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PhD studentship: Stakeholder perception of flood risk

Supervisors: Dr Diane Horn, Department of Geography, Environment and Development Studies, Birkbeck College, University of London

Professor Dave Pratt, Department of Geography, Enterprise, Mathematics and Science, Institute of Education, University of London

Applications are invited for a three-year PhD studentship, to start October 2011. This interdisciplinary studentship will be based in the School of Geography, Environment and Development Studies at Birkbeck College, University of London, and will be jointly supervised by Dr Diane Horn, Birkbeck, and Professor Dave Pratt, Institute of Education. The studentship will cover course fees at the usual level for UK and EU studentships and a stipend in accord with research council rates. Please be aware that non-EU applicants will be liable to pay the difference between Home/EU and overseas PhD fees. Fieldwork expenses will be covered by the two departments.

By examining the real and contemporary context of development and flood risk, this doctoral research aims to uncover how various stakeholders in that context make risk-based decisions on matters that have significant impact on themselves and others, and to explore how better perceptions of risk might be supported. The research focus is on how policy makers and those who implement flood policy interpret risk and make judgements of those risks. The aim will be to understand how stakeholders make judgements about flood risk and how their methods for making such judgements impact upon performance. In the case of local authority planners, members of local planning committees, government officials responsible for housing policy, and insurers, performance will be interpreted in terms of their role within their respective institutions. In the case of house-purchasers, performance will be interpreted in terms of the conduct of their everyday lives. By developing training materials useful to employees in one of these contexts, the research will illuminate how more sophisticated perceptions of flood risk might be supported in that context. The case study area is the Thames estuary, where the majority of land available for development is subject to many different types of flood risk, which will be increased by climate change and land use change. The research will be of benefit to Defra, the Environment Agency, and local authorities who are responsible for decisions about development and flood risk. The research will also be of interest to the insurance industry, which is concerned about development on the floodplain and the associated risk.

The PhD studentship will be enhanced by the provision of specialised training courses available at both academic institutions. Training on the scientific aspects of flood risk and Geographical Information Systems will be available in the Birkbeck Geography department. The student will also have access to facilities within the Willis Research Network through Dr Horn's membership. The WRN is the world's largest partnership between academia and the insurance industry and currently includes 22 universities around the world, sponsoring research across all fields of natural hazards. The WRN funds a network of postdoctoral researchers and PhD students, and organises regular research and industry meetings which the PhD student will be invited to attend. The student will have access to a wide range of policymakers and stakeholders through Willis contacts. The student will receive training in the use of design research to conduct qualitative research in the social sciences under Professor Pratt at the IoE and will participate in the mathematics education and the science education special interest groups at the IoE.

Applicants must have or be expected to achieve at least a 2.1 degree in a relevant subject and be of home or EU status. Candidates must supply full transcripts of their qualifications and the following:

1. A statement of not more than 500 words indicating what skills, academic and professional experience you bring to this project and why you consider you would be the best person to undertake this research. If possible, this should include evidence of your knowledge of the relevant literature in the field.
2. A piece of your academic writing which may be from your previous degree studies or an academic publication for which you were responsible. This should show your skills of critical analysis and your clarity, focus and fluency in the organisation and presentation of your arguments.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited for interview.

Further details about the project may be obtained from:

Dr Diane Horn, d.horn@bbk.ac.uk

Professor Dave Pratt, D.Pratt@ioe.ac.uk

http://www.bloomsbury.ac.uk/studentships/studentships_11/stakeholder_perception_flood_risk

Further information about PhDs at Birkbeck, application forms and details about how to apply are available on the Birkbeck web site:

<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/geds/prospective-students/mphil-phd>

http://www.bbk.ac.uk/study/all_courses/applyonline.html

<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/geds/prospective-students/mphil-phd/how-to-apply>