PhD Researcher Handbook

School of Sport
2023

CONTENTS

1   Welcome from Postgraduate Tutor

Welcome to the School of Sport, Ulster University!

We are so delighted you have chosen to embark on your PhD journey with us! Whilst we hope this will be an enjoyable and stimulating experience, we also recognise that at times the completion of your thesis can become overwhelming. The aim of this handbook is to act as a point of reference providing you with the necessary information to help guide you through the processes involved in your research training, supervision, monitoring of progress, submission of research thesis and importantly, identifying areas of academic and personal support to ensure you have a positive and nurturing experience whilst at Ulster University.

Ulster University's School of Sport is one of the longest-serving providers of sport education in Great Britain and Ireland. Our mission is 'to lead, inspire and shape the future of sport' and we know that your invaluable contribution in terms of research excellence will advance and reinforce our aspirations.

We hope you find the contents of this handbook helpful, but please do not hesitate to contact me or other staff members if queries arise.

On behalf of both the School and the University, welcome to our research programme; we wish you every success and look forward to being involved in developing your academic qualities to be an excellent Researcher.

Dr Carla McCabe
Postgraduate Tutor

2   Introduction

This handbook has been prepared by the School of Sport to help PhD Researchers and their Supervisors find information regarding administrative procedures and support arrangements. This includes information on where to get help, staff responsibilities, the role of the PhD Researcher and their Supervisory team, services, office arrangements, health & safety, research ethics, local guidance on initial, confirmation and final assessments.

The handbook supplements the information provided by the Doctoral College in relation to policies and procedures. More information provided by the Doctoral College can be found here.

3   School Structure & Staff Responsibilities

The School of Sport is part of the Faculty of Life and Health Sciences. The Faculty consists of seven Schools; School of Biomedical Sciences, School of Geography and Environmental Sciences, School of Health Sciences, School of Nursing, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, School of Psychology, and the School of Sport.

The School of Sport conducts research through the Sport & Exercise Sciences Research Institute (SESRI), which is comprised of two distinct research centres:

- **Centre for Sport & Society**
    - **Disciplines:** Politics, History, Sociology, Management.

- **Centre for Exercise Medicine, Physical Activity & Health**
    - **Disciplines:** Physical Activity for Health & Disease Prevention, Mental Health, Sports Science (Performance), Sports Medicine, Exercise, Metabolism, Nutrition.

Dependent on the PhD Researchers area of enquiry, they will automatically become a member of one of the above research centres (or in some cases both) and a valuable contributor to SESRI. Collectively our research outputs will be submitted to Unit of Assessment 24 (Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism) as part of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2027 submission.

The School has a number of academic and administrative staff on hand to support PhD Researchers. The School management comprises of the Head of School (pending appointment), who oversees the Schools core business, and the Research Director (Prof Gareth Davison), who focuses on all research related activities.

Below is a list of School of Sport staff that you will be liaising with throughout your PhD Journey. Each staff member and their role has been outlined to help identify who is best to contact in each instance.

Research Director:
Prof Gareth Davison

E: gw.davison@ulster.ac.uk
R: BC-04-153
P: 0289536 5212

Responsible for the School of Sport research activities.

- Represents the School of Sport across Faculty & University Committees
- Chair of the SESRI Directorate
- Manages research budget
- Oversees PhD recruitment
- Contributes to local induction & SESRI PhD Researcher Forum
- Considers PhD Researcher progress via annual reports
- Approves PhD Researcher reports within PhD Manager
- First point of contact if a grievance has occurred within the supervisory team, or if the conduct of a PhD Researcher is deemed unsatisfactory
- Responsible for the overall running of the Schools PhD Programme and provides confidential pastoral support for PhD Researchers

Postgraduate Tutor:
Dr Carla McCabe

E: c.mccabe@ulster.ac.uk
R: BC-04-144
P: 0289536 5347

- General PhD enquiries (including processes)
- Monitors PhD Researcher progress & organises Assessment Seminars
- Typically Chairs Assessment Seminars & the SESRI PhD Researcher Forum
- Contact regarding issues relating to physical resources and problems outside of the supervisory team
- Communicates with PhD Researchers across a wide range of academic and pastoral matters
- Represents the School of Sport PhD Researchers at the University Postgraduate Tutor Forum & the SESRI Directorate
- Conducts local PhD induction
- Considers PhD Researcher progress via annual reports with the Research Director
- Tracks all contributors' complete reports via PhD Manager
- Involved in the PhD recruitment process
- Logs PhD Researcher successes & feeds information to the Senior Leadership Team

Administrative Support:
Mrs Julie Haydock

E: je.haydock@ulster.ac.uk
R: BC-04-108
P: 0289536 5234

- Support the Research Director and Postgraduate Tutor
- Diary management of the Research Director
- PhD Researcher administrative support
- Communicates with PhD Researchers when planning Assessment Seminars
- Financial assistance (how to reclaim authorised expenditure, questions in relation to research budget allocation per PhD Researcher etc)
- How to apply for Prior Approval
- PURE support (submitting publication details via PURE)
- Manages ethics applications
- Contact for attending a conference

Technical Services Co-ordinator:
Emma Finlay

E: e.finlay@ulster.ac.uk
R: BC-04-418
P: 0289536 7384

- Booking lab space
- Issues with equipment failure or breakages
- Ordering consumables
- Offers lab assistance
- Health and Safety procedures for lab protocols (risk assessment)
- Problems with computer or other technical equipment provided by the University

Support Assistant:
Mrs Barbara Gregg

E: bm.gregg@ulster.ac.uk
R: BC-04-108
P: 0289536 5224

- Contact regarding stationery supplies, printing and photocopying issues.
- Questions to do with teaching or demonstrator activities (payment, completing paperwork etc)

*All School of Sport contact details can be accessed here.

