



Fully-funded PhD KESS Award (European Social Fund - Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarship)

School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, Cardiff University

Developing a new model for local news provision and addressing the democratic deficit in the digital economy

The 3-year award provides for payment of tuition fees, together with a maintenance stipend set at £13,688 per annum (expected to increase annually)

Start date: October 2010 or January 2011 (3 years duration)

Supervisors: Professor Justin Lewis and Dr. Andrew Williams

External supervisor / company: Martin Moore, Media Standards Trust

Outline of the project

Two of the biggest issues facing journalism in Wales - and in many other parts of the UK - are:

1. The shift from print to digital (online) news, which has had a substantial negative impact on the economic viability of local news provision, causing cutbacks and closures of local news providers across Wales (including Neath Port Talbot). While the old (print) business model is collapsing, the quest to find a new business model for news in the digital economy has so far failed.
2. The 'digital divide' in news consumption, with online news providers having limited appeal, especially to less affluent socio-economic groups. This, combined with the decline of local news, is likely to increase the democratic deficit. This is particularly the case in Wales, where devolution of political power has combined with a weakening Welsh news sector.

The aim of this project is to address these issues head on, on the basis of a case study in Neath Port Talbot, with the goal of outlining viable models of future local digital news provision? As well as creating business opportunities, this project has the potential for a broader set of social benefits, based on the use of digital media to increase knowledge and understanding of local issues across Wales (and thus the strength of local democracy).

The project will thus be designed to address two central issues:

1. The state of the current democratic deficit in Neath Port Talbot, and the extent to which local news provision has declined.
2. How a new digital model of local news provision, involving both the commercial and public sector and involving local people, might begin to redress this problem, as well as offering a way forward in local news provision across Wales.

The project will survey of existing level of news provision a local level. This will involve comprehensive media content analysis, examining how much and how regularly news is provided about local issues.

Later stages of the project will involve:

- conducting local surveys to gauge how much news about local issues from various sources is consumed, the barriers to digital news dissemination and how these might be overcome;
- quantitative analysis and interviews with news producers, consumers to examine how the consumption of news about local politics has changed
- examination of the economics of local news provision, through analysis of information detailing how much is spent on news production by the local press, the local commercial TV broadcaster, local radio and public agencies.

All information gathered will be used to examine how existing and new resources might be organised to create a new model of news provision in the digital age.

Work placements:

This project will involve close working with the Media Standards Trust and a company in Neath Port Talbot. The studentship will support travel and work placements.

Training:

Candidates will also be required to participate in other skills training undertaken as part of the KESS project relating to attainment of a KESS Postgraduate Skills Award.

Eligibility:

Candidates must meet the following criteria;

1. Have an address in a Convergence area of Wales* at the time of their application to the University- this can be a home address, or the address of a current employer.
2. Have the right to take up paid work in the Convergence areas of Wales* on completion of the scholarship, and be classified by the University as 'home' or 'EU' according to the University's guidelines.
3. Satisfy Cardiff University's admissions criteria (as outlined in the Code of Practice for Research Degrees) - applicants for research PhDs will be expected to have one or both of the following:
 - a. a first degree, normally with class 2:1 or equivalent in a relevant subject;
 - b. a relevant Master's qualification or equivalent.

**The Convergence area covers West Wales and the Valleys, and is made up of the following 15 local authorities: Isle of Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen.*

Background to funding:

KESS supports doctoral awards for students from the Convergence areas of Wales which are jointly sponsored by employers based in Convergence areas of Wales. This scholarship

is part-funded by: the European Social Fund (ESF); by non-academic employers from the Convergence areas of Wales; and by Cardiff University. The ESF Convergence West Wales and the Valleys Programme is administered by the Welsh Assembly Government through the Welsh European Funding Office.

The key objectives of KESS are to:

- Increase the research capacity of SMEs by linking with a PhD / Masters project.
- Encourage SMEs to undertake research and recruit researchers.
- Prepare and train individuals to contribute to research as professionals
- Support the development of key technologies in the Convergence area
- Promote Higher-level Skills Development

Applications:

Should consist of an emailed CV and a cover letter explaining why you would like to apply for this project at Cardiff, and detailing how your background equips you for the award. Send to Andy Williams at the address below.

Andy Williams
KESS Scholarship Application
School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies
Bute Building
Cardiff CF10 3NB

Deadline: August 26th, 2010.

Contact details:

Andy Williams
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