PhD project title
Agency at the lower levels: an exploration into the labour market recruitment strategies of lower league football clubs

Supervisors
Tom Hastings

Research centre
WOERRC

Project description
There remains a gap in our understanding of the recruitment strategies of lower league professional football clubs in the English Football League (EFL). This doctoral research opportunity offers the potential to address this lacuna via a mixed method approach intended to uncover approaches to recruitment at clubs primarily based in Leagues 1 and 2 of the EFL. In addition, the research is intended to gain insights into the agency of lower league players: namely their ability to forge careers via clubs in the bottom two divisions of the game. Existing studies of this sort have tended to concentrate on cash rich clubs at the elite tiers who are capable of utilising a global labour market via basic economic exchange. Here the contention is that lower league clubs are more likely to adopt novel/innovative approaches to player recruitment, involving a greater focus on regional labour markets, the social regulation of these labour markets, temporary labour (e.g. loans) and the resourceful use of informal contacts/intermediaries (football agents or others). In exploring this phenomenon, the study will make a theoretical contribution to labour geography, aiming to uncover the agentic coping practices of under-resourced clubs via their management/coaching staff, and the agency of footballers themselves who ply their trade at this level. The uncovering of power relations is a necessary pre-requisite in order to understand how the landscape of rules and regulations governing the game at this level forms a structural constraint which impacts upon the decision-making of clubs (e.g. the impact of the Elite Player Performance Plan).

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 for full details of how to apply

For an informal discussion about this opportunity, please contact Tom Hastings at t.hastings@sheffield.ac.uk.