

PhD studentship (fee-waiver): Exploration of the implicit and explicit processes involved in identity change in recovery from alcohol addiction

School: Applied Sciences

Division: Psychology

Duration of studentship: fixed-term, 3-years

Stipend: none- fee waiver only

Purpose: To conduct qualitative, phenomenologically-oriented research on the lived experiences of people receiving treatment to quit alcohol. To conduct survey research to examine implicit and explicit using and non-using identities in current or ex-service users.

Applications are invited for a full-time three-year PhD studentship at London South Bank University London, funded by London South Bank University, to begin as soon as possible.

Project details

The significance of identity perceptions on engagement with and cessation of potentially harmful behaviours is increasingly recognised in addiction research. Frings and Albery have developed a theoretical model (The Social Identity Model of Cessation Maintenance; 2015; in press) which outlines how social identities associated with addiction and recovery influence cessation. In addition, in-depth exploratory qualitative work highlights the role of identity more broadly (i.e. personal and social identities). A process of transition towards a 'non-smoker' identity was found to extend beyond a year in successful quitters (Vangeli & West, 2012; Vangeli, Stapleton & West 2010a) with those further along the process less vulnerable to relapse. Late relapse (i.e. after several months) was associated with the presence of a non-absolute identity (i.e. 'I can smoke just one or two cigarettes and stop again'; Vangeli, Stapleton & West, 2010b) and a competing identity to which smoking is central (Vangeli & West, in prep). There is also evidence that such identities related to addictive behaviours affect engagement in addictive behaviour at both explicit (conscious, accessible and reflective, e.g. Buckingham, Frings & Albery, 2013) and,

perhaps more influentially, implicit (automatic, unconscious) levels (e.g. Frings, Melichar & Albery, 2015).

For addiction to substances where intoxication has an immediate negative impact on an individual's ability to function (e.g. alcohol), the impact on identity is likely to be exacerbated. The importance of identity transition in cessation is demonstrated in recovery narratives where a process of self-reconstruction is observed (e.g. Hanninen & Koski-Jannes, 1999; 2002). Despite the increasing recognition that changes in identity are a key predictor of cessation maintenance, little existing work has comprehensively examined identity transition processes themselves, or how they vary over time in recovery from alcohol addiction (cf. Dingle, Cruwys & Frings, 2015; Best et al., 2015). Importantly, none has examined such transitions simultaneously at an implicit and explicit level.

The PhD will expand on the extant literature by focussing exclusively on transitions between using and non-using identities amongst those attempting to quit using alcohol. It will employ cutting edge quantitative measures (including implicit identity measures) to pin down changes in identity at explicit and implicit levels. It will also explore these issues in depth through a series of qualitative interviews which will provide a rich dataset and insights into underlying processes. This synthesised approach draws upon a unique combination of strengths in the research team. It will also enable a deeper understanding of identity transition processes and the development of effective interventions.

Expected outputs:

In addition to the thesis, the candidate will be encouraged to submit academic journal articles and to present their findings at conferences.

Supervision and training:

The successful candidate will work under a supervisory team composed of Dr Eleni Vangeli (Lecturer in Psychology), Dr Daniel Frings (Associate Professor in Addiction) and Prof Ian Albery (Professor of Psychology and Director of Research and Enterprise). The successful candidate would be part of the Addiction and Health Related Behaviours research grouping within the Division of Psychology. A grouping recognised in REF2014 for its contribution of research considered to be world-leading and impact production of considerable reach and influence.

Deadline for application: 20 March 2016. See below for details of how to apply.

London South Bank University

London South Bank University (LSBU) is a dynamic, inner-city University with a diverse multi-cultural population of 17,700 students (7% of whom are international students) and 2,000 academic and support staff. LSBU has over one hundred years of experience of providing high quality teaching and learning, underpinned by relevant research and delivered in an environment that is focussed on the needs of

its students, the great capital city of London, the UK and global marketplaces. The main LSBU campus is located at the heart of London in historic Southwark, only minutes away from the professional, social and cultural facilities of the capital.

The University is divided into seven Schools: Applied Science (AS), Health and Social Care (HSC), Law and Social Sciences (LSS), Engineering (E), Business (B), Arts and Creative Industries (ACI), and the Built Environment and Architecture (BEA). Teaching and the main administration is conducted at the Southwark Campus for all courses, except the professional courses in nursing, midwifery, health and social care, which are offered at sites at Havering and Great Ormond Street. Each School is headed by their Dean.

School of Applied Sciences

The School of Applied Sciences at LSBU offers exciting opportunities for education, research and knowledge transfer activities. Our vision is to be an internationally recognised centre of academic excellence, making a positive impact in the real world.