Launched in 2018, the Doctoral College is responsible for the Management and Development of Postgraduate Research at Ulster University. Key Doctoral College staff are detailed below:

Director of Doctoral College:
Prof Sonja McIlfatrick
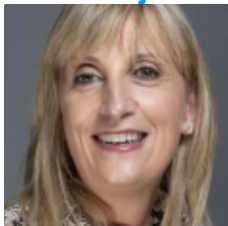
E: sj.mcilfatrick@ulster.ac.uk
R: BD-04-173

Provides strategic leadership for the Doctoral College. Chairs the Doctoral College Board. Policy development for postgraduate research at Ulster.

Head of Doctoral College:
Dr Patrick Dunlop

E: psm.dunlop@ulster.ac.uk
R: BC-04-215

Provides leadership of the Doctoral College (Belfast Campus). Advises on PhD Researcher queries which cannot be resolved at Faculty level. Involved in recruitment, selection, progress monitoring and examination of Researchers.

Doctoral Development Manager:
Lisa Thompson

E: l.thompson@ulster.ac.uk
R: BD-04-005

Contact Lisa with queries in relation to the Researcher Development Programme. Leads the development and delivery of the Researcher Development Programme for PhD Researchers and Supervisors. Leads communications with PhD Researchers.

*All Doctoral College Staff contact details can be accessed here.

4   The Role of the PhD Researcher

We expect that our PhD Researchers should:

1. Accept responsibility for completion of the agreed research project on time

2. Maintain satisfactory progress of the agreed programme of research

3. Take the initiative in raising any problems or difficulties for discussion with the Supervisor(s) and/or Research Director as appropriate

4. Identify personal development and training needs in consultation with Supervisors

5. In collaboration with Supervisor(s), assume responsibility for the direction, timetable and progression of the research project

6. Act in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations in respect of health and safety, ethics etc

7. Ensure that the final thesis is submitted within the designated period, taking due account of advice and recommendations of Supervisor(s)

8. Ensure that any circumstances which might require the mode of study to be altered (e.g. transfer to part-time or writing-up status) or the registration period to be extended, suspended or withdrawn, are brought to the attention of his/her Supervisor(s)

Meetings, written work and records

9. Discuss and agree with the Supervisor(s) a schedule of regular Supervisory meetings

10. In collaboration with Supervisors, set agenda for Supervisory meetings and address the schedule of any agreed actions in a timely fashion after each formal meeting

11. PhD Researchers are encouraged to organise Supervisory meetings and record the agenda, what was discussed and future action points within PhD Manager. All International PhD Researchers **must** record supervisory meeting details via PhD Manager.

12. Submit written work for review and comment by Supervisor(s) at agreed times

13. Maintain clear, accurate, detailed and accessible records of all relevant work

14. Provide adequate explanation of any failure to meet commitments, including attending meetings

15. Prepare periodic progress reports on the research project by due dates as required by University and Faculty procedures and (where appropriate) any relevant external agencies

16. Inform the Supervisor of any communications in relation to the research project, including communications from sponsors, external agencies and other Researchers

Communication of findings

17. Maintain up-to-date records of publication work within the PURE system

18. Ensure that all academic contributions are appropriately acknowledged and recognised, paying particular attention to the issue of co-authorship where appropriate

19. Obtain appropriate consent from Supervisors and any relevant co-authors to publication of findings from work undertaken as part of the thesis

20. Avoid inappropriate publication or duplication of others' work

21. Ensure that intellectual property rights are respected in relation to output from the research programme, both during the period of registration and subsequently

5 The Role of the Supervisor & Supervisory Team

We expect that School of Sport Supervisors should:

1. Assume, in collaboration with the Researcher, responsibility for the satisfactory progress and completion of the agreed research project, making reasonable adjustments where necessary

2. Possess and maintain knowledge of the research area to provide adequate supervision of the research project in its entirety. If this is not the case, we expect that an academic with the required expertise is added to the Supervisory team (this may happen at any stage of PhD process)

3. Possess and continue to develop the appropriate skills to facilitate the production of high-quality research work by the Researcher

4. Develop, in collaboration with the Researcher, an appropriate planning schedule for successive stages of the research project (including writing-up) so that the thesis may be completed and submitted within the appropriate timescale

5. Ensure, where appropriate, that ethical committee and other related approvals have been obtained

6. Assist Researchers in identifying their development and training needs and in selecting appropriate courses and other opportunities for training as part of their personal development

7. Encourage and instil a high standard of research ethics on the part of the Researcher

8. Ensure that the Researcher is made aware of any unsatisfactory progress or standard of work, and arranging any supportive action as necessary

9. Communicate with the Research Director and Postgraduate Tutor in relation to PhD Researcher progress or lack thereof (disruption of progress, leave of absence, extension required etc)

10. Supervisors should seek counsel from the Research Director if problems or difficulties emerge in relation to the PhD Researcher or amongst the Supervisory team

11. If the primary Supervisor is going to be absent or on leave for a period of time, that suitable Supervisory arrangements are made and that these are communicated to both the PhD Researcher and Postgraduate Tutor/Research Director

12. Exercise formal duties in respect of University regulations and guidelines

13. Advise Researcher when the thesis should be considered ready for submission

14. Make arrangements for examination of the thesis

15. Providing guidance, encouragement and counsel regarding the future career plans of the Researcher

Meetings, written work and records

16. Maintain and ensure availability for regular contact with the Researcher, making sufficient time available to fulfil the needs of the individual Researcher

