



Global Challenges
Doctoral Centre (GCDC)
Staff Briefing 2020

WELCOME

Goals for this briefing

1. Introducing the GCDC
2. Origins and funding of the GCDC
3. What opportunities exist for academic staff?
 - Supervision of Student-led PhD projects
 - GCDC PostDoc awards
4. The application process
5. The supervisor perspective
6. The student perspective
7. Any questions?





SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



“a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all”

Global Challenges Research Fund

A £1.5 billion fund announced by the UK Government in late 2015 to support cutting-edge research that addresses the economic and social challenges faced by developing countries.

Challenge-led disciplinary and interdisciplinary research, and strengthening of the capacity for research, innovation and knowledge exchange in the UK and developing countries.

Three principal challenges that research projects should address:

- 1) Equitable access to sustainable development;
- 2) Sustainable economies and societies; and
- 3) Human rights, good governance and social justice.

<https://www.ukri.org/research/global-challenges-research-fund/>

The GCDC team



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The Vision for Kent's GCDC

- To provide scholarships for doctoral research that helps achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals by tackling economic and social problems faced by developing countries on the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list.
- To provide the best possible academic and pastoral support for our doctoral researchers
- To create a welcoming home for all those on our campuses who are aligned with the goals of the GCRF



GCDC PhD scholarships

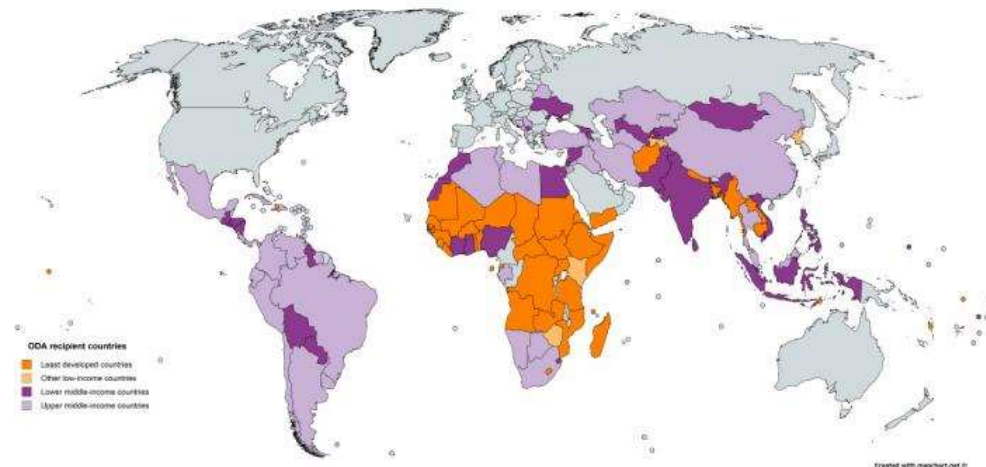
- Student-led competition
- Number of available scholarships dependent on funding but likely 6-10
- Fees for 3.5 years
- Stipend at UKRI rates for 3.5 years: (£15,285 in 2020/21)
- Research Training Support Grant £1,500 per year for first three years of study, plus access to 'top up' fund.
- Specialised interdisciplinary GCDC cohort training activities.
- Support from GCDC – events, research methods, social & networking, a doctoral community on campus.

New for 2020/21: The scholarship competition is open to all new postgraduate research applicants, in any discipline. We particularly welcome applications from Black African, Afro-Caribbean, and Asian communities as these groups are under-represented in academia.

Deadline for GCDC scholarship applications – midnight (UK time) on Monday 18 Jan 2021

Criteria for GCDC-funded PhDs

- Tackle economic and social problems faced by developing countries on the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list.
- Fit within the wider aims and specified challenges of the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF):
 1. Equitable access to sustainable development;
 2. Sustainable economies and societies; and
 3. Human rights, good governance and social justice.
- Demonstrably meet UN sustainable development goal(s)



The application form

When applying, students follow the University of Kent's standard online application process.

- Applicants are also required to complete the GCDC Student-led PhD Scholarship application form (left). This consists of:

GCDC PHD Scholarship 2021/22 – Student-led Application Form

Name: _____

1. Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) Compliance Statement – 500 words max.
Please outline: the GCRF challenge area(s) your project will meet (200 words max), the UN sustainable development goal(s) your project will meet (100 words max), the DAC-list country/countries your project will benefit and how (100 words max) and the future benefits to that country/countries (100 words max). Please see the GCRF compliance statement checklist on the GCDC website.

