The impact of time and mental health on lived experience of conflict of UK Service Personnel who served on Operation HERRICK: an oral history

AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (CDP) Studentship with King’s College London and Imperial War Museums

Start date: 1 October 2021

Application deadline: by 23:59 GMT, Sunday 25 July 2021

Interviews will take place on Monday 9 August 2021

King’s College London and Imperial War Museums (IWM) are pleased to announce the availability of a fully funded Collaborative doctoral studentship from October 2021 under the AHRC’s Collaborative Doctoral Partnership Scheme.

The project involves analysis of oral histories of military personnel who had been deployed to Afghanistan as part of Operation HERRICK, who have been re-interviewed to provide a unique opportunity to examine how narratives and perceptions of wartime experiences change with time.

This project will be jointly supervised by Professor Sir Simon Wessely, Dr Howard Burdett, and Dr Thomas Colley (KCL) and Louise Skidmore (IWM). The student will be expected to spend time at both the university and IWM, and will become a part of research activity under the IWM Institute, IWM’s innovation hub experimenting with creative new ways of deepening understanding of war and conflict. The student will also join the wider cohort of CDP funded students across the UK. The studentship can be studied either full or part-time.

We encourage the widest range of potential students to study for this CDP studentship and are committed to welcoming students from different backgrounds to apply. We particularly welcome applications from Black, Asian, Minority, Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds as they are currently underrepresented at this level in this area. Students should have a Master’s Degree in a relevant subject or can demonstrate equivalent experience in a professional setting. Given the potential for interdisciplinary research associated with this project, we welcome applicants from a wide range of disciplines, including but not limited to: psychology, anthropology, history and war studies.

Project Overview

Between 2010 and 2014, the War Story project at IWM worked with the UK Ministry of Defence and others to document the UK’s involvement in the conflict in Afghanistan.
Sixty-five oral history interviews were recorded with those who were deployed on Operation HERRICK within weeks of their return. The immediacy of these interviews, in contrast to most of the IWM's oral histories which were conducted years or even decades after deployment, presents a unique and distinctive opportunity.

The project will use a multidisciplinary approach to explore and compare the interviews conducted immediately after deployment and those conducted 10-12 years later. The project will contribute to an understanding of how time, competing narratives and mental health, influence recollection of the lived experience of combat and trauma. This project will inform the historical role of oral histories and will provide new insights into conflict memory together with its intersection with mental health.

The PhD student will develop a theoretical understanding of the practice of collecting and interpreting oral histories from a museological perspective. To this they will also bring an understanding of the function and role of memory in conflict and traumatic environments. Working with the Contemporary Conflict team and using the two bodies of interviews (past and recent), the PhD student will develop a project plan which will consider the influences and impact of the identified differences and similarities.

The precise direction of the project will be developed by the student in partnership with IWM and the HEI co-supervisors, but likely areas of research include:

- How do military personnel reflect on their experiences of conflict after a considerable distance of time?
- How do perceptions of conflict change with time since return from deployment?
- How do changing perceptions affect narratives related to conflict?
- To what degree does recall bias affect later perceptions and memories of conflict?
- How does mental health affect the shift in memories and perceptions of war over time?

**Details of Award**

CDP doctoral training grants fund full-time studentships for 45 months (3.75 years) or part-time equivalent. The studentship has the possibility of being extended for an additional 3 months to provide professional development opportunities, or up to 3 months of funding may be used to pay for the costs the student might incur in taking up professional development opportunities.

The award pays tuition fees up to the value of the full-time home UKRI rate for PhD degrees. **The UKRI Indicative Fee Level for 2021/22 is £4,500.**

The award pays full maintenance for all students - both home and international. The National Minimum Doctoral Stipend for 2021/22 is £15,609, plus a London Weighting of £2000/year, plus a CDP maintenance payment of £550/year.

Further details can be found on the [UKRI website](https://ukri.org). The student is eligible to receive an additional travel and related expenses grant during the course of the project courtesy of IWM, worth up to £1000 per year for 3.75 years (45 months).

The project can be undertaken on a full-time or part-time basis. NOTE: **All applications should be submitted to the full-time programme regardless of your preferred mode.**
Eligibility

- This studentship is open to both Home and International applicants.

- We want to encourage the widest range of potential students to study for a CDP studentship and are committed to welcoming students from different backgrounds to apply. We particularly welcome applications from Black, Asian, Minority, Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds as they are currently underrepresented at this level in this area.

- Applicants should have a Bachelors degree with 2:1 honours (or Overseas equivalent). A 2:2 degree may be considered only where applicants also offer a Masters with Merit. Students should have a Master’s Degree in a relevant subject or can demonstrate equivalent experience in a professional setting. Given the potential for interdisciplinary research associated with this project, we welcome applicants from a wide range of disciplines, including but not limited to: psychology, anthropology, history and war studies.

- Applicants must be able to demonstrate an interest in the museum sector and potential and enthusiasm for developing skills more widely in related areas.

- As a collaborative award, students will be expected to spend time at both the university and IWM.

NB. All applicants must meet UKRI terms and conditions for funding. See: https://www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/grant-terms-and-conditions/

The successful candidate will be eligible to participate in CDP Cohort Development events.

How to apply

Applicants must complete and submit an online admissions application, via the King’s admissions portal (https://apply.kcl.ac.uk/) by midnight (23:59 GMT), Sunday 25 July 2021.

Applicants will need to satisfy AHRC eligibility requirements including Masters-level advanced research training or equivalent professional experience. Applicants will be assessed based on their academic record and research potential, the strength of their covering letter, and the overall fit of their approach with the aims of the research project outlined above.

Online application:

On the ‘Choosing a programme’ page, please select Psychological Medicine Research MPhil/PhD (Full-time).

In the ‘Funding’ section, please tick box 5 and include the following reference: SW-KCMHR-IWM-21

In your application, you will be asked to include:

- Transcripts of undergraduate and masters qualifications (or evidence of equivalent).
- Curriculum vitae (max. two pages).
• A personal statement outlining your suitability for the project and how you will approach the research (max. two pages). Please include this as an attachment rather than using the text box.

• Sample of writing from either an academic assignment/publication OR museum interpretation/publication (1,500 to 8,000 words). Please include this as an attachment rather than using the text box.

• Details of two academic referees. References must be received by the deadline for the applicant to be eligible.

Only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.

Complete applications must be submitted on https://apply.kcl.ac.uk/ by no later than midnight (23:59 GMT), Sunday 25 July 2021.

Interviews are scheduled to be held Monday 9 August 2021.

**Further Enquiries**

You are welcome to email howard.burdett@kcl.ac.uk or research@iwm.org.uk for more information regarding the project and studentship.

If you have any queries regarding the application process, please contact the Education support team at ioppn.pgr@kcl.ac.uk