The School has a thriving community of scholars and students, who are supported by the rich educational environment and committed to academic excellence. Our academics and researchers pass on their knowledge, but also their enthusiasm and experience. A large number of staff are recognised as Senior Fellows of the Higher Education Academy, and have won prestigious educational and research awards. Our research work has been recognised by the 2014 Research Excellent Framework (REF) as being world leading or internationally excellent. Our involvement in research and enterprise work also means that our students are taught and mentored by leading authorities. Our academics and researchers play leading roles in learned societies and professional bodies, edit leading academic journals and disseminate their research in scholarly conferences around the world. They also work extensively with partners in the industry and the local community, ensuring that our work is meeting the needs and challenges of the real world.

Our undergraduate and postgraduate courses nurture scientific creativity, intellectual rigour and employability skills. This allows our graduates to pursue careers in their area of competence and to become tomorrow's leaders who can truly make a difference in the world. The School has a student voice and engagement committee, and students actively contribute to the academic development of our courses. Students are also encouraged and supported to seek internal and external bursaries and to apply for prizes and awards which recognise their competencies.

Our School is a great place to study or get involved, but also a fantastic experience, whether you are a potential student wanting a first-rated degree course, or a business looking for consultancy or collaborative research.

This PhD is linked to the [Division of Psychology](#).

Studentship information

The studentship will cover tuition fees at the prevailing UK/EU rate.

Person description

We are seeking an individual to conduct both qualitative phenomenological research and quantitative online research using survey methods and implicit association tests. This will include preparing ethical approval documents, literature reviewing, collecting data (interviewing, online surveys and tests), analysing the data using in-depth qualitative and quantitative methods, and writing up the research findings for presentation and publication.

Eligibility

The studentship will be awarded on the basis of merit for three years of full-time study. Overseas candidates are welcome to apply, but non-EU students will be required to pay the gap between home and international tuition fees.

Person Specification

Essential:

- ✓ Undergraduate degree with at least 65% as final grade, in a relevant subject, such as psychology or sociology, or equivalent educational background
- ✓ Experience conducting exploratory research using experiential qualitative or survey methods
- ✓ Knowledge of ethical procedures and experience of working within ethical frameworks
- ✓ Excellent written, verbal and presentation skills for both specialist and non-specialist audiences (proof of proficiency in English will be required)
- ✓ Excellent working knowledge of Microsoft Windows

Desirable:

- ✓ MSc/MRes (at Merit or Distinction level) in research methods in psychology, addiction, clinical psychology, counselling/psychotherapy or other relevant higher degree
- ✓ Experience conducting research using experiential qualitative methods
- ✓ Experience conducting interviews
- ✓ Experience in working with and analysing quantitative data, especially using SPSS
- ✓ Experience of working with people in recovery from addiction

Personal attributes:

- ✓ An ability to work independently and with initiative at a high level of self-motivation

- ✓ Ability to prioritise tasks to achieve project goals and meet deadlines
- ✓ Ability to problem-solve, innovate or adapt
- ✓ Ability to think critically
- ✓ Ability to apply strong interpersonal skills to the building and maintenance of effective working relationships and to written and verbal communication with partners from a variety of professional backgrounds
- ✓ High level, across-the-board attentiveness to detail.

Contact:

For informal enquiries please contact Dr Eleni Vangeli (email: vangeli@lsbu.ac.uk; telephone: +44 (0)20 7815 5806).

How to apply:

A shortlist of candidates will be invited to interview. The successful candidate will be selected for the award in accordance with the University's postgraduate admissions requirements and must be eligible under the Education (Fees and Awards) Regulations 1997.

Applications for research degrees and PhD scholarships are made through UKPASS. For information on how to apply through the UKPASS system, please visit our [How to apply page](#). Please indicate on the UKPASS application form that you are applying for a scholarship.

Please include in your UKPASS application:

- Your current curriculum vitae including details of your education (subject, level, institution, date of award)
- Academic transcripts and professional qualifications and distinctions other than degrees
- a personal statement setting out your motivation for applying for the post and explaining how your skills, experience and academic knowledge will contribute to the each of the criteria and to the project
- An example of your academic written work, up to 2000 words. This could be an extract from a dissertation, journal paper or coursework assignment, and should showcase your ability to think critically
- Names and contact information of two referees
- Indication that you are applying for a scholarship.

Shortlisted candidates will be contacted with an invitation to attend a set of interview and presentation activities. Candidates are requested to respond promptly to such an invitation, indicating their agreement to attend and their availability.

Closing date for applications: 20 March 2016