17. Review written work produced by the Researcher and provide appropriate and constructive feedback in a timely fashion and within two weeks of submission

18. Maintain and ensure that Researcher maintains clear, accurate, detailed and accessible records of work undertaken

19. Maintain and ensure that the Researcher maintains a record of supervisory meetings and agreed actions (recommend use PhD Manager to log meeting details)

20. Retain a copy of all written feedback provided to the Researcher

Communication of findings

21. Encourage Researcher to avail of opportunities to present research work at appropriate seminars, festivals and conferences (both intra- and extra-mural)

22. Assume an active role in introducing the Researcher to other workers in the field, and in encouraging attendance and membership of appropriate academic bodies and societies

23. Ensure that any formal requirements on the part of external bodies or agencies in relation to the submission of reports, observation of confidentiality, training etc are met

24. Ensure that appropriate agreement has been obtained with all parties, including external sponsors and potential co-authors, in relation to the communication of research outputs

25. Ensure that the Researcher is aware of all issues regarding intellectual property rights and intellectual contribution relating to the research project

26. Encourage appropriate and early dissemination of research findings

27. Obtain the agreement of the Researcher for any publication of work contained in the thesis, and quoting the Researcher as a co-author

The role of a recognised Supervisor will include:

28. Contributing to the guidance and monitoring of the Researcher in collaboration with the University supervisor who will be a member of staff of the University

29. Ensuring that the Researcher is made aware of the rules and regulations governing the collaborating organisation's premises and working practices including health and safety and confidentiality

6 Working Environment

6.1 PhD Office Working Arrangements

PhD Researcher's are provided with ample spaces to study and supplied with access to a lockable cabinet on campus. These spaces are shared, therefore it is your responsibility to keep these spaces clean and tidy.

To minimise noise disruptions, social activities or meetings should not take place in PhD working spaces. It is recommended that such activities take place at the Doc (locations detailed below).

Belfast	Room BC-06-225
Coleraine	Room E008
Magee	Room MC026

PhD Researchers are also reminded that staff offices are located nearby and therefore would request that noise levels are kept to a minimum.

In the event of a sub-standard office space, contact the Postgraduate Tutor or Research Director.

6.2 Photocopying and Printing

The Information Services Department (ISD) provide information and support on printing and photocopying services on each campus. PhD Researchers have access to multi-function devices (MFD) that will allow you to print, copy and scan documents. The system is accessed using your PhD Researcher ID card (or you can logon manually if you have forgotten your card) and the device will retrieve your prints and automatically input your email address for the scanning service.

The service also offers a secure cashless payment system that is linked to your ID card (manual logon) that will allow you to add funds from credit/debit cards to your UniFlow account. These can then be used to pay for printing, copying and scanning at any MFD. Mobile printing is also operational. You can send work from any device that can access your University email account, allowing you to attach a file to an email from a mobile phone, laptop, tablet or your home computer.

The ISD Service Desk provides support via telephone and email. In addition to core working hours, extended support is available from 5pm to 9am Weekdays, 24-hour Weekends, Bank Holidays and all year round. Telephone: 028 9036 6777 or ext: 66777, email: servicedesk@ulster.ac.uk

In some cases, funds from your research training grant (if funds are available) can be used for printing. Please consult your Supervisor for further information about this if needed.

6.3 Lunch Facilities

Eating in the office space is not encouraged. There are kitchenettes for all staff and PhD Researchers located throughout the campus. These include a sink, washing-up materials, hot water, and a fridge. There are also dining facilities available at the Doc and various eateries across campuses.

6.4 Attendance and Absences

It is expected that you attend University daily, except by mutual agreement of your Supervisor(s) or Research Director. Typically, PhD Researchers work 35-40 hours per week between the hours of 9.00am - 5.00pm. Holidays must be approved by your Supervisor and must not exceed a total of eight weeks including public holidays (40 days) per year.

If you need to take some leave, you should inform your Supervisor. If the leave is for more than two weeks, you must notify your Supervisors, who will then notify the Doctoral College in writing of the dates of absence, accompanied by a medical

certificate. You should notify your Supervisors at the first available opportunity of prolonged absence due to sickness.

If you require a prolonged period of leave (exceeding 28 days) then you may need to consider taking a Leave of Absence. Funded PhD Researchers should be aware that they may normally be allowed a Leave of Absence for a maximum of one year. It is important to note that your maintenance grant will be suspended during a Leave of Absence. You are not permitted to take up paid employment during a Leave of Absence. Please read the terms and conditions of your funding if applicable. If you decide to request a Leave of Absence, please submit your request on PhD Manager once you have spoken with your Supervisor.

If you need any further information or advice regarding attendance and absence regulations, please contact your Supervisor or Postgraduate Tutor.

6.5 Health & Safety

Laboratory and Office Safety

It is everyone's duty to ensure a safe working environment. Your first point of contact if you have a health and safety query should be your Supervisor. The Schools Health & Safety Co-Ordinator is Mr Maurice Field (BC-04-150, 0289536 5981, m.field@ulster.ac.uk).

Lab risk assessments are carried out and updated annually by Emma Finlay. We would encourage all PhD Researchers using the lab to undergo defibrillator training and other useful health and safety courses.

First Aid/ Defibrillator is available from Jordanstown Security- 22222 (DDI: 02870 123456). In event of an emergency requiring Police, Fire or Ambulance, dial (9)999 directly then contact security immediately on extension 22222 (DDI: 02870 123456).

