

Title	UBEL ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership Co-funded studentship for the project “Evaluation of a child-centred intervention targeting wellbeing and cognitive skills in primary age children”
Institution/Division	Department of Psychological Sciences, Birkbeck University of London
Funding Period	October 2021 – September 2024
Stipend	£17, 285 p.a
How to Apply	Applications for the studentship should be made via the Survey Monkey Apply portal (https://ucl.smapply.io/acc/l/?next=/prog/)
PhD Title	Evaluation of a child-centred intervention targeting wellbeing and cognitive skills in primary age children
The Studentship	<p>This project is a collaboration between the Centre for Educational Neuroscience and Evolve, a social enterprise, to carry out and evaluate a trial to improve wellbeing and cognitive skills in primary age children in the Doncaster area. The PhD student will be involved in delivering the intervention in the academic year 2021-22, evaluating the trial’s outcome, and exploring the underlying mechanisms of any improvements. The student will gain training in the interdisciplinary field of educational neuroscience from the academic partners, and experience with Evolve in the operation of a social enterprise developing educational interventions of potential societal impact.</p> <p>The Centre for Educational Neuroscience (http://www.educationalneuroscience.org.uk/) is a cross-institutional research centre, combining expertise in neuroscience, child development, psychology, and education research from Birkbeck, UCL, and UCL Institute of Education. Its goal is to establish a dialogue between researchers and educationalists to further translations of research into practise to improve education and well-being across the lifespan. It is involved in intervention trials to evaluate learning activities and practices to improve educational outcomes, from small scale studies (e.g., spatial training to improve mathematics skills; individualised interventions for children with developmental language disorder) to large-scale randomised controlled trials (e.g., the Education Endowment Foundation funded UnLocke project with over 6000 children targeting maths and science learning in primary schools). The CEN’s focus is to understand the mechanisms underpinning intervention effects, their range of transfer, and their persistence.</p> <p>Evolve (https://www.evovesi.com/) is a social enterprise founded in 2003, with the mission of enabling all children to achieve their potential by improving their physical, emotional and cognitive health and wellbeing. It has pioneered the deployment of Health Mentors to work with children identified as vulnerable and/or at risk of not achieving the required academic progress. Mentors deliver a wraparound programme of social and emotional learning activities. Evolve has also explored the benefits of cognitive training for these children. Their recent Project HE:RO intervention trial, which targeted 8-11-year-old children at risk of school</p>

	<p>exclusion, demonstrated both wellbeing and cognitive gains from health mentors and cognitive training, compared to classmates not in the programme and business-as-usual controls (N=1200; The Health Foundation, 2020). However, the intervention did not consider educational outcomes and had relatively few children in the cognitive training condition.</p> <p>The student will take part in a new, follow-up intervention focusing on educational outcomes on the intervention and a deeper consideration of the potential of cognitive training. In collaboration with Doncaster Local Authority, Evolve has designed a new trial involving 1600 children. The trial will also address the scalability of the intervention by comparing delivery by its own health mentors with delivery by school staff who have received training from Evolve.</p> <p>The project will provide an ambitious and talented student with the opportunity to work at the forefront of an emerging interdisciplinary field and make a contribution to the translation of research into societal impact in the education and wellbeing of young children.</p> <p>The student will be based at Birkbeck in the Department of Psychological Sciences, currently rated as the 5th leading Psychology department in the UK (http://www.bbk.ac.uk/psychology/). The student will integrate with Prof Michael Thomas's and Prof. Tolmie's research groups. Both researchers are members of the Centre for Educational Neuroscience, a leading research centre supporting dialogue and translation between cognitive neuroscience and education.</p> <p>The student will gain highly sought-after translational training, in the interdisciplinary field of educational neuroscience and experience in the operation of a social enterprise developing educational interventions of potential societal impact. The student will therefore develop skills that would be highly beneficial to his/her future career. The student will be encouraged to attend training courses and conferences both within the UK and overseas.</p>
Key Requirements	<p>Candidates must have a first class or upper second undergraduate degree in a relevant scientific discipline, including but not limited to psychology, biology, neuroscience, computer science, or mathematics. Candidates must also have a first class or upper second Master's degree in a relevant discipline, as this is a +3 doctoral award. A strong grounding in research design and quantitative data analysis would be advantageous. Experience working with young children, working in a research assistant post and experience of programming would also be advantages.</p>
Further Details	<p>If you have any queries about this studentship, please contact:</p> <p>Professor Michael Thomas (m.thomas@bbk.ac.uk)</p> <p>Professor Andrew Tolmie (andrew.tolmie@ucl.ac.uk)</p> <p>John Bishop at Evolve (john@evolvesi.com)</p>

Closing Date	Friday 5th March 2021
Latest time for Submission of Applications	23:59
Details for Submission	See above
Interview date	Monday 15 – Friday 19 March 2021 (day to be confirmed)