Opportunity for PhD student in the Department of Innovation & Entrepreneurship
(1 + 4 years fixed term)

Imperial College Business School, South Kensington Campus

Imperial College Business School wishes to recruit a PhD student in its Department of Innovation & Entrepreneurship to work with Dr Anne ter Wal on a research programme funded by the European Research Council (ERC). The research programme is titled “Networking for innovation: how entrepreneurs’ network behaviour helps clusters to innovate” (N4I_CLUSTER).

Our Doctoral programme is a full-time, five-year programme. In the first year you will complete a Master’s in Research (MRes) programme with highly relevant and structured training. During that year you will take compulsory modules in research methodology and subject-specific theory, which will provide you with a theoretical grounding and thorough research training for a solid foundation for your academic career. You will also undertake an individual research project, meant as a stepping stone for your PhD research project.

For the remaining four years you will design and conduct your PhD research project, as part of the wider N4I_CLUSTER research programme. The programme is described in more detail on the next page.

As a PhD student you will play a leading role in the collection and analysis of data. Depending on the sub-projects that you may choose to work on, these may include interviews, multi-wave surveys, online networking monitoring tools, social science experiments and use of data from Twitter. Students with an interest in conducting social science experiments are particularly encouraged to apply.

The Doctoral programme at the Business School is fully funded, including a full tuition fee waiver (Home/EU or Overseas fees) plus a living stipend for up to five years through the Business School Graduate Teaching Assistant Scholarship.

For more information on the doctoral programme, the entry requirements, and details on how to apply, please visit: wwwf.imperial.ac.uk/business-school/programmes/doctoral-degree/.

If you are interested in the project specified below, please indicate this in your application. For more information on the opportunity, please contact a.terwal@imperial.ac.uk.

Application closing date: 9 January 2017 (midnight GMT)

Imperial Managers lead by example.

Committed to equality and valuing diversity. We are also an Athena Silver SWAN Award winner and a Stonewall Diversity Champion
Research Programme Description:

*Networking for innovation: how entrepreneurs’ network behaviours help clusters to innovate (N4I_CLUSTER)*

“Networking is just a letter away from not working”, a phrase that perhaps reflects the pervasive negative sentiment associated with deliberate attempts to build, maintain or leverage one’s professional network. Despite this negative connotation, individuals continuously engage in behaviours – be they deliberate and strategic, or ad-hoc and spontaneous – that change their social network and the valuable resource it represents. Entrepreneurs in particular actively shape their professional networks to access key knowledge inputs, capital and other resources.

The literature on clusters, networks, and innovation has come a long way in demonstrating how networks in clusters shape innovative outcomes. It is widely recognized that clusters thrive in generating innovations when cluster members such as entrepreneurs and small businesses have access to valuable social capital in the form of well-developed local and global network resources. Yet research is only starting to unravel the micro-foundations of network advantage for innovation. In particular, there is a lack of understanding of the strategic and intentional behaviours of entrepreneurs in clusters: entrepreneurs in clusters are portrayed as receiving automatic, intangible advantages based on their beneficial physical location and network position, whilst virtually no attention is paid to how these entrepreneurs can best actively shape these advantages and how they can best leverage them to innovate and sustain the survival of their business.

The N4I_CLUSTER research programme aims to investigate the network-innovation relationship from a network *behavioural* perspective. It is based around the idea that the most innovative entrepreneurs may not simply have better local and global networks, they may rather have a superior ability to draw on the right connections at the right time and to make wise and insightful decisions on when to mobilize specific ties from their network to gain access to crucial inputs, resources and support for their ideas. It is not just the structure of the network or the position of entrepreneurs in it that determines information advantage and, in turn, the innovative success of their business. Some clusters may thrive not simply because of the valuable social capital individual entrepreneurs may have access to, rather they may be home to network-savvy entrepreneurs that know how to build valuable social capital and how to leverage it successfully. Heterogeneity in innovative outputs within and between clusters may thus originate in individual (dis)similarities in the entrepreneurs’ behaviour in terms of building and mobilizing their social capital.

The main objective the research programme is to generate insights into how network behaviours of entrepreneurs in geographical clusters enable them to achieve innovative outcomes and consequently help the clusters where they are located to thrive as hubs of innovation. In this approach, the research departs from extant research on networks in economic geography and innovation studies that (a) relates individual ability to benefit from social capital mostly to network structure whilst disregarding individual decisions *when to mobilize* certain connections and (b) portrays network formation as a process guided by environmental and structural constraints whilst disregarding individual *agency* in terms of active network behaviour geared at building and maintaining ties.

The N4I_CLUSTER research programme is built on a large-scale and intensive data collection effort of network structural data, network behavioural data, and innovation achievement data at multiple points in time using a range of novel data collection methods. The PhD student will play a leading role in the collection and analysis of data. Depending on the sub-projects that the student may choose to work on, these may include interviews, multi-wave surveys, online networking monitoring tools, social science experiments and use of data from Twitter. The student is also expected to provide creative ideas and academic input into the research design, the theoretical motivations and arguments, and the write-up in academic papers.