

PhD Studentship: Vice-Chancellor's PhD Studentship (Fully Funded)
Location: Buckinghamshire New University, High Wycombe, UK
Mode of Study: Full-time, in-person
Duration: 3 years

Project Title: *Running narratives: Using stories of running to engage and inspire people in drug and alcohol recovery.*

Project summary: This research project seeks to create and disseminate powerful stories of recovery through running, and to capture responses to those stories by other recovering addicts. It builds on the dual premise that telling a story is liberating and healing, and that new, liberating stories are formed in response to stories heard. A story of addiction and recovery, and running as part of recovery, is an accessible, evocative, and involving medium, which might resonate and be a more effective tool for self-reflection and acceptance, and for recruitment and commitment to social prescription pathways. Employing the University's network of potential gatekeepers, and other appropriate groups, the successful candidate will engage with and recruit people who have used or are currently using running to help them on their drug or alcohol recovery journeys. Then, using narrative methods, they will co-create stories of 'running to recovery' and take them into the wider recovery community to generate responses from others.

The project ultimately aims to explore the usefulness of stories to go beyond more traditional testimonials, to liberate and inspire, and to recruit to physical activity social prescription. The research objectives include:

- a. Exploring individuals' experiences of drug or alcohol addiction and recovery, and of running as part of the recovery journey.
- b. Identifying key narrative components of identity and wellbeing, which represent individuals' stories and changing outlooks.
- c. Co-creating stories in a form that is accessible and evocative.
- d. Exploring responses of people in drug and alcohol recovery to the stories.

Supervisory Team

Dr Ben Clayton, Associate Professor in Sociology of Sport. Ben.Clayton@bnu.ac.uk

Dr George Clerk, Senior Lecturer in Criminology. George.Clerk@bnu.ac.uk

Funding and eligibility: This project is open to UK and international applicants for full-time study only, and covers:

- Tuition fees for up to three years.
- A bursary of £15000pa for up to three years.

The successful candidate must enrol as a full-time PhD student at Buckinghamshire New University. The candidate is required to attend campus regularly, normally at least three days per week for 45 weeks per year. Any absence from campus during this period must be formally agreed by the Graduate School and will normally only be permitted for research-related activities such as data collection, fieldwork, conferences, or approved training. Continued enrolment and funding are subject to satisfactory academic progress, including successful

completion of progression reviews and participation in the University's research training and development programme. This is an in-person studentship and cannot be undertaken remotely. Any employment undertaken during the studentship must be declared and approved in line with University regulations.

Person specification: The successful applicant will have:

- An MSc/MA in sociology or psychology of health or sport, health and social care, or other relevant social science field (applicants with a strong undergraduate degree may be considered).
- Exceptional qualitative research capability.
- Excellent communication skills, including verbal and academic *and* creative writing.
- Excellent interpersonal skills and, preferably, experience working collaboratively in a community setting.
- The ability to work independently and as part of a team.
- Preferably, a strong interest in drug and alcohol recovery work *and* physical activity.
- A commitment to academic integrity, research ethics, and research excellence, and to contributing to the BNU research community and to publications.

How to apply:

Applicants must follow the standard PhD application process through Buckinghamshire New University, as outlined on the Graduate School website. In addition to the normal application requirements, applicants must also complete and submit the Vice Chancellor's PhD Studentship application form alongside their PhD application. Only complete applications, including both the standard PhD application and the VC Studentship form, will be considered.

To apply for a research degree, please email the following documents to ResearchUnit@bnu.ac.uk:

a completed [Application Form](#)

a Research Statement ([Download Research statement template](#))

scanned copies of your degree qualifications - as in point 4 of the guidance notes in the application form. (Other supporting documentation may be submitted if available)

a scanned copy of your passport

evidence of any previous publications or research outputs, where relevant

Applications are considered two times during each academic year. The current application deadlines and associated start dates are as follows:

Application deadline	Start date
20 April 2026	1 September 2026

The Research Degrees Admissions Panel reviews all applications and decides whether to invite candidates for interview. The Panel aims to provide an outcome within 8 to 12 weeks of receiving a complete application. Successful applicants will receive confirmation of their start date as well as details of their induction programme.