Often PhD Researchers work late and/or at weekends across the various campuses. To ensure your safety, it is recommended that all Researchers download the smartphone app called 'SafeZone' which enables users to call for help and assistance right when and where they need it. It is free and takes up minimal storage space. It can be downloaded from the following: www.safezoneapp.com. Finally, if working late you should make security aware and let them know when you leave.

Fire Safety

If you discover a fire, activate the alarm immediately using the nearest break glass point.

On hearing the fire alarm:
- You must leave the building using the nearest available route by following the emergency exit signs
- You must go directly to the assembly point
- You must not re-enter the building until told it is safe

Fire marshals sweep each floor in the event of an evacuation. The alarm is **tested** in every Wednesday.

7   The PhD Journey Key Milestones

Process	When (full time)	When (part time)
Re-enrolment	Mid-September, annually	Electronically, every summer
Initial Assessment	Within four months of first registration	Within 10 months of first registration
Annual report	First week in May, annually	First week in May, annually
Confirmation Assessment	Between eight and twelve months of first registration	Between twelve and twenty-four months of first registration
Final Assessment	Within thirty months of first registration	Within sixty months (PhD) or thirty-six months (MPhil) of first registration
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

8 Assessment Information

PhD Researchers will be assessed on three occasions (Figure 1), in addition to Annual Reports. These assessments are scheduled at the beginning of each academic year to ensure diary availability and communicated via Mrs Julie Haydock. Guidelines for each assessment are detailed below.
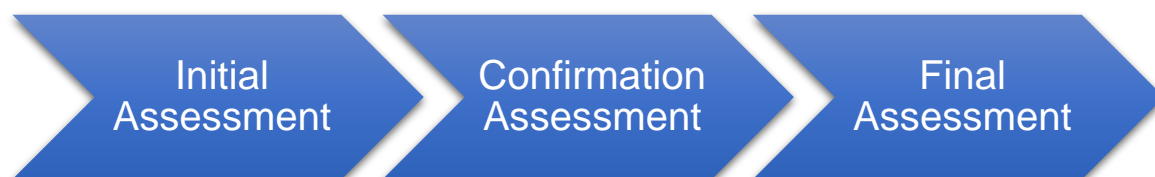

Figure 1: The three assessment points as part of the PhD process.

Each assessment will normally be presented to an audience including (but not always): the Assessor, Research Director, Postgraduate Tutor, PhD Researchers and School of Sport academic staff. All full-time PhD Researchers are required to attend seminars. Typically, the Postgraduate Tutor will Chair each assessment and manage timekeeping. The duration of each assessment is detailed below, however the School of Sport operates *a degree of flexibility within the discussion element to allow thorough exploration of the Researcher's project in detail.*

8.1 Role of The Assessor

Each Supervisory team will appoint an Assessor from within the same discipline or cognate area. The role of the Assessor is to read all written paperwork *before* attending the presentation where they will lead the discussion period with an inquisitive approach, provide a constructive critique of the material presented and question the PhD Researcher in a professional manner.

It is advisable, but not mandatory, that the Assessor will contribute to *each* of the assessments throughout the PhD Researcher's journey. On completion of each assessment, the Assessor will complete a report via PhD Manager, which will automatically be communicated to the PhD Researcher and Supervisory team. The Assessor may make a recommendation concerning the direction of work and they are empowered to recommend re-assessment after an agreed period if progress is deemed unsatisfactory.

Within the School of Sport, we recommend that the Assessor will <u>not</u> act as the internal examiner during the PhD Researcher's viva examination.

8.2 Initial Assessment
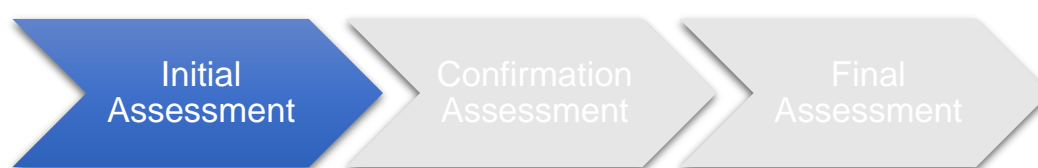
> **The purpose of this assessment is to provide an up-to-date overview of the progress made in terms of mapping the PhD project, including the rationale for research questions and the proposed methodology.**

This is held 3 months post-registration for full-time researchers (normally in January) and approx. 8 months post-registration for part-time researchers. This assessment takes the form of an oral presentation (with slides) and a written report submitted through PhD Manager. The report will be subject to Turnitin review. The written report must be uploaded **two weeks** prior to the assessment date to ensure circulation to academic assessors. As a guide, approx. four pages would normally be appropriate for the written report (excluding references).

The purpose of the written report is to fully brief/inform the Assessor and help prepare questions in advance of the presentation. The Assessor will not provide any written feedback on the report.

The presentation should be no more than *15mins in duration*, followed by a *10-minute discussion period*.

Content typically included within the presentation and written report would be:
(1)   the project background
(2)   the overall aim of the investigation
(3)   the methods to be employed
(4)   the objectives to be achieved within the first year of registration
(5)   is ethical approval required and if so, what arrangements are being made to apply for this?
(6)   areas of development identified through a Training Needs assessment completed by the supervisor
(7)   evidence of completion the online Research Integrity course
(8)   inclusion of attended training courses
(9)   proposed timeframe (Gantt chart)

As part of the Initial Assessment, Assessors are encouraged to focus on the following considerations:
(1)   Is the project clearly defined?
(2)   Are the objectives to be achieved within the first 12-month period realistic and achievable with the available resources?
(3)   Will the project provide adequate research training for the Researcher?
(4)   Is the programme of work likely to provide a sufficient foundation for (potential) PhD study?

