practice impact represents his main priority, he continues to publish in leading journals, in business and management, such as Academy of Management Journal, Journal of Management Studies, Human Resource Management, Organization Studies, in public administration, such as Public Administration Review, Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, and in health services, such as Social Science and Medicine, Implementation Science. Nevertheless, informed by work experience in his pre-academic life, Graeme remains essentially a practical person.

#### Abstract

The focal study question is: *How do low status professionals located in a permanent liminal space respond to maintain and/or enhance their status?* The question is answered drawing on the historical case of independent/high street pharmacists in the UK, who have been characterised as an incomplete or marginal profession because they engage in trade and commerce derived from their shopkeeping role, which is seen as running counter to pure professionalism. The study integrates literature about liminality and sociology of professions to frame analysis. Empirically, an archival study is undertaken

that examines a watershed period for independent pharmacists (1960s), to illuminate the temporal and processual character of liminal experiences for low status professionals and its interaction with changing context. The study highlights limits to individual strategies for navigating permanent liminality. Addressing the structural forces driving dynamics of professional organisation, our focal low status professionals engage in a sequence of collective liminal work of an institutional character through their professional association. However, changing employment dynamics, within which pharmacists are increasingly employed by corporate chains, undermines such efforts. Our historically located study highlights boundaries, and jurisdictions, within and between professions, are constantly being defined and redefined, with new actors emerging that disrupt previous professional settlements. Such dynamics of context are key to explain success or otherwise of collective liminal work by low status professionals.