



# Nursing and Health


PhD Researcher Subject Handbook  
*(Last updated November 2021)*

[ulster.ac.uk](https://www.ulster.ac.uk)



# Institute of Nursing and Health Research

## DOCTORAL STUDIES INFORMATION Faculty of Life & Health Sciences

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## W E L C O M E

### ***to Unit 03A- Nursing and Health Research***

***On behalf of the Research Director/Associate Research Director, Research Supervisors, Lecturing Staff, Research Administration Team and Nursing Secretaries, I would like to welcome you to Ulster University. We hope that you will enjoy and develop personally, academically and professionally as you progress in your doctoral studies.***

***Doctor Donna Brown***

***Postgraduate Tutor***

The purpose of this document is to help you to piece together relevant information regarding assessment of progression through doctoral studies.

*NOTE: The information provided here draws upon and supplements that provided in the Doctoral College postgraduate studies PhD researcher handbook*

**<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/doctorscollege/current-phd-researchers/handbooks-and-policies>**

**<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/doctorscollege>**

**Associate Research Director Nursing and Health Research, Faculty of Life and Health Sciences**

Professor Ciara Hughes

**Head of Research Centres**

Professor Marlene Sinclair: Centre for Maternal, Fetal and Infant Research (CMFIR)

Dr Laurence Taggart: Centre for Caring for People with Complex Needs (CPCN)

Dr Brenda O'Neill: Centre for Health and Rehabilitation Technologies (CHaRT)

**Postgraduate Tutor Institute Life and Health Sciences**

Dr Donna Brown

**Associate Postgraduate Tutors and members of the Doctoral Education Research Committee**

**Associate Postgraduate Tutors per Research Centre**

Dr Cathal Breen: Centre for Health and Rehabilitation Technologies (CHaRT)

Dr Patricia Gillen: Centre for Maternal, Fetal and Infant Research (CMFIR)

Dr Toni McAloon: Centre for Caring for People with Complex Needs (CPCN)

Dr Paul Slater: Centres for Caring for People with Complex Needs (CPCN)

**PhD Researcher Representatives per Research Centre**

Rachel Savage/Jonathan Agnew: Centre for Health and Rehabilitation Technologies  
(CHaRT)

Rachel Black: Centre for Maternal, Fetal and Infant Research (CMFIR)

Lorraine McGlinchey: Centre for Caring for people with Complex Needs (CPCN)

**Terms of Reference: Postgraduate Doctoral Education Research Committee, Nursing and Health Research.**

To advise the Nursing and Health Research Leadership committee on:

1. Issues related to the supervision, education and training of PhD researchers in Nursing and Health Research.
2. The quality review of procedures for the admission, supervision, reporting of performance, progress and examination of PhD researchers.
3. The development of support mechanisms for PhD researchers, working alongside the Doctoral College.
4. The recruitment of pre and post doctoral PhD researchers.
5. Issues relating to staff training and development for supervisors and examination of research supervision.
6. Any other matters relating to postgraduate studies and PhD researchers that may arise from time to time.

## Helpful Contacts

### Postgraduate Tutor (PGT)

The postgraduate Tutor oversees and supports the PhD researcher's journey across Nursing and Health Sciences.

### Associate Postgraduate Tutors (APgT)

Associate Postgraduate Tutors (APgT) support PhD researchers through their research activity and should be their first point of contact to join your chosen Research Centre.

**Mr Paul Henry, Academic Excellence Executive Assistant, Belfast campus, Tel: +442890366542**

Authorised expenditure  
Booking progress seminars (initial, confirmation, final)  
Stationery

**Mrs Karen Moran, Academic Excellence Executive Assistant, Belfast campus, Tel: +442890366096 Email: [k.moran@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:k.moran@ulster.ac.uk)**

### Queries in relation to progressed authorised expenditure

Karen Haggan, Payments administrator

*\*Please note that your supervisory team are the first point of contact to discuss and agree any funding or courses that you wish to undertake. A prior approval must be completed BEFORE you attend courses or spend money*

### Allocation of Desk spaces

Dr Donna Brown- nursing across Jordanstown & Belfast campuses  
Dr Donna Brown – nursing on Magee campus, MD building  
Dr Cathal Breen. Mrs Karen Moran – Health Sciences across Jordanstown & Belfast campuses

PhD researchers in Nursing and Health Research are allocated a desk space and drawer for their individual personal use throughout their studies. These spaces should be quiet areas that are conducive to learning and for gaining peer support. As far as possible, data should be stored electronically or locked away if hard copies are essential.