(5) Does the Researcher show evidence of an understanding of the problem, the limitations of the techniques to be employed and the significance of the work within the broader context?

(6) Are the proposed Supervisory arrangements satisfactory?

Once the PhD Researcher has submitted the written report, they can track their progress throughout the Initial Assessment via PhD Manager (dashboard). The Assessor's report will outline the outcome of the Initial Assessment (see below) which will be communicated to the PhD Researcher via PhD Manager.

Outcome of the Initial Assessment

1. Initial Assessment is deemed satisfactory and the Researcher progresses

2. The project details are not clear and quality of the proposed work is poor/limited. Further work is required which will be completed within a specified timeframe (as agreed with Researcher and Supervisor) and present again.

8.2.1 Summary of the Initial Assessment Process

PhD Researcher submits written report via PhD Manager →

Supervisor completes progression report via PhD Manager ↓

Assessor completes their report through PhD Manager outlining outcome of Initial Assessment ←

PhD Researcher presents Initial Assessment

Assessor completes their report through PhD Manager outlining outcome of Initial Assessment ↓

PhD Researcher recieves outcome of Assessment via PhD Manager

8.3   Confirmation Assessment
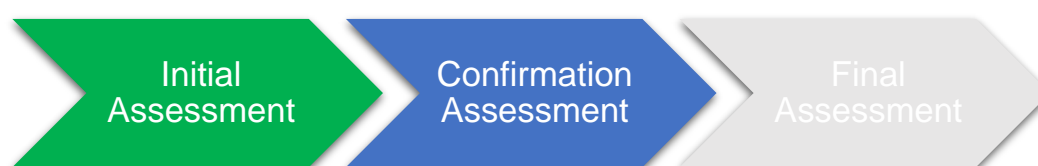
The purpose of this assessment is to confirm registration status as a PhD Researcher. Researchers will not be permitted to re-enrol into second year until the Doctoral College has received notification of successfully completing the Confirmation Assessment.

This is held approx. 9 months post-registration for full-time Researchers and 21 months post-registration for part-time Researchers. This assessment takes the form of an oral presentation (with slides) and a written report submitted through PhD Manager. The written report must be uploaded **two weeks** prior to the assessment date to ensure circulation to academic assessors. The report will be subject to Turnitin review. As a guide, up to six pages would normally be appropriate for the written report (excluding references).

The purpose of the written report is to provide the Assessor with a detailed account of the progress made, map of planned studies with accompanying rationale and research design. This report will also help the Assessor in compiling constructive questions in advance of the presentation. The Assessor will not provide any written feedback on the report.

The presentation should be no more than *20mins in duration*, followed by a *15-minute discussion period.*

Content typically included within the presentation and written report would be:
     (1)   the project background
     (2)   the overall aim of the investigation
     (3)   the methods employed
     (4)   data obtained to date
     (5)   proposed programme for future PhD work (including detailed timeline)
     (6)   evidence of training courses/workshops
     (7)   Updated Gantt chart

As part of the Confirmation Assessment, Assessors are encouraged to focus on the following considerations:
(1)   Have the objectives of the first 9-month period of work been achieved?
(2)   Is the proposed programme of work a logical extension of the completed studies?
(3)   Are the defined objectives likely to be achieved with the available resources?
(4)   Is the work likely to provide adequate research training to doctorate level for the Researcher?

(5)   Is the work sufficiently well-defined to (potentially) provide publishable data within a 18-21 month period (full-time Researchers) or 27-33 months (part-time Researchers)?

(6)   Can the practical studies be completed within a 21-month (full-time) / 27-month (part-time) period?

(7)   Does the Researcher show evidence of ability to critically evaluate the work and place it within the context of related studies?

(8)   Is (are) the Supervisor(s) satisfied with the Researcher's progress to date?

(9)   Is the Researcher satisfied with the current Supervisory arrangements?

Once the PhD Researcher has submitted the written report, they can track their progress throughout the Confirmation Assessment via PhD Manager (dashboard). The Assessor's report will outline the outcome of the Confirmation Assessment (see below) which will be communicated to the PhD Researcher via PhD Manager.

Outcome of Confirmation Assessment

1. Confirm PhD Registration and the Researcher progresses

2. More work is required to be completed within a specified timeframe and present again.

3. Standard of work is at MPhil level and advised to pursue as an MPhil candidate.

4. Withdrawal from the programme is recommended.

8.3.1 Summary of the Confirmation Assessment Process

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┌─────────────────────────┐          ┌─────────────────────────┐
│   PhD Researcher         │   ──▶    │  Supervisor completes   │
│   submits written report │          │  progression report via │
│   via PhD Manager        │          │  PhD Manager            │
└─────────────────────────┘          └─────────────────────────┘
                                                   │
                                                   ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐          ┌─────────────────────────┐
│  Assessor completes      │   ◀──    │  PhD Researcher         │
│  their report through    │          │  presents Confimration  │
│  PhD Manager             │          │  Assessment             │
│  outlining outcome of    │          │                         │
│  Confirmation            │          │                         │
│  Assessment              │          │                         │
└─────────────────────────┘          └─────────────────────────┘
        │
        ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│  PhD Researcher          │
│  recieves outcome of     │
│  Assessment via PhD      │
│  Manager                 │
└─────────────────────────┘
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8.4   Final Assessment

Initial Assessment → Confirmation Assessment → Final Assessment
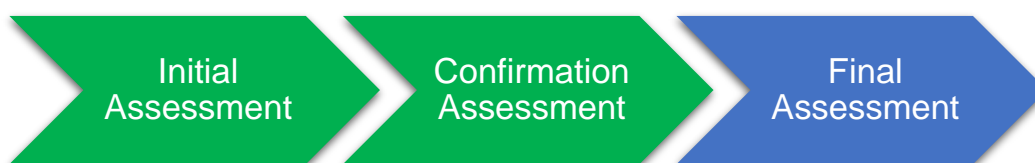
The purpose of this assessment is to provide an overview of the full project, to determine the quality of the project in terms of originality, robustness, significance, rigour and prepare the Researcher for their Viva.

