

Centre for Business in Society PGR Handbook

Academic Year 2023-2024

Welcome to the Centre for Business in Society

The Centre for Business in Society (CBiS) is an exciting research community focused on areas within responsible business. Our thriving PhD and DBA communities are integral to the Centre and contribute to our wide-ranging research portfolio. Choosing to pursue PhD or DBA study within the vibrant and supportive intellectual environment of the Centre is an investment in your future.

The behaviours of organisations and policy makers impact on individuals, groups and communities, businesses and organisations, nations and global relations. These effects and consequences can be beneficial and enable enhanced social, economic and environmental well-being. However, negative consequences can also arise from business practices and policy makers paying insufficient attention to their corporate responsibilities or their impact on society. Our research aims to understand the role of business in society, to share these emerging insights and to seek a fairer outcome for all.

We welcome you into our community of scholars.

Professor Lyndon Simkin Executive Director, CBiS

Key staff in Research Centre

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CBiS research activities

The Centre for Business in Society (CBiS), based in the Business School in Coventry University, is home to approximately fifty specialist researchers, including Professors and Associate Professors (Readers), more than 100 doctoral researchers and a specialist research support team located in a dedicated research hub. CBiS explores the impact of business on society, the behaviours of organisations and policy makers' impact on individuals, groups and communities, businesses and organisations, nations and global relations. Our research aims to understand the role of business in society, to share these emerging insights and to seek a fairer outcome for all.

Within the Centre itself are four pillars of research activity known as clusters:

- Sustainable Production and Consumption (SPC)
- Economic Transformation, Inclusion, and Entrepreneurship (ETIE)
- Sector, Economic Equality, and Responsible Finance Studies (SEERFs)
- Data, Organisations and Society (DOS)

More details of these clusters are contained within later pages of this handbook. Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) research interests are aligned with these pillars of activity, offering collegiate support and networking opportunities with research staff members already active in areas closely related to or within these research topics. Developing these relationships is an important part of building and promoting a research culture at Coventry University. To support such activities CBiS staff, with the help of the operations team, provide a range of activities and events for PGRs to attend, aimed at upskilling as well as the cultivation of knowledge and experience of a high quality research environment.

One such event is the PGR Presentation Series that has been successfully running for over 5 years, with the support of CBiS. Occurring every three months, the day is dedicated to presentations by PGRs on their research to peers from across the faculty, with positive feedback provided in a safe and encouraging environment. In addition to the presentation series, there are also opportunities to present alongside staff at CBiS seminars organised by individual clusters throughout the year. These are targeted at smaller, more discipline-focussed audiences, giving more expert feedback on research activities. Other activities aimed at promoting the Business School's research culture and environment include plenaries and a more recent and novel initiative, the Knowledge Café, which takes an audience-centric approach to resolving research questions posed in advance.

CBiS also supplies plentiful opportunities for expert training and specific skills development, through methodological and theoretical training. Twice a year, summer and winter, the centre provides advanced methodological classes, taking in a range of analytical and data analysis tools. Bespoke training is provided for those PGRs seeking to improve skills related to specific components of their thesis. These classes are additional to the essential general training provided by Coventry University's key PhD programme delivery unit, Doctoral College.

Doctoral College and RECAP

The Doctoral College (DC) at Coventry University is tasked with applying regulations and maintaining quality standards for all PhD candidates across the University. While staff members in CBiS focus on the academic components of the PhD, such as supervision, progress and involvement in the research environment, DC provides support on many of the administrative research processes, for example admissions, Progress Review Panels, *Viva Voce* etc. DC also offer access to many training and development opportunities through The Doctoral College and Centre for Research Capability and Development (RECAP).

DC work closely with CBiS staff to involve PGRs in University events that draw on new and early career researcher's experiences. The two largest events hosted by DC are the Coventry University's Annual Doctoral Capability and Development Conference (April) and Coventry University's Research Hootenanny (January) are a vibrant mix of activities to showcase research excellence at the institution. DC are also responsible for organising two other fun but informative activities; Visualise Your Thesis, a short competition to encourage PGRs to disseminate their research in a more visually appealing way (see video link example), the 3 minute thesis competition, where PGRs have 3 minutes to explain and promote their research, and the Postgraduate of the Year Competition, where the PGR who has made the biggest contribution through impactful research academically and practically are recognised and rewarded for their efforts.

Links to RECAP and other DC activities are provided below.

Doctoral College <https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/research-opportunities/doctoral-college-and-centre/doctoral-college/>

Centre for Research Capability and Development <https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/research-opportunities/doctoral-college-and-centre/centre-research-development/>

'Visualise Your Thesis' RECAP competition – CBiS participant Isabel Galvis
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z05o0M84Ts0>

Research overview

As noted above, our research is grouped around four key clusters and themes:

Sustainable Production and Consumption

This research team focuses on the ultimate goals of living within environmental limits and the attainment of social justice, through the delivery of responsible business and ethical consumption practices. Our work focuses upon areas such as waste reduction, resource and energy efficiency, sustainable community and consumer behaviours, corporate values and supply chain governance. Our research adopts a multi-disciplinary approach and is framed by the UNDP's Sustainable Development Goals through the interlinked concepts of the Green Economy, the Circular Economy, the Biodiversity Economy and the Sharing Economy.