The protection of our research, participants and data is of paramount importance. Therefore, please be advised that there should be **no occasion** where a PhD researcher should permit a non-university member be left alone for a long period of time in a designated PhD researcher space.

In Ulster University we have a number of different types of spaces that can be used to talk to visitors, friends and colleagues. Please use these places and keep the PhD researcher spaces for the purpose for which they are intended.

*Due to COVID-19 the allocation of desk spaces in the university may be delayed.*

## Key Processes for PhD Researchers– what happens and when

These are the key administration and academic processes for MPhil and PhD researchers and when they happen during your period of study. You are asked to note, in particular, the processes that occur on an annual basis - re-enrolment and the completion of annual reports. **Please ensure that you respond to the instructions provided through the PhD manager system. It is *absolutely essential*** that you return your annual report and complete your progress seminars within the specified periods of time. If you do not, your progress will be delayed, suspended or terminated. Applications relating to any change in circumstances (such as change from full-time to part-time, leave of absence, extension etc) must be completed as far in advance of the date of change as possible. A three-month period of time allows time to process information through PhD manager and make any adjustments to finances.

Process	When – full time	When – part time
Re-enrolment*	Late August or Mid-September, annually	Electronically, every summer
Initial assessment	Within three months of first registration	6 months from first registration
Annual report*	As prompted through PhD manager, annually. Usually in March time.	As prompted through PhD manager, annually. Usually in March time
Confirmation/ formal assessment	Between ten and fifteen months of first registration	Between 20 and 25 months of first registration
Final Assessment	Within thirty months of first registration	Within sixty months (PhD) or thirty-six months (MPhil) of first registration
Hand in of Intention to Submit	Three months before proposed submission date	Three months before proposed submission date
Submission of thesis	Within thirty-six months (PhD) or twenty-four months (MPhil) of first registration	Within seventy-two months (PhD) or forty-eight months (MPhil) of first registration

**Please ensure you read emails from the Doctoral College and PhD manager in relation to key administration and academic processes and feel free to discuss changes with your supervisory team or postgraduate tutor.**

## **PROGRESS ASSESSMENTS (POSTGRADUATE SEMINARS)**

In Nursing and Health Research it is usual that progress assessments (postgraduate seminars) are held in an open forum with PhD researchers presenting their research to their peers and an audience of academic staff. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, currently postgraduate seminars (PG seminars) occur virtually. An audience are invited to attend virtually, keeping their camera and microphone off. We plan to hold face-to-face seminars again whenever this is permitted.

### *Guidance for virtual seminars*

The PG seminar retains the same format regardless of whether it is virtual or held on campus. PhD researchers will be given 15 minutes to give their presentation and then there will be 15 minutes for questions.

The PhD researcher, assessors and chair will all be asked to switch on their camera, so that they can be seen on the screen. The supervisors may be invited to join by audio only, if the virtual platform used becomes unstable. During your presentation everyone, except the PhD researcher, will be asked to switch their microphone to mute.

On most virtual platforms there is a little icon on the screen that permits the PhD researcher to share their presentation on screen. To share the presentation PhD researchers will be required to open their powerpoint presentation and have it on their computer work top, prior to their seminar. This will enable them to share it easily. PhD researchers are encouraged to practice their seminar and sharing their screen prior to their seminar.

If you are anxious about virtual platforms and screen sharing, PhD researchers may send a copy of their presentation to the assessors and chairperson prior to their seminar. This will enable us to support you better with technology, if for some reason you cannot manage to share your presentation on the day.

The virtual link will be sent to the appropriate people prior to the seminar.