This is given approximately 28-30 months post-registration for full-time PhD Researchers and 60 months post-registration for part-time PhD Researchers. This assessment takes the form of an oral presentation (with slides) and a written abstract providing a synopsis of the project through PhD Manager. The abstract should be uploaded **two weeks** prior to the assessment date to ensure circulation to assessors.

The presentation should be no more than *30mins in duration*, followed by a *15-minute discussion period.*

The Assessor, academic staff and PhD Researchers are encouraged to review the Researcher's progress, offer advice and highlight any problems which may hinder completion.

As part of the Final Assessment, Assessors are encouraged to focus on the following considerations:
(1)   Has the work made, or is it likely in the very near future to make, a measurable and worthwhile contribution to the field of study?
(2)   Is the practical component of the work completed, or almost completed?
(3)   Has an outline of the thesis been decided upon?
(4)   Has the work been, or will be in the near future, subject to external review through conference presentation or full papers?
(5)   Are the Researcher, Supervisor(s) satisfied that the written thesis will be submitted on time? If not, are the assessors convinced that the thesis will be submitted within 3 years (full-time) / 6 years (part-time) of enrolment and would they support an extension on this basis?

Following the Final Assessment presentation, the Assessor will provide verbal feedback in relation to the Researcher's progress, including advice that may be beneficial ahead of submitting their final thesis and viva examination. The Assessor, in consultation with the Research Director and Postgraduate Tutor, will outline the outcome of the Final Assessment (see below) which will be communicated to the PhD Researcher via direct email.
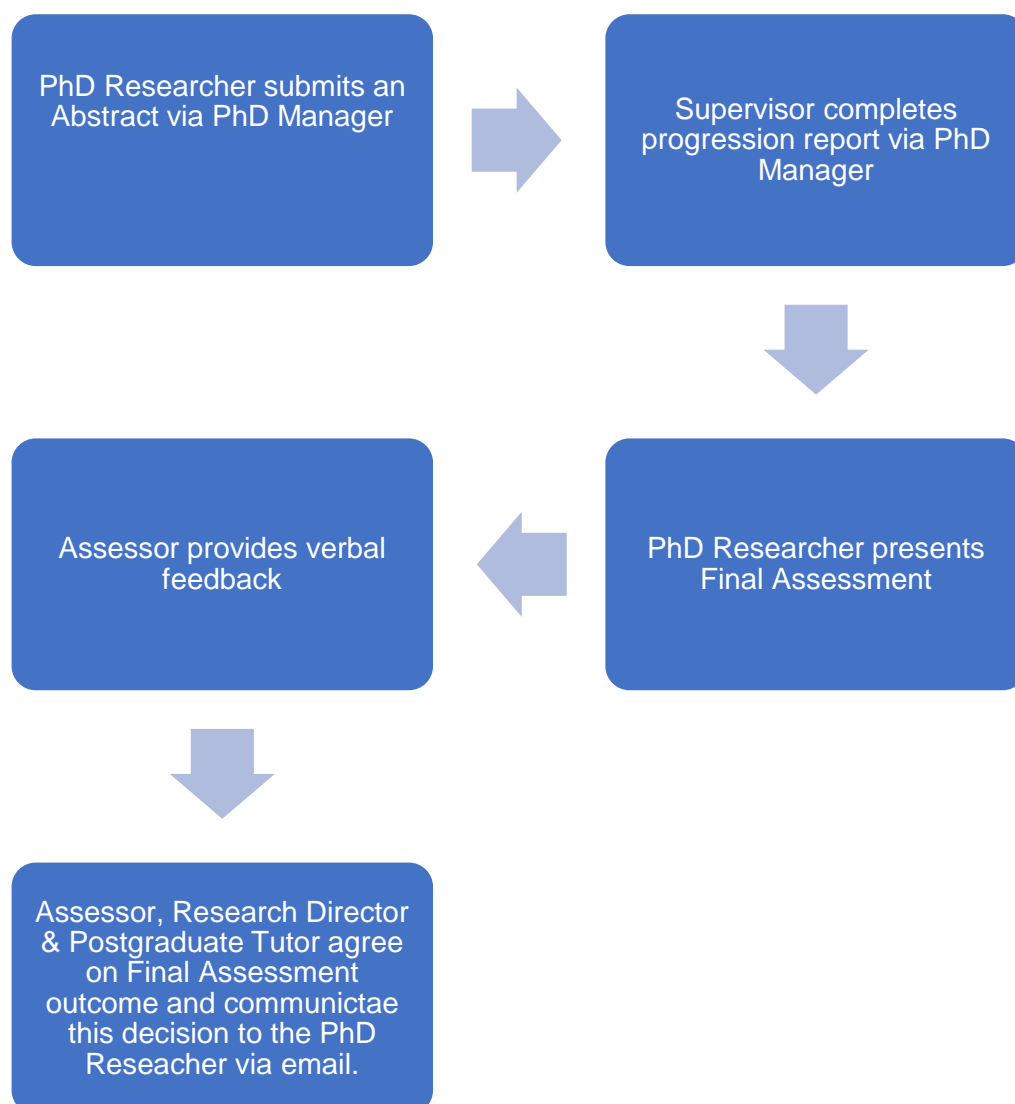
Outcome of the Final Assessment

1. Body of work is considered high quality in terms of research excellence and meets the standard required for a PhD. The Researcher continues to work towards submitting their thesis.