We have established projects focusing on:

Sustainability within horticultural value chains - we have interlinked projects examining issues such as standards and certifications in cut-flower supply chains; food waste management within retailer supply chains; consumption habits within the coffee sector and the impacts of sustainable practices upon business performance.

Sustainable operations and supply chain management - we emphasise the issue of sustainability throughout the supply chain, from sourcing and production, right through to the delivery of goods and services via various logistics channels.

Our work is international in focus, with well-established research links operating in South Africa, Indonesia and China. In South Africa, we have developed strong relationships with local stakeholders focusing upon the local wildflower export sector, the development of retailer sustainability standards and online sustainability training for participants in fruit, wine and flower production. We also provide monitoring and evaluation support for conservation and social development organisations in the Western Cape. In China and Indonesia, we collaborate with several top universities (Chongqing, Universitas Indonesia, Institut Teknologi Bandung and the Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember) to work on various projects focusing on food supply chains, Circular Economy implementation in manufacturing industries and green logistics and transport.

The cluster enjoys strong links with industry, social enterprises and NGOs. Our industrial collaborators include, Toyota, Jaguar Land Rover, Rolls-Royce, Bombardier, Unilever, Alliance Boots, the NHS and OHL, MMUK, Tesco, Woolworths (South Africa), and a wide range of SMEs.

Economic Transformation, Inclusion and Entrepreneurship

Encouraging economic growth and development is a core aim of public policy; however, there is increasing concern with the question 'who gains from growth?' This question was brought into sharp focus by the global financial crisis, alongside continued economic and social inequalities, and on-going austerity in many countries. In the UK, there are long-running concerns about low-pay, productivity and spatial disparities in economic performance and outcomes, as well as increasing concerns about insecurity in the labour market. There is also a growing acknowledgement that future growth and development must be 'greener' and more sustainable. Yet questions remain about the ability to balance economic, social and environmental sustainability – with an associated proliferation of proposed development models, such as local economic development (LED), the low carbon economy, the circular economy, a sharing economy, community economic development and community finance.

The economic and social outcomes of growth and development relate to both the type of growth which is generated and the mechanisms connecting this to the experiences of workers, citizens and communities. The aim of this CBIS research cluster is to develop high quality and impactful research, which seeks to inform and shape policy on the future challenges for economic development and inclusive economies.

Sector, Economic Equality, and Responsible Finance Studies

The capital account liberalisation and financial reforms since the early 1980s, including eased restrictions on foreign direct investment and short-term portfolio flows, are at the heart of financial globalisation. Financial openness and deregulation can be seen as an essential step in the process of economic development, but can also have detrimental effects, including higher co-dependence, contagion and likelihood of systemic crises. This research team focuses on the study of such economic and financial phenomena and how these impact on economies, industries, individuals, communities and societies, with a particular focus on responsible finances and investments.

This cluster is very eclectic in nature, focusing upon the study of such economic and financial phenomena and how these impact on economies, industries, individuals, households, communities and societies. This includes the examination of wide-ranging issues, including economic growth and social development, inequality, responsible finances and investments.

At the macro, economy-wide level, typical themes include FDI, financial liberalisation/openness/deregulation, financial development and financial crises. At the micro-level, key areas include personal finance, the impact on families and society of financial decisions, long-term financial planning, financial security and financial rights, the operation of and access to financial services, and community finance.

Several levels of analysis characterise this work (from international trends to individual behaviours) and a major but not exclusive lens through which many of the above phenomena are examined is industry specific, including the banking, financial, tourism and sport sectors.

Data, Organisations and Society

Data availability has increased exponentially in the last decade, paving the way to a new business environment. As such a growth rate continues to accelerate, so does the need for a better understanding of the opportunities provided by the new phenomenon and the challenges it poses to business, individuals and society regarding strategic decision-making and innovation, business strategy, data security and protection, surveillance, ethics and data privacy.

Data and data analytics have become the foundations of disruptive change in a networked business environment. Every aspect of society, from the workplace to the marketplace, to the way people live, communicate and learn, is being transformed by the acquisition and analysis of data and their transformation into actionable insight.

However, there are also challenges embedded in the processes of data-driven decision-making. The implications of big data's size and relevance, the space where data comes from, and the timeliness of data collection and analysis processes, are only beginning to be understood. Organisations must move quickly to understand those processes and adapt. Citizens need to play a more active role in the process of sharing their data, so they have a clearer appreciation of the privacy implications and are better able to benefit from the results. The ability of the public sector, government bodies, community organisations and the popular news media to balance the advantages and disadvantages of data collection, its analysis and the resulting decision-making also needs to be developed.