## **INITIAL ASSESSMENT**

PhD researchers will be notified of their expected seminar date through PhD Manager. The initial seminar is normally undertaken within three months of a full-time PhD researcher's first registration. For part-time PhD researchers this will be carried out within six months. Within Nursing and Health Research, postgraduate seminars are held TEN times throughout the year. The dates will be released to PhD researchers and their supervisory teams by the Postgraduate Tutor. Following discussions within the supervisory team, the PhD researcher is required to book their initial assessment with the Nursing and Health Research Postgraduate Tutor ([d.brown1@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:d.brown1@ulster.ac.uk)) and Paul Henry ([p.henry@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:p.henry@ulster.ac.uk)), administration support. Once the date for the seminar has been booked the PhD researcher will be required to:

1. Liaise with their supervisory team ensuring that their assessors (Doctoral studies panel) are contacted, by their supervisors, and available for the date of the arranged seminar.
2. Complete their report.
3. Upload an electronic version of their final version of their report through Turnitin, on Blackboard Learn.
4. Upload the electronic final version of their report and Turnitin report onto PhD Manager. This will initiate the PhD manager system to enable the PhD researcher to undertake their seminar.
5. Send an electronic copy of the final version of their report and Turnitin report to Paul Henry ([p.henry@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:p.henry@ulster.ac.uk))
6. Complete their seminar.
7. The outcome of the assessment will be communicated to the Doctoral College via PhD Manager.

The assessment process (initial seminar) involves completing the report **two weeks** prior to the assessment date. This is to provide time for supervisors to complete their report and assessor to read the material prior to the initial assessment. You will be advised of the dates that you are required to submit your work via an email from Dr Donna Brown and/or Paul Henry. *Please ensure you read your email carefully.*

The initial assessment in Nursing and Health Research focuses upon:

**A report designed to articulate what PhD researchers are planning to do for their PhD research project. This should take the form of an outline proposal.**

- A maximum of 2,000 words for the report.
- The report should be structured using the headings of an abstract
  - Background literature – a general overview of the relevant literature
  - Clear aims and objectives
  - Justification of the research topic/ Identify the research gap
  - Theoretical framework
  - Brief methodology (study design, participants, etc)
  - Ethical considerations
  - Brief timetable for your PhD study (not included in word count)
  - There should be no appendices beyond references (not included in word count)

\*PhD researchers considering formatting their thesis using the PhD *with* papers option should identify what their publications are likely to be focused around.

**This initial assessment:**

1. Assesses initial thinking and planning underpinning the study.
2. Considers if the appropriate literature is being explored.
3. Identifies key issues to be considered in taking the study forward.
4. Determines that supervision arrangements are satisfactory.
5. Determines that the PhD researchers has the necessary resources to undertake the proposed research.
6. Identifies issues for research ethics and governance and ensuring these processes are initiated at this stage.
7. PhD researchers will receive feedback on their report through PhD Manager and should discuss this with their supervisory team.

**Seminar presentation:** PhD researchers will be required to give a formal presentation for 15 minutes using PowerPoint. You will then engage in discussion with the assessors for approximately 15 minutes. The focus of the discussion is on helping to critique the proposed research plan and offering helpful suggestions to shape the study.

- Seminars take place in an open setting in which the PhD researcher presents their work in front of their assessors, academic supervisors and staff and other PhD researchers. This provides an opportunity for learning for all.
- Doctoral researchers will to be advised by the Chair that they will be stopped if they go over their time.



- PhD researchers are encouraged to do a dry run of their presentations in the seminar room particularly if they want to use alternative ppt formats (e.g. use of presenter view).
- First year PhD researchers are encouraged to network with 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year PhD researchers to advance their knowledge of what is required for seminars.
- *Many of our campus based seminars have invited lunch time speakers who will provide presentations on topic pertinent to Nursing and Health Researchers. All PhD researchers are expected to make every effort to attend the monthly post-graduate seminars as a learning and networking opportunity.*

NOTE 1: For PhD researchers please note the requirements for the establishment of 'a Doctoral Studies Panel' (Appendix 1)

## CONFIRMATION ASSESSMENT

All candidates for the degree of PhD, whether full or part-time will be required to undergo a formal assessment of progress. This procedure is known as the confirmation assessment. This is an important seminar and it is essential that PhD researchers can demonstrate adequate progress.

