

### PhD studentship (Full-time)

Institution	Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China
School	School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Supervisors	Principal supervisor: Dr. Tom Duggett (XJTLU) Co-supervisor: Professor Chris Harris (XJTLU) Co-supervisor: Professor Paul Baines (UoL) Co-supervisor: Professor Nicholas Roe (St Andrews)
Application Deadline	Open until the position is filled
Funding Availability	Funded PhD project (world-wide students)
Project Title	New Directions in Literary Biography:
Contact	Please email <a href="mailto:thomas.duggett@xjtlu.edu.cn">thomas.duggett@xjtlu.edu.cn</a> (XJTLU principal supervisor's email address) with a subject line of the PhD project title

#### **Requirements:**

The candidate should have a first class or upper second class honours degree, or a master's degree (or equivalent qualification), in literary studies or a related field. Evidence of good spoken and written English is essential. The candidate should have an IELTS score of 7.0 with 7.0 minimum in each component, if the first language is not English. This position is open to all qualified candidates irrespective of nationality.

#### **Degree:**

The student will be awarded a PhD degree from the University of Liverpool (UK) upon successful completion of the program.

#### **Funding:**

The PhD studentship is available for three years subject to satisfactory progress by the student. The award covers tuition fees for three years (currently equivalent to RMB 80,000 per annum) and provides a monthly stipend of 5,000 RMB as a contribution to living expenses. It also provides up to RMB 16,500 to allow participation at international conferences during the period of the award. It is a condition of the award that holders of XJTLU PhD scholarships carry out 300-500 hours of teaching assistance work per year. The scholarship holder is expected to carry out the major part of his or her research at XJTLU in Suzhou, China. However, he or she is eligible for a research

study visit to the University of Liverpool of up to six months, if this is required by the project.

### **Project Description:**

To write a life, said Francis Bacon, was to hang ‘the greatest weight upon the smallest wires’. Bypassing the ‘pomp’ of public histories, biographies went right to the point, showing ‘the true and inward resorts’ of action. But in the age of the Anthropocene, when the very idea of human historical agency seems questionable, what becomes of Bacon’s claim? Can a single literary life tell us the story of an age? Taking an interdisciplinary approach – drawing on creative writing, history and the new humanities (digital, legal, medical) – this project aims to test the resources for new thinking in this ancient form.

Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, the Chinese joint-venture of the University of Liverpool, is offering a three-year fully-funded doctoral studentship to work on this project exploring new directions in literary biography, studying under the supervision of Dr. Tom Duggett and Professor Chris Harris. Dr. Duggett, whose ‘Lives and Letters’ study of William Wordsworth won the MLA Prize for Independent Scholars, and who is currently engaged on a life-writing project on Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s middle years, will act as Principal Supervisor. Professor Harris, who recently published the volume *Men, Power and Liberation* on masculinities in Spanish American Literatures, and who is currently writing a biography of Agustín Yáñez, will act as Second Supervisor. In addition to the two main supervisors, the supervisory team will include external members who are recognized experts and practitioners in the project field: Professor Paul Baines (University of Liverpool), author (with Pat Rogers) of *Edmund Curll, Bookseller* (2007); and Professor Nicholas Roe (University of St Andrews), author of *John Keats. A New Life* (2012).

In the foundational phase of the project, the scholarship holder will be working with the supervisory team to survey and theorize new directions in literary biography, broadly conceived, up to and including the wider field of life-writing research, and also encompassing non-traditional and cybercultural dimensions. The student will work to explore and develop interdisciplinary connections with implications for literary biography, including between literary studies and disciplines including creative writing, history, and the new (digital, legal, medical) humanities. Alongside and evolving from this foundational phase of the project, the scholarship holder will also be working on an independent and original literary-biographical study, focused on a subject or subjects of their own choosing, and illustrating through practice the findings of the theoretical phase. The overarching question addressed by the project is the extent to which engagement with leading-edge theory and practice in Biography Studies and Life-Writing research, broadly conceived, can inform and support original work with important outcomes for Literary Studies and the Humanities and Social Sciences at

large.

It is anticipated that the principal research outcome of the scholarship will be a doctoral thesis suitable for publication as an academic monograph (classified under English or Modern Languages and Linguistics). The project team welcomes applications that have the potential for additional literary-biography outputs, especially where these show potential for significant impact on culture and society. Projects that might draw upon significant new digital resources, and/or archival resources specific to the East China region, or which might explore transnationalizations of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British literary lives, will also be welcomed.

The holder of the PhD studentship will be primarily based in the new Department of Literature in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at XJTLU in Suzhou, China. XJTLU is the largest and most successful Sino-Foreign University in China – a unique partnership between the Russell Group University of Liverpool and the prestigious Xi'an Jiaotong University – celebrating 20 years in 2026. (More information about the University is available at <https://www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/about/>.) The studentship thus offers a rare opportunity to study and to gain research and teaching experience at a centre for innovation in global literary studies and language arts research, working in an English-speaking academic environment while being based in the most forward-looking and economically dynamic region of China. The studentship has been designed to be resilient to the ongoing COVID-19 situation. While the scholarship holder will normally be expected to be onsite and receiving a full on-campus study experience at XJTLU, the supervisory team will ensure a maximal use of digital resources to develop and maintain connections with the international scholarly community, particularly in the UK.

For more information about doctoral scholarship and PhD programme at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU): Please visit

<https://www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/admissions/global/entry-requirements/>

<https://www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/admissions/global/fees-and-scholarship>

### **How to Apply:**

Interested applicants are advised to email [thomas.duggett@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:thomas.duggett@xjtlu.edu.cn) the following documents for initial review and assessment (please put the project title in the subject line).

- Covering letter
- CV
- Two reference letters with company/university letterhead
- Proof of English language proficiency if English is not your first language
- Verified certificates of education qualifications (with an English translation if the original is in another language)

- Writing sample (an essay, dissertation chapter or similar)
- A research proposal of up to 2,000 words, clearly indicating suitability for the studentship position

**Informal enquiries** may be addressed to Dr. Tom Duggett (thomas.duggett@xjtlu.edu.cn), whose personal profile is linked below, <https://www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/departments/academic-departments/english/staff/thomas-duggett>