



Leading education
and social research
Institute of Education
University of London

THE BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS TEAM ♦

PhD Opportunity

This PhD represents a unique opportunity to work between the world's leading university for the study of Education and a team at the heart of UK public policy design. We invite applications from candidates who have an ambition to make a difference to the educational outcomes of adult learners.

About the organisations supervising the PhD:

The **Behavioural Research Centre for Adult Skills and Knowledge (ASK)** and the **Institute of Education's National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy (NRDC)** are seeking a PhD candidate to work on a collaborative project.

ASK is a part of the Behavioural Insights Team ([BIT](#)) – a social purpose company which started life in Number 10 Downing Street and is owned, in part, by the Cabinet Office – with a mandate to apply research findings from psychology, behavioural economics and related disciplines to improve public services. Over the past four years, the BIT has helped the UK Government make significant gains across most major policy areas.

NRDC was established in 2002 by the UK government as part of the Skills for Life strategy (the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills in England and Wales), to create a strong evidence base for the future with close links to practice and policy. NRDC has an international reputation, undertaking research and development activity for a wide range of funders. Over the past 10 years NRDC has built a powerful evidence base that engages with and is used extensively by practitioner and policy communities.

About the opportunity:

The candidate will undertake the [PhD with Integrated Research and Methods Training](#) at the Institute of Education ([IOE](#)) full time over the course of three or four years.

They will be co-supervised by:

- an academic from the IOE's [National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy](#) (NRDC), who will provide expert guidance on the elements of study related to numeracy and/ or literacy; and
- the Head of Research at the Behavioural Insights Team, who will provide expert guidance on running randomised control trials in the field.

Course costs and a salary will be fully funded by the BIT.

This PhD provides a unique opportunity to work between the IOE and ASK. ASK is a newly established research initiative, which seeks to use experimental techniques to bring lessons from behavioural science to bear on adult numeracy and literacy skills development.

Over the course of the PhD, ASK will be running a number of field trials in settings where adult learners can be found in the UK. These trials will be focused on the following research question:

How can we apply lessons from the behavioural sciences to get adults to:

- i. recognise the need for;
- ii. sign up to;
- iii. persist with;
- iv. complete; and
- v. reap the long term benefits of training to improve their numeracy and literacy skills?

The candidate would spend three or four days a week working at the BIT offices as an Assistant Advisor within ASK and one or two days a week at the Institute of Education. The work the candidate does within both organisations would provide them with material for their PhD thesis. For example, at ASK, the candidate's time may be spent identifying hypotheses about what might get adult learners to stick with a difficult course, conducting a literature review, devising trials to test these hypotheses and evaluating the resulting data. A write up of such activity could form a PhD chapter and lay the foundations for academic papers for publication. The theoretical aspect of the PhD would be further developed through exposure to subject matter experts in adult education at the Institute for Education.

Please note: Applications will only be considered from candidates who are eligible for UK/ EU tuition fees and who are able to freely work in the UK.

Candidate specification:

Required

- A strong academic track record with an upper second class honours degree in a relevant topic;
- A strong interest in applied research and experimental methods;
- A strong interest in both adult basic skills education and behavioural science;
- Experience of experimental research methods;
- Be a UK/ EU citizen

Desired

- Experience of designing and running field trials;
- Project or programme management experience;
- A strong understanding of the adult basic skills sector in the UK.

How to apply:

With this model in mind, we invite **proposals of up to 1,000 words** from candidates that describe:

- Identified issue(s)/ need(s) within the current provision for adult numeracy and/ or literacy training;
- A theoretical analysis of the issue and how we might address it (including proposed interventions);
- A minimum of three experimental ideas on how we might test whether intervention is successful (at least two ideas should be field experiments);

Candidates should also send a CV (including details of nationality) and a brief cover note.

Applications should be submitted to bit.jobs@behaviouralinsights.co.uk by **5pm on the 19th December 2014.**

Interviews will take place w/c 12th January 2015.