PhD researchers will be notified of their expected seminar date through PhD Manager. The confirmation assessment is normally undertaken within ten to fifteen months of a full-time PhD researcher's first registration. For part-time PhD researchers this will be carried out between twenty and twenty-five months from registration. Within Nursing and Health Research, postgraduate seminars are held TEN times throughout the year. The dates will be released to PhD researchers and their supervisory teams by the Postgraduate Tutor. Following discussions within the supervisory team, the PhD researcher is required to book their confirmation assessment with the Nursing and Health Research Postgraduate Tutor ([d.brown1@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:d.brown1@ulster.ac.uk)) and Paul Henry ([p.henry@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:p.henry@ulster.ac.uk)), administration support. Once the date for the seminar has been booked the PhD researcher will be required to:

1. Liaise with their supervisory team ensuring that their assessors (Doctoral studies panel) are contacted, by their supervisors, and available for the date of the arranged seminar.
2. Complete their report.
3. Upload an electronic version of their final version of their report through Turnitin, on Blackboard Learn.
4. Upload the electronic final version of their report and Turnitin report onto PhD Manager. This will initiate the PhD manager system to enable the PhD researcher to undertake their seminar.
5. Send an electronic copy of the final version of their report and Turnitin report to Paul Henry ([p.henry@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:p.henry@ulster.ac.uk))
6. Complete their seminar.
7. The outcome of the assessment will be communicated to the Doctoral College via PhD Manager.

The assessment process in Nursing and Health Research (confirmation assessment) involves completing the report **two weeks** prior to the assessment date. This is to provide time for supervisors to complete their report and assessor to read the material prior to the confirmation assessment. You will be advised of the dates that you are required to submit your work via an email from Dr Donna Brown and/or Paul Henry. *Please ensure you read your email carefully.*

The confirmation assessment builds on your initial assessment. Please note PhD researchers may be at different stages depending on their research topic. Your presentation, while based on your report, should be used to add to the material you have in your report. On this occasion PhD researchers must complete:

**A report designed to articulate what progress PhD researchers have made to date and should concentrate on data collection and preliminary analysis (if it is available).**

- A maximum word count of 2,000 words for the report.
- The report should be structured using the headings of an abstract.
  - On this occasion the background should be short & concise and not fully re-visit the literature you presented previously.
  - The research question/Aim should be re-stated.
  - Focus on methodology.
  - Report on progress / data collected to date this includes: has ethics been obtained, has a formal and robust review of the literature been started, has any of the stages/phases of the study commenced and data been collected (this includes systematic review data).

- Report preliminary findings (if available).
- Plan for further data collection with dates.
- Theoretical framework.
- Conclusion to include proposed outline some notion of your contribution to knowledge.
- Publications and dissemination (not included in word count)
- There should be no appendices beyond references (not included in word count)

*\*PhD researchers considering formatting their thesis using the PhD with papers option should identify what publications they have achieved or submitted to date.*

The confirmation assessment in Nursing and Health Research focuses upon:

1. Assessing that the research being undertaken is of doctoral standard, i.e. is being undertaken rigorously and systematically, answering a specific research question that requires systematic inquiry/analysis and is contributing to new knowledge.
2. Assessing the quality of the research work undertaken and ensuring that it is achievable in the timeframe.
3. Determining that supervision arrangements are satisfactory.
4. Determining that the PhD researcher has the necessary knowledge and skills to undertake the proposed research.
5. Determining that the PhD researcher has the necessary resources to undertake the proposed research.
6. Ensuring that research ethics and governance issues are being adhered to.

Please **note 1**: At the end of the seminar the assessors will determine (1) that the PhD researcher's work is of sufficient standard for them to progress with their studies or (2) that major amendments need to be made to the research plan and progression is not advised. If the latter is decided the assessors will advise that the assessment needs to be repeated and/or a revised plan is submitted for review by the lead assessor. The outcome from the seminar will be progressed through PhD Manager.