As the growth and potential of big data continue to explode, so does the need for a better understanding of the opportunities this new phenomenon provides. Deeper insight into big data's impact in areas such as marketing, strategy and innovation across a range of sectors is needed, as well as the business, ethical, social, privacy and security challenges it poses. The cluster adopts a Cross disciplinary approach to research examining this explosion of data and its implications for organisations and society. The aim is to undertake theoretically rigorous and practically relevant research to contribute to knowledge and help shape policy and practice in relation to data, organisations and society.

Buildings and facilities

CBiS is based in the Jaguar Building. Our PGR community has access to a Hot-Desking Room, with docking stations, lockers, printing, and kitchen facilities. Our PGRs are provided with a laptop from the Doctoral College for the duration of their studies and they have access to required software and databases. We also have a number of digital voice recorders available for loan. The staff in the Operations Support Team in JAG25 oversee the delivery of these services.

Claiming student allowance and entitlements

All research students have a student allowance of £875. This can be used for items such as equipment, or specialist software identified as being necessary by your Supervisory Team, and which is not available on the network; attendance at specialist workshops, relative to your subject, or to fill a gap in your knowledge, which has been given first approval by your DoS (Director of Studies). In addition to this, there is a further £350 available to you in your final year for attendance at a conference where you are presenting a paper as the primary author.

In order to apply for your funding, you must first seek the approval of your DoS, and then forward that approval to the Research Support Office on irbesresearch.ops@coventry.ac.uk, and they will advise you as to what funds are available to you, and whether your request meets the requirements. You will then be informed that the purchase will be made on your behalf, or occasionally we will ask you to make the purchase/booking and claim the money back on production of receipts. Please note that it can take 4-6 weeks for the funds to be transferred into your account.

Please note that you will need to be set up on our Financial System in order to get any expenses processed. This will require you providing us with details about your bank account.

Activities and opportunities available to PGR researchers

PGRs are at the centre of the research vision of the centre. CBiS PGRs are encouraged to participate in the life of the Centre in many ways: through engagement with our research clusters; PGR-led activities such as a regular research seminars and reading groups; CBiS research events; and research projects. In addition to this, occasionally the centre is able to offer paid work opportunities through www.thefutureworks.org.uk.

Some recent examples of projects supported by our PGRs:

Responsible Community Finance Research and Impact Programme

The Programme brought together and successfully delivered a set of five simultaneously awarded impact-led responsible personal finance projects. This was a cutting-edge Programme designed to build financially resilient and sustainable communities, based on a portfolio of inter-linked work which has placed CBiS visibly on the responsible personal finance map. The five projects were funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, Barrow Cadbury Trust, Carnegie UK Trust, the Oak Foundation and the Money Advice Service, with a combined value of £642,000.

The Programme made a considerable impact externally. It will now form a REF2021 Impact Case Study, given that it has supported and created positive outcomes for financially marginalised communities, by (a) enhancing the affordable, responsible finance sector; and (b) promoting individual financial well-being. The CBiS team included Dr Lindsey Appleyard (Project PI), Dr Hussan Aslam, Dr Elizabeth Bos, Dr Sara Degli-Esposti, Professor Sally Dibb (Project PI), Professor Nick Henry (Project PI), Dr Andrew Jones, Jordon Lazell, Dr Alessandro Merendino, Dr John Morris, Dr Helen Roby and Dr Yun Luo. Ably supported by CBiS Doctoral students Huma Asif, Rebecca Beech, Claire Brewis, Ryan Bushell, Isabel Galvis, Duncan Greaves and Sanne Velthuis.

Crisis Management in Business: Finding Resilience?

This event also formed part of the Economic and Social Research Council's Festival of Social Science week. Organised by a project team consisting of both CBiS staff and doctoral researchers – Dr Alessandro Merendino, Alessandro Stuart Di Bona, Malte Busch, and Jonathan Gunson – the event attracted delegates from SMEs, large companies such as E:ON, Unipart and Fosse Motor Ltd, and the Department of Work and Pensions, as well as academics. Key speakers were Professor Gerrit Sarens from Université Catholique de Louvain in Belgium and Leslie Spiers, a PhD candidate from Bournemouth University.

The objectives of the event were:

- Discuss and exchange knowledge on solutions, recommendations and guidelines for timely crisis management resolution.
- Joint platform between stakeholders' organisations, businesses and universities
- Raise the awareness about the importance of sharing tools and solutions to effectively tackle management crisis.

The Centre for Business in Society

The Centre for Business in Society (CBiS) is the principal research centre within Business and Management at Coventry University. CBiS is home to over fifty specialist researchers, a dedicated research support team, 100+ PhD researchers, most of the Faculty of Business and Law's professoriate, and a large designation of Associate Researchers. CBiS also oversees the faculty's new professional doctoral programme, the DBA.

Through understanding and interrogating the impact of organisations' activities, behaviours and policies, CBiS's research promotes responsibility and inclusivity, seeking to change behaviours in order to achieve better outcomes for economies and societies.

CBiS's traditional core interests in sustainability and economic development have been joined by teams exploring two of the biggest sources of business's impact on society in recent years: post-financialisation and the implications for economies and the individual; along with the explosion of big data and the digital economy, and the ramifications for organisations, consumers and society.

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