2. Clear deficiencies and limitations in the body of work are identified; a salvage plan is agreed between the PhD Researcher and Supervisors – for a PhD.

3. Clear deficiencies and limitations in the body of work are identified and it is recommended that the thesis is submitted for an MPhil award.

8.4.1 Summary of the Final Assessment Process

```
┌─────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ PhD Researcher submits  │   ──►  │  Supervisor completes   │
│ an Abstract via PhD     │        │  progression report via │
│ Manager                 │        │  PhD Manager            │
└─────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────┘
                                                │
                                                ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Assessor provides       │   ◄──  │ PhD Researcher presents │
│ verbal feedback         │        │ Final Assessment        │
└─────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────┘
        │
        ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Assessor, Research      │
│ Director & Postgraduate │
│ Tutor agree on Final    │
│ Assessment outcome and  │
│ communictae this        │
│ decision to the PhD     │
│ Reseacher via email.    │
└─────────────────────────┘
```

9   Submitting Your Thesis

As the PhD Researcher approaches completion, they should submit their **'Intention to Submit'** form via PhD Manager **three months** before the proposed submission date.

PhD Researchers should submit two soft bound copies of the thesis for examination to the Doctoral College office. PhD Researchers are also requested to submit their thesis through Turnitin and email the output report from Turnitin along with an e-copy of the thesis, in PDF format, to the Doctoral College.

As part of this process, the Supervisory team will be notified via PhD Manager to appoint an internal and external examiner (that meet the Doctoral College examiner criteria). The two soft bound copies will then be distributed to the examiners.

For further details in relation to submitting your thesis, click here.

10   Research Integrity and Ethics

Ulster University requires the highest standards of professionalism in research conducted by all staff and PhD Researchers in all disciplines.

10.1 Research Integrity

The University encourages and supports research integrity through a framework of policies, procedures and guidance, summarised and illustrated in the Code of Practice for Professional Integrity in the Conduct of Research which is updated regularly at Ulster to reflect changing sector-wide requirements.

All researchers are required to successfully pass the University's Research Integrity Course which is available through Blackboard. The course takes approximately one hour to complete and provides grounding in the essentials of good research conduct, and guidance on how to avoid bad practice. **All PhD Researchers must have successfully completed the Research Integrity Course prior to their Initial Assessment.**

10.2 Research Ethics Process

What is it?
Research ethics is about ensuring that your research is carried out appropriately. It is also about identifying and managing risks to participants, to the research team and to the University. The following section should help you understand the context and processes of Research Ethics and Governance within SESRI and Ulster University.

What you need to know?
If you want to conduct a research project involving humans (for example, fellow PhD Researchers, staff, family or the wider community) you will need ethical approval in advance from the Filter Committee [Category A research only] and the University's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) (Categories B-D). Categories of research are detailed below in Section 10.3.

Research which requires ethical approval must not commence until this approval has been obtained, nor deviate from the approved protocol without new ethical approval; i.e. ethical approval must be sought and obtained prior to implementing any amendment to or deviation from the protocol originally approved.

The policies and procedures apply to *all* research involving human beings as participants and to all research that seeks to use human tissue (such as blood and muscle samples).

The policies *require* that all research on human volunteers has been reviewed to ensure that it is necessary or worthwhile, viable, properly designed and ethically sound.

10.3 The University's Research Categories

Please refer to the web pages for a full definition in each case.

Category A: No NHS/HSC involvement. Conducted by staff or PhD Researchers. No new methodologies; no vulnerable populations; no therapeutic interventions; no evident risk to participants/researchers.

Category B: No NHS/HSC involvement. Conducted by staff or PhD Researchers. New methodologies; includes vulnerable populations; therapeutic interventions; possible risk to participants/researchers.

Category C: NHS/HSC involvement. Conducted by staff or PhD Researchers.

*Category D: All research regulated by the Human Tissue Act 2004. Conducted by staff or PhD Researchers.

*These studies require researchers to complete the Human Tissue Act (HTA) training course; discuss with your supervisor for information re this training.

10.4 Research Ethics Process

Further information in relation to Research Ethics and Governance, as well as accessing and downloading the **required forms**, click here.

Peer Review - Every research study involving human participants must be subjected to peer review by a minimum of one member of staff of the University (or person of equivalent standing) who has the knowledge and experience to comment on the design and viability of the study, including the statistical models to be used. Applications are submitted to the School or Local Research Filter Committee (via Mrs Julie Haydock) where suitable peer reviewers will be identified to review each application – this process must happen **two weeks** in advance of School Filter Committee Meetings. Peer reviewers can make a number of recommendations on the application including suggestions for revisions or that the study proceed to the Filter Committee **N.B. A favourable outcome from peer review cannot be used as a substitute for an ethical opinion received from a research governance filter committee or the University REC.**

Filter Committee – applications will then be reviewed by the Filter Committee and if a favourable* outcome is received; the study can proceed (Category A or D [non-storage]) or progress to UREC (Category B or D).

Approved Category C studies involving the Hospital Trusts/NHS must then proceed to further ethical review from ORECNI – such studies should be discussed with Supervisors.

More information can be found [here](#).

*Where changes or clarification are required, the researchers should include a point-by-point rebuttal document with a clearly revised and updated application, highlighting the relevant amendments.