Candidates for the degree of MPhil will also be required to undergo a formal assessment at this time. Following completion of the Confirmation process the Doctoral College will write to PhD researchers confirming their PhD status or otherwise.

**Note 2**: The annual re-registration process will not normally be permitted until the Doctoral College has received notification from the Faculty of successful completion of all Confirmation formalities.

**Seminar presentation**: PhD researchers will be required to give a formal presentation for 15 minutes using PowerPoint. You will then engage in discussion with the assessors for approximately 15 minutes. The focus of the discussion is on helping to critique the research being undertaken, ensure it is of doctoral standard, ensure that the work is achievable and advise as appropriate. The PhD researcher will also be expected to demonstrate their learning achieved through their Learning Needs Analysis and undertaking Research Skills Training programmes.

- Seminars take place in an open setting in which the PhD researcher presents their work in front of their assessors, academic supervisors and staff and other PhD researchers. This provides an opportunity for learning for all.
- Doctoral researchers will to be advised by the Chair that they will be stopped if they go over their time.
- PhD researchers are encouraged to do a dry run of their presentations in the seminar room particularly if they want to use alternative ppt formats (e.g use of presenter view).
- PhD researchers are encouraged to network with their peers to advance their knowledge of what is required for seminars.
- *Many of our campus based seminars have invited lunch time speakers who will provide presentations on topic pertinent to Nursing and Health Researchers. All PhD researchers are expected to make every effort to attend the monthly post-graduate seminars as a learning and networking opportunity.*

## **FINAL ASSESSMENT**

PhD researchers in the Nursing and Health Research unit of assessment are expected to complete a final assessment. This assessment is normally undertaken within thirty months of a full-time PhD researcher's first registration. For part-time PhD researchers this will be carried out within sixty months from registration. Within Nursing and Health Research postgraduate seminars are held TEN times throughout the year. The dates will be released to PhD researchers and their supervisory teams by the Postgraduate Tutor. Following discussions within the supervisory team, the PhD researcher is required to book their final assessment with the Nursing and Health Research Postgraduate Tutor ([d.brown1@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:d.brown1@ulster.ac.uk)) and Paul Henry ([p.henry@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:p.henry@ulster.ac.uk)), administration support. Once the date for the seminar has been booked the PhD researcher will be required to:

1. Liaise with their supervisory team ensuring that their assessors (Doctoral studies panel) are contacted, by their supervisors, and available for the date of the arranged seminar.
2. Complete their report.
3. Upload an electronic version of their final version of their report through Turnitin, on Blackboard Learn.
4. Send an electronic copy of the final version of their report and Turnitin report to Paul Henry ([p.henry@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:p.henry@ulster.ac.uk)) and Donna Brown ([d.brown1@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:d.brown1@ulster.ac.uk))
5. Complete their seminar.

Please **note**: PhD researchers are required to initiate their seminar through PhD manager. Please contact the Doctoral College if you experience any difficulties.

The assessment process (final assessment) involves completing the report **two weeks** prior to the assessment date. This is to provide time for supervisors to complete their report and assessor to read the material prior to the final assessment. You will be advised of the dates that you are required to submit your work via an email from Dr Donna Brown and/or Paul Henry. *Please ensure you read your email carefully.*

The final assessment in Nursing and Health Research should be decided in line with guidance from your supervisory team. Your presentation, while based on your report, should be used to add to the material you have in your report. On this occasion PhD researchers must complete:

**A report that is focused on the presentation of findings and discussion and submitted as an abstract.**

- A. Maximum word count of 2000 words.
- B. The report should be structured using the headings of an abstract.
  - Background
  - Aim
  - Design
  - Results
  - Contribution to knowledge, Theory and/or Practice
  - Conclusion
  - Implications for practice, theory or policy
  - Publications and dissemination (not included in word count)
  - No appendices beyond references (not included in word count)

\*PhD researchers formatting their thesis using the PhD *with* papers option should identify what publications they have achieved or submitted to date.

