Three year PhD studentship to be part of the HRBDT Project and to undertake research in the area of Health and Human Rights

The Economic and Social Research Council-funded HRBDT Project, based at the University of Essex’s Human Rights Centre, maps and analyses the challenges and opportunities presented by the use of ICT and big data from a human rights perspective. Drawing on the wide range of expertise of its interdisciplinary researchers and partner organisations, the project considers whether fundamental human rights concepts and approaches need to be adapted to meet the rapidly evolving technological landscape. The work brings together practitioners in the fields of human rights and technology, Internet governance, the United Nations, technology industries, and academics, to assess existing regulatory responses and the need for reforms in order to maximise effective human rights protection.

This funded three-year doctoral studentship will undertake research concerned with health and human rights as part of work stream three of the HRBDT Project. The scope of this work stream includes research into:

1. The degree to which interventions such as e-health and m-health can contribute to the practical delivery of health rights;

2. Whether or not big data, including Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, can help accountability bodies, such as UN human rights treaty-bodies and national human rights institutions, hold duty-bearers to account in relation to health rights.

3. An examination of the evidence, including big data, that human rights contribute to health gains.

The research will be under the supervision of Professor Paul Hunt (Work Stream Director) and Dr Linsey McGoey (Work Stream Member). Professor Sonia Bhalotra (Work Stream Member) will also provide guidance and support. The successful candidate will work their supervisors and the Work Stream Team to develop their precise PhD project.

This studentship is one of five to be associated with the HRBDT Project. The holder of the doctoral studentship will be a full member of the University of Essex Human Rights Centre and the University’s ESRC Doctoral Training Centre.

For eligible candidates the three-year award pays annual fees of £4,121 and an annual maintenance grant of £14,296, in addition to a Research Training Support Grant of £750 per annum.
For ESRC eligibility please see: [http://www.esrc.ac.uk/skills-and-careers/studentships/prospective-students/am-i-eligible-for-an-esrc-studentship](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/skills-and-careers/studentships/prospective-students/am-i-eligible-for-an-esrc-studentship)

Under ESRC rules, UK residents are eligible for a full award (fees and annual maintenance grant) and EU citizens who are not UK residents are eligible for a fees-only award, although Essex University may pay an equivalent maintenance grant. Overseas students (non-UK, non-EU) are not eligible for an ESRC award but may be considered for an Essex award.

Further information on the HRBDT project can be found at: [http://www.hrbdt.ac.uk/](http://www.hrbdt.ac.uk/). Further particulars on the studentship can be found below.

Applications must be made online through the University of Essex’s postgraduate applications page: [https://www.essex.ac.uk/pgapply/enter.aspx](https://www.essex.ac.uk/pgapply/enter.aspx)

The following information is required for the application:

1. A letter of motivation (1,000 words), detailing special areas of interest in this field and explaining aspects of your academic and professional background that are relevant to the studentship. If you will require a Tier 4 student visa to study in the UK, then your letter should refer specifically to your reasons for wishing to study in the UK;
2. An up to date CV;
3. Two academic references, dated;
4. A sample of recent written work;
5. A sample research proposal (800 – 1,000 words)
6. Official transcript(s), in English or a certified translation of your academic results to date, showing marks or grades;
7. A language certificate (if relevant). Evidence of any academic or English language qualifications which have already been awarded and which you have cited in your application. For non-native speakers of English, an overall IELTS score of 7.0 is required, with a 6.5 in the writing component. The assessment must be no more than two years prior to application.

**Closing date: 5pm, Tuesday 31 May 2016.**

Interviews will be held by Skype or in person at the University of Essex in June 2016. The successful candidate would be expected to start on Thursday 6 October 2016.

Informal enquiries should be made to Professor Paul Hunt on either phmhunt@essex.ac.uk or paulhunt28@yahoo.co.uk.
Further Particulars

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The HBRDT Project

Housed at the University of Essex’s Human Rights Centre and funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, the Human Rights, Big Data and Technology Project considers both the challenges to and opportunities for human rights presented by ICT and big data.

Specifically, the aims of the Project are to:

- Map and analyse the challenges and opportunities of the use of ICT and big data from a human rights perspective;
- Consider whether fundamental human rights concepts and approaches need to be updated and adapted to meet the new realities of ICT in the era of big data; and,
- Develop good practice guidelines on technology, big data and human rights and propose remedies and regulatory responses from a rights-based perspective.

You can find more information about the Project at: www.hrbdt.ac.uk.

Candidate Profile

The successful candidate will have a postgraduate qualification in a relevant discipline (such as law, human rights, public policy, public health or medicine) and be able to demonstrate ability: to undertaken qualitative and quantitative research of a high standard; to disseminate research findings to a range of stakeholder and expert communities; and to write work of publishable quality.

Candidates will also need to show that they can work as part of a multidisciplinary team and assist with the broader activities of the HRBDT Project including the organisation of meetings and impact engagement activities.

Benefits and Opportunities

PhD students associated with the HRBDT project will benefit from access to advanced training courses run by the Essex Summer School in Social Science and the Human Rights Centre Summer School in Human Rights Research Methods. They will also have access to the ESRC’s Advanced Training Network courses.

In addition the PhD students will benefit from the University’s professional development scheme Proficio which provides a wide range of courses, including advanced research methods, career management, communication skills and public engagement. All students will receive a Research Training Support Grant and be able to take the Postgraduate
Certificate in Higher Education Practice to prepare them for an academic career. PhD students may also have the opportunity to spend six months on placement with one of the Project’s partners.

The studentship will be funded by either the ESRC or the Essex University, or a combination. Applications are welcome from home, EU and overseas applicants, but any funding package will depend on eligibility and potential applicants are encouraged to discuss their individual circumstances. In order to receive ESRC funding applicants must meet the ESRC residency requirements. Part-time applicants will be considered.