**Fully funded three-year PhD studentship**

The School of Human and Behavioural Sciences

Bangor University

Closing date: **Friday 28th April**

**Project title:** Understanding variation in early speech, language, and communication skills

**Supervisor:** Sam Jones (samuel.jones@bangor.ac.uk)

**Overview**

Applications are invited for a fully funded three-year PhD studentship within the School of Human and Behavioural Sciences at Bangor University. The studentship includes a tuition fee waiver and a stipend of approximately £17,668 per year for three years, as well as a generous research allowance. The studentship can begin between August 2023 and January 2024, but an October 1st start date is preferred.

**Project**

Speech, language, and communication skills are essential to human wellbeing. This project will examine factors contributing to variation in these skills during childhood. The project will be developed together with the successful applicant but should involve theoretical and applied components. Theoretical questions of interest may include the role of auditory perception, attention, working memory, predictive processing, statistical learning, reward, or metacognitive awareness in speech, language, and communication skills (for instance, in word learning or in sentence comprehension). The applied component of this project may involve the development of a tool to measure or improve speech, language, and communication skills, for instance a language ability screener, a parent and teacher questionnaire, or an intervention resource. The aim is to use the theoretical insight we develop to build something concrete that solves a real-world problem.

There is an expectation to use multiple converging methods during this scholarship. This might include behavioural assessment (for instance, the non-word repetition task), eye-tracking, corpus analysis, video recording and coding, parent and teacher reports, or computational modelling. Special emphasis will be given to developing the successful candidate’s data science skills. This will prepare the post holder well for a continued career in academia or a move into industry.

**Requirements**

Essential criteria

* First or upper second-class degree in developmental psychology or a related discipline, or significant research experience.

Desirable criteria

* A Master’s degree in developmental psychology or a related discipline.
* Experience of using programming languages such as R or Python for data science.
* Experience of running behavioural experiments with children.
* Proficiency in Welsh, and experience of using Welsh in a research context (for instance, working with bilingual data or testing Welsh-speaking children).

**Research Environment**

The School of Human and Behavioural Sciences offers an excellent research environment, with a large community of PhD students and research-active faculty, excellent professional development opportunities, and cutting-edge facilities including a research-dedicated 3T MRI centre, TMS suite and EEG laboratory. The school includes students and faculty from over 20 countries, and we are committed to fostering a diverse and family-friendly environment. Bangor University is situated between Snowdonia National Park and the coast, making it an ideal choice for applicants looking to combine advanced research with a love of the outdoors. In addition to immediate access to some of the world’s most beautiful mountains and beaches – plus woodlands, castles, prehistoric sites, and beautiful seaside towns – Bangor maintains close transport links to some of the U.K.’s largest cities, including Manchester, Liverpool, and London.

**Further information**

Informal enquiries about the studentship or the School of Human and Behavioural Sciences should be directed to Sam Jones (samuel.jones@bangor.ac.uk). Please get in touch if you would like to discuss potential ideas that we can develop together prior to application.

For general information about applications and eligibility please visit the Bangor Doctoral School Website (<https://www.bangor.ac.uk/doctoral-school/>). This studentship is principally aimed at UK students. However, prospective applicants from outside the UK should contact Sam Jones to discuss possible conditions for funding.

PhD students are expected to contribute to teaching within the School of Human and Behavioural Sciences. The school provides excellent teacher training, and many students achieve a nationally recognised professional teaching qualification while completing their PhDs. The initial appointment will be for one year, with an extension of 2 years dependent on a positive evaluation of capability and compatibility. The appointment must lead to the completion of a PhD thesis.

**How to apply**

All applications must be submitted via our online application system: <https://apps.bangor.ac.uk/applicant/>.

**Required documents**

1. *Cover letter*. Please describe (i) your motivation for applying for this studentship, (ii) why you are well suited to this project, and (iii) your ambitions beyond your PhD.
2. *References*. All applications require two academic references. Candidates must approach referees themselves and include the references with their application.
3. *Curriculum vitae*. This should be no longer than two pages. Where appropriate, your CV should include proof of your English language proficiency (7.0 IELTS minimum).
4. *Research Proposal.* Three to four pages including background information necessary to situate the proposal, research questions and hypotheses, prospective methods for each study planned, a clear indication of what the project contributes to the existing knowledge base, and a project timeline. Please give special attention to how you will secure the data that you require. For instance, by using established networks or participant panels, recruiting through social media, running experiments or questionnaires online (e.g., via Gorilla), or incorporating existing data resources (e.g., see ‘data science tools’ here; <https://manybabies.github.io/resources/>).