The final assessment focuses upon:

1. Assessing that the research undertaken has the potential to make a significant contribution to knowledge.
2. Assessing the quality of the research work undertaken and ensuring that key processes are in place for achieving successful completion/submission of thesis.
3. Determining that supervision arrangements are satisfactory.
4. Ensuring that research ethics and governance issues are being adhered to.
5. Ensuring that a clear plan is in place to ensure successful completion in the given time- frame or discussing options for extension of time.
6. PhD researchers will be notified of the outcome of their assessment through their report which should be discussed with their supervisory team.

**Seminar presentation:** PhD researchers will be required to give a formal presentation for 15 minutes using PowerPoint. You will then engage in discussion with the assessors for approximately 15 minutes. The focus of the discussion is on helping to critique the research undertaken, discuss key issues that could impact on successful/timely completion, discuss the contribution to new knowledge and identify issues to consider in preparation for Viva.

- Doctoral researchers will be advised by the Chair that they will be stopped if they go over their time.
- PhD researchers are encouraged to do a dry run of their presentations in the seminar room particularly if they want to use alternative ppt formats (e.g use of presenter view).
- Seminars take place in an open setting in which the PhD researcher presents their work in front of their assessors, academic supervisors and staff and other PhD researchers. This provides an opportunity for learning for all.

*Many of our campus based seminars have invited lunch time speakers who will provide presentations on topic pertinent to Nursing and Health researchers. All PhD researchers should make every effort to attend the monthly post-graduate seminars as a learning and networking opportunity.*

### **Annual Reports**

The Doctoral College will initiate the online reporting procedure, through PhD Manager, for all PhD researchers in March each year. Both you and your supervisory team will be asked to complete a confidential annual report detailing a summary of your progress to date. *As a PhD researcher you should be aware that the report you submit will **not** be shared with your supervisors.* You are encouraged to be open and considered in your responses as the feedback will help us to make changes if necessary.

Your supervisors will also be asked to provide a recommendation on whether or not you should progress to the next academic year. If reports are not submitted they will be pursued by the Nursing and Health Research Associate Director, Postgraduate Tutor and Doctoral College and progress to the next academic year may be delayed.

The Faculty will receive and consider all reports at the faculty progress board. If the Research Director/Associate Research Director is also a member of your supervisory team, then your report will be considered by the Associate Dean of the Faculty to ensure confidentiality. When the forms have been considered by the faculty progress board and any action identified and carried out, they should be returned to the Doctoral College where they will be held on file, and may be referred to at a future date should issues of academic progress come under discussion.

***Please note the annual re-enrolment process will not normally be permitted until the Doctoral College has received your Annual Report.***

### **PhD Researcher feedback**

A wide range of methods are used to find out from PhD researchers how satisfied you are with the service we are providing, any difficulties you are having and what improvements can be made. Your contribution to this process is invaluable and you are encouraged to contribute whenever you feel able. You may express views informally to your supervisors, Postgraduate Tutor, Research Director, Associate Research Director or to relevant faculty and University committees through PhD Researcher representatives. The Doctoral College also has a Campus forum for PhD researchers on each campus and a PhD researcher Forum; both report to the Doctoral College Board. PhD researchers should also note that they will be given the opportunity to comment on the research degree provision at the University through completion of the **National Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). YOU ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO COMPLETE THE PRES SURVEY AS IT CONTRIBUTES TO FUTURE PHD RESEARCHERS EXPERIENCE AND PERMITS THE UNIVERSITY TO EVALUATE ITS PERFORMANCE.**

### **Students union.**

All PhD researchers enjoy free and automatic membership of the University of Ulster Students' Union. The Union is active in all matters of student welfare and represents students within the University and externally.

Throughout the course of study there may be times when differences occur between yourself and supervisors. There are clear processes to be followed within Nursing and Health Research for dealing with these situations- please see Appendix 2.

## **Ethics procedures**

Obtaining the correct ethics and governance approval is vital for research. Please ensure that you familiarise yourself with the Doctoral College website in relation to ethical approval.