2. Indication of Supervisor Support (optional)

Please check this box to confirm that you have contacted a supervisor at the University of Kent, who is willing and able to supervise your proposed project if you are successful in winning a GCDC Scholarship application.

Please indicate the name(s) of your potential supervisor(s) here

- 1) A GCRF compliance statement (max 500 words) to demonstrate which principal GCRF challenge area(s) the research project will meet, which [UN sustainable development goal\(s\)](#) the project will meet, which specific DAC-list country (or countries) will benefit from the project, how the project will benefit that country/countries and any future benefits to that country/countries (as envisaged at this stage).
- 2) Confirmation that the student has contacted a supervisor at the University of Kent, who is willing and able to supervise the proposed project if successful.

GCDC Training and Events

We organise a mixture of virtual and in-person training sessions each term, supported by colleagues from across campus.

Topics autumn term:

- *Fieldwork in Developing Countries*
- *(Interdisciplinary) Publishing*
- *Data Visualisation*
- *How to Develop Plan B*

Topics spring term:

- *Training on sustainability and SDGs*
- *Engaging with audiences*

We also create free methods training videos, available via the GCDC website : <https://research.kent.ac.uk/gcdc/virtual-resources-for-global-challenges-researchers/>

GCDC Hangouts

Regular, informal opportunities to discuss global challenges doctoral study more broadly and meet up with fellow members and the staff of the Global Challenges Doctoral Centre.



The GCDC Supervisor's View




Dr Rob Barker, School of Physical Sciences

Supervising 1st year PhD student Charlotte Byford's project: Towards versatile water treatment systems

40% of the global population is affected by water scarcity, 1 in 4 health care facilities don't have access to clean water, which adds to the overwhelming issues of 1000's of people dying from preventable water and sanitation related diseases. My PhD is an interdisciplinary project that plans to address this issue by focusing on developing innovative technologies that can be applied to water treatment in developing countries such as India and Botswana. As their water purification needs vary, the project will be heavily collaborated with academic and industrial partners in these countries in order to optimise the devices for future delivery.

The GCDC Student's View


Lizzie Edrich, year 2 of PhD in BioScience



Combatting *Cryptococcus neoformans* infection and drug resistance in the Tanzanian HIV population: Current estimates place life-threatening infections from the yeast *Cryptococcus neoformans* at 1,000,000 per year worldwide with an average mortality of 50%, placing it on a par with the death toll attributable to Malaria. Lizzie will address this present and increasing medical and economic issue found within a number of low and middle-income countries with large HIV positive populations. As an initial step, she will focus her anti-fungal research activity on HIV populations within Tanzania, a low-income country with a high HIV burden.

Supervisors: Dr Campbell Gourlay & Dr Alessia Buscaino

Will Hayes, 2nd year PhD in SAC



The social and environmental impacts associated with gold mining in the rainforests of Guyana: As Guyana's Government seeks to transition the country into a 'green economy' based on sustainable development over the next 15 years, increasing deforestation and mercury pollution from gold mining are becoming a national concern. This PhD project is a partnership between the DICE research centre (School of Anthropology and Conservation) and Conservation International Guyana (CIG). The co-developed research will feed directly into CIG's work on mining. As such, the project has a high impact potential as Guyana needs to benefit from its mineral wealth but faces huge obstacles to do so.

Supervisors: Dr Jake Bicknell & Prof Zoe Davies.

Staff-led GCDC PostDoc awards

Pilot PDRA scheme run in 2020.

Dependent on the outcome of the evaluation and availability of funding, a new competition will launch in Spring 2021.

Academic staff members propose projects suitable for a postdoctoral researcher to conduct.

Projects must adhere to Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) stipulations and are intended to enhance the capacity of our academics and their partners to deliver world-class ODA compliant research and impact

Key points:

- 6 to 12 months fractional or FTE.
- PostDoc candidates should be early career, ideally current Kent PhD/PostDocs.
- Projects must be feasible within the given timeframe and demonstrate strong projected impact and outputs.
- The postdoctoral researcher will be expected to participate in and contribute to the development of GCDC activities.
- Schools liaise with HR to advertise and fill the posts.

Any questions?



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University of
Kent