PhD project title
Innovation in virtual work

Supervisors
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Research centre
IWP

Project description
How do you create and develop ideas with someone you never or rarely meet? Modern communications technologies have increased the flexibility of work such that people can collaborate with colleagues who are not at the same location as themselves. This flexibility can allow for greater diversity of inputs from people from different backgrounds and situations who might not otherwise be able to work together. Such diversity can enhance creativity and innovation through the melding of different perspectives and ideas. Moreover, the lack of interruption and relative anonymity afforded by text based communications media like email can mean that people feel less inhibited and more willing to express their ideas and views.

However, virtual communications have their limitations and lack the richness of face to face interaction. The lack of social cues, reduced information transfer and increased probability of conflict can impede the full discussion of ideas and their development into implementable solutions. Thus innovation may be enhanced at certain stages of the innovation process (e.g. idea suggestion) but hindered at later stages (e.g. when gaining support for ideas and developing them further).

Whilst there is a large body of research on innovation and increasing literature on virtual work, the links between these two topics has been neglected. However, understanding how innovation processes are affected by virtual work is becoming increasingly important as more and more organisations practice virtual work, particularly in research and development and industries reliant on creativity and innovation. For example, video games and other software are increasingly being developed by individuals and groups who do not physically meet with each other. Moreover, across a range of industries, the development of new products is conducted across multiple locations and is reliant on the use of communications technologies.

Thus we invite PhD applications that explore the advantages and challenges for innovation in virtual work, so that we can better understand how to enhance this process within virtual environments.

PhD candidate profile
The PhD candidate should meet the following requirements:

- Be enthusiastic, well-organised and have good inter-personal skills.
- High motivation and a keen interest in the research area.
- A first degree that is equivalent to a UK classification of upper second class honours or above. In addition, a good masters level qualification of merit or above, with a minimum of 60 per cent in the dissertation, research project element or equivalent experience. We also accept an MBA from an accredited school where the candidate can demonstrate that a significant research element has been undertaken. For further information on entry requirements, please see: http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/management/study/researchdegrees/howtoapply
**Duration and start dates**

Full or part-time study for 3 or 6 years is available, and remote location study is also possible. We have two start dates a year for PhD students. Our preferred start date is 1 October, however we do recognise that not everyone will be able to commence studies at that time, so we also offer a second start date of 1 February. If you are unable to start in October or February, it may be also possible to start your PhD at a different time of the year.

**Closing date for applications**

Applications will be considered until a suitable candidate has been identified. For the 1 October start date, a full application must have been received by 15 July. For 1 February start date, a full application must have been received by 15 November.

**How to apply**

See [http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/management/study/researchdegrees/howtoapply](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/management/study/researchdegrees/howtoapply) for full details of how to apply.

For an informal discussion about this opportunity, please contact Dr Carolyn Axtell at c.m.axtell@sheffield.ac.uk, or Dr Kamal Birdi at k.birdi@sheffield.ac.uk.