**All researchers will be required to complete their research integrity course prior to their initial assessment.** For those conducting research in clinical practice there is a requirement to also complete the Good Clinical Practice course. Please contact Mr Nick Curry, Head of Research Governance (Email: [n.curry@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:n.curry@ulster.ac.uk)) or Ms Elaine Bell, Research Governance Officer (Email: [e.bell2@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:e.bell2@ulster.ac.uk)) for guidance.

All research in Nursing and Health Research is required to be presented to the filter committee. This committee is chaired by Professor George Kernohan. Chair, Nursing and Health Research, Research Governance Filter Committee, (Email: [wg.kernohan@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:wg.kernohan@ulster.ac.uk)). Please note that you are required to submit the necessary documents for approval using the online link. You may wish to bookmark the link:  
<https://ethics.ulster.ac.uk/portal/ethics/my submissions>.

Please contact Karen Moran (Email: [k.moran@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:k.moran@ulster.ac.uk)) to verify the dates that you are required to meet for your proposal to be considered at the filter committee.



## **Learning Needs**

A key element for researcher development is the clear identification and assessment of your own learning needs.

*“Personal development planning enables individuals to take charge of their own learning. Learning becomes a proactive as well as a reactive process, designed and prioritised to support immediate development needs as well as longer term ambitions”*

In order to further assist PhD researchers, please use the template for assessing your own learning needs available from the Doctoral College web site. This should be shared with your supervisory team to assist with the subsequent identification of your learning needs and personal development plan.

NB: The Doctoral College have undertaken significant work to enhance developments around the researcher development programme. The main enhancements that have resulted from this work include:

1. Development of an implementation model to support The Researcher Development Framework (Vitae 2010)
2. A restructuring of the online, in classroom ‘curriculum’ to align more carefully with the developmental phases associated with a doctoral study
3. A reframing of the curriculum to encourage doctoral candidates to take more responsibility for planning their personal researcher development in collaboration with supervisors.
4. Since 2017, the development of the Doctoral College has seen exciting and significant changes to Doctoral Researchers learning experience. You are encouraged to engage with the activities of the Doctoral College as this will help you build your networks and enhance your learning.

**ULSTER UNIVERSITY**  
**NURSING AND HEALTH RESEARCH**  
**DOCTORAL STUDIES PANEL**

The 'seminar/assessment' programme for PhD researchers (3 seminars over the programme period) is an important part of PhD researcher support, progression and quality assurance mechanisms in the School/University. The Doctoral College have brought in changes to maximise the effectiveness of the seminar/assessment experience, the rigor of the process and improved opportunities for learning and development.

One of the key challenges to the effectiveness of the seminars/assessment is the contribution of the assigned assessors and the quality of the engagement with candidates and the feedback offered. A key feature here is the continuity of feedback between first, second and third seminars. To ensure that, as far as possible, we provide the best support for your studies, nominating a panel of assessors, at the outset of your PhD, has been introduced in the Schools of Nursing and Health Research.

What this means is:

1. When a doctoral candidate commences their studies with us, they, with their supervisors, will agree 2-3 assessors who will make up the panel of assessors for the interim assessments.
2. The assessors are normally:
  - A. 2-3 members of academic staff (from within the School/Nursing and Health Research or another School/Faculty in the University).
  - B. In addition, if the PhD researcher is undertaking clinical/practice based research, then an additional member of the committee will be appointed, i.e. a senior (expert) professional (e.g. expert nurse, policy analyst, strategic stakeholder etc. as relevant to their area of study). The intention being to ensure the clinical/practice relevance of the research and to enhance opportunities for knowledge/technology transfer.
  - C. Assessors remain independent of the supervisory team thus providing unbiased feedback.
3. It will be the role of the Supervisors to invite assessors to be part of the panel for interim assessments.
4. A list of the assessment panel members for each PhD researcher will be maintained by the Postgraduate Tutor.
5. The role of the panel of assessors is to support the work of the PhD researcher by:
  - A. Being familiar with the candidate's work by receiving the candidate's research proposal when it is agreed with the supervisors.
  - B. Acting as assessors at PhD researcher postgraduate seminars.
6. At each seminar/assessment, the assessors will be drawn from the candidates panel of assessors and for clinical/practice-based research an additional 'professional' member of staff (as per 2b above) will also be invited to act as assessor.
7. **Postgraduate Seminar dates are planned and published 12 months in advance. All members of staff and PhD researchers are notified of dates. It is the responsibility of the supervisors and PhD researcher to notify their panel of assessors of the date they plan to undertake their seminar. Panel assessors require at least 3 months notice.**

Please note that occasionally, due to unexpected circumstances, it may be necessary for a different assessor to replace those nominated by your supervisory team. We will do our best to let you know of any changes in advance of your seminar.

## **Appendix 2: Guidelines for PhD Researchers**

The contract between the PhD researcher and the supervisors is a working arrangement. The supervisors have a wealth and breadth of experience in doctoral supervision and in some cases they have the added input from an advisor to the research. The supervisors will endeavor to work with the PhD researcher (in their independent piece of research) to support them to a successful completion. Like all working relationships there may be times when the harmony is strained. In situations where there is some discord, there are a set of procedures that should be followed.

There may be times when the PhD researcher feels they would like to speak with an independent person at some point (for personal or other reasons). The PhD researcher should be aware that the Associate Postgraduate Tutor (APgT) will act to support them through their research activity and should be their first point of contact. If the APgT is also their supervisor, then they should seek advice from the PgT for the Institute.

If the PhD researcher disagrees with a recommendation of their supervisors then they should (in the following order): See flow chart below:

## FLOW CHART

**Step 1.** Attempt to reconcile any differences in opinion as a first measure (involve the advisor if



**Step 2.** Contact the Associate Postgraduate Tutor (APgT) for their centre to discuss how to



(i.e. Dr Donna Brown)



**Step 4.** If the matter cannot be resolved at this point then it will be referred to the Centre lead



*Compiled by  
Dr Donna Brown  
PG Tutor Nursing and Health  
Research U03A, 2021*

## Schedule of Postgraduate Seminars 2022 Institute of Nursing and Health Research

<p><b>Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022</b>  Chair: Dr Patricia Gillen  APGT linked to Centre for Maternal, Fetal and Infant Research</p>
<p><b>Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2022</b>  Chair: Dr Paul Slater  APGT linked to Centre for Caring for People with Complex Needs</p>
<p><b>Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022</b>  Chair: Dr Donna Brown  PGT linked to Centre for Caring for People with Complex Needs</p>
<p><b>Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022</b>  Chair: Dr Paul Slater  APGT linked to Centre for Caring for People with Complex Needs</p>
<p><b>Tuesday, 24<sup>th</sup> May 2022</b>  Chair: Dr Donna Brown  APGT linked to Centre for Caring for People with Complex Needs</p>
<p><b>Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2022</b>  Chair: Dr Toni McAloon  APGT linked to Centre for Caring for People with Complex Needs</p>
<p><b>Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> September 2022</b>  Chair: Dr Patricia Gillen  APGT linked to Centre for Maternal, Fetal and Infant Research</p>
<p><b>Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2022</b>  Chair: Dr Donna Brown  PGT linked to Centre for Caring for People with Complex Needs</p>
<p><b>Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022</b>  Chair: Dr Cathal Breen  APGT linked to Centre for Health and Rehabilitation Technologies</p>
<p><b>Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022</b>  Chair: Dr Cathal Breen  APGT linked to Centre for Health and Rehabilitation Technologies</p>

Please note: The dates for the seminars are confirmed. However, due to the uncertainty of COVID -19 it is not possible to confirm if postgraduate seminars will be completed face to face or virtually. Please choose the date for your seminar and contact Mr Paul Henry (Email: [p.henry@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:p.henry@ulster.ac.uk)) and Dr Donna Brown (Email: [d.brown1@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:d.brown1@ulster.ac.uk)) to advise them of your chosen date. You will be advised, at this time, of the format in which your seminar will be completed.

Please note the information in this handbook was correct at the time it was compiled. It is possible that there will be changes throughout the academic year and these will be communicated to you via email.