University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) - UREC will, in general, consider applications, on merit and as presented, for Category B and D research on healthy human participants following the peer and research governance filter committee review. However, the committee will not conduct a further scientific review. The ultimate responsibility for the design and presentation of any study lies with the Chief Investigator. Researchers are expected to provide full, accurate, truthful and well-researched information to the committee.

You cannot submit your application until the Filter Committee advises you to proceed to UREC. Application deadlines for UREC are usually two weeks before scheduled UREC meetings and late submissions are not accepted. Researchers are ordinarily invited to UREC meetings to defend any queries relating to submitted applications. Although attendance is not compulsory, it is encouraged where possible, but researchers should discuss this with their Supervisory team in advance of UREC meetings. The School of Sport recommends that PhD Researcher should attend the UREC meeting with a member of their Supervisory team where possible.

Indicative ethical issues to consider:
- Informed Consent
- <u>Additional</u> Parental/Guardian Consent for minors or for vulnerable adults
- Assent is obtained where appropriate
- No deception
- Right to withdraw
- Confidentiality – consistent with the GDPR
- Safety and risk
- Experimental aim is justified and research design been quality controlled

Key Considerations: Ensuring the Health, Safety and Well-being of participants and researchers
1. The potential benefits of the study outweigh any potential risks and every effort has been made by the research team to reduce risk.
2. There are procedures in place for participants to contact the researcher at all times.

3. Have underlying medical conditions been considered and screened and will they create excess risks?
4. What are the procedures if any physical, emotional or psychological problems are detected?
5. Has due diligence been exercised when developing questions and interview scheduled concerning sensitive themes or issues (especially for qualitative research)?
6. Have appropriate measures been taken to ensure the study is conducted in line with GDPR (2018) and the University's Code of Practice for Professional Integrity in the Conduct of Research?
7. Has the study been properly risk assessed and does the submission include all relevant Risk Assessment documents and Standard Operating Procedures, where applicable?

10.5 Applying for Ethical Approval - A Summary of the Main Steps:

- Identify your project; draft an outline or description;
- Confirm the identity of the Chief Investigator – most likely your primary Supervisor;
- Complete the University ethics application forms – _RG1a_ and supporting documents;
- Add the detailed experimental protocol, PIS, Informed consent and any instruments to be used;
- Submit copy for peer review;
- If required, make the changes required by the reviewers and resubmit to the School or Local Research Ethics Filter Committee;
- If the study is Category A, you can proceed following notification by the Filter Committee – not before;
- If it is a Category D (including those designated _non-storage_), you will need to undertake Human Tissue Act (HTA) training;
- If the study is falls into Category B or D then it must be reviewed at the UREC once it has been approved at the Filter Committee level;
- Studies will only be approved if all Ulster University Researchers have completed the online _Research Integrity Training Course_ on Blackboard Learn;
- Remember that you cannot make changes without permission and that annual and final reports will be required

For any further information concerning ethics, contact Dr Conor McClean (15C01a, 02890 368435, cm.mcclean@ulster.ac.uk).

10.6 Storing PhD Material

Research Governance advise that:

Electronic data should be stored on a University server or, at the very least, on a University supported PC and then uploaded to a server (not on laptops, portable drives, except temporarily when off-site or when working at home etc). Original, irreplaceable data should not be taken off-site, but should be copied onto another device. Data which includes personal, identifying information for participants should

not be taken off-site unless for a specific purpose. This material should be copied onto an encrypted device before being taken off University premises. All researchers should be able to obtain, access to server space. Your technician or ISD will be able to advise. Hard copy information should be stored securely and on University premises unless there are specific reasons to do otherwise".

Based on the above recommendations, PhD Researchers are requested to store all material relating to their PhD on the SESRI server. It is advised that each PhD Researcher create one folder (best to use your own name). **However,** before Researchers can access this server, they will need to obtain a 'P-Code' which can be issued by ISD. If the PhD Researcher has sensitive or confidential material, it is advised to encrypt their folder. For further assistance setting-up your personalised folder on the server, contact your Supervisor or Postgraduate Tutor.

11 PhD Manager

PhD Manager is an online, web-based system that manages the administration of the PhD Researcher journey from registration through to graduation. It is a bespoke system that has been designed to enable efficient and paperless processes for the PhD programme at Ulster.
For more information in relation to PhD Manager click here.

Below are links to important features that describe the various stages and processes within PhD Manager:

General Information
1. Introduction to PhD Manager dashboard
2. Overview project history
3. Project dates
4. Setting up a supervisor meeting

Assessments
5. Initial Assessment process
6. Confirmation Assessment process
7. Final Assessment process

Training
8. Introduction to Training Functions
9. Booking training courses
10. Unbooking from training courses

Making Changes
11. Overview of requesting changes
12. Extension of time
13. Transfer from PhD to MPhil
14. Study away
15. Leave of absence
16. Thesis title/modification of programme of work
17. Request withdrawal
18. Annual report
19. Absence request

Submitting Your Thesis
20. Intention to submit
21. Submission of thesis

12 Travel and Procurement Procedures

As a Researcher you may get the opportunity to attend and present your work at academic conferences. Funded PhD Researchers have research training grants that can be used to support relevant travel. Agreement for travel and accommodation must be sought from your Supervisor and Research Director prior to proceeding with any booking. Once confirmed, the school office can provide you with a prior approval and expense form (Mrs Julie Haydock).

Travel Procedures
Prior to Travel
- Check with your Supervisors
- Complete a Prior Approval (PA) Form, available from the School Office.
- Have this form signed by your Supervisor.
- Take the signed form to the School Office for Approval from the Research Director or Head of School.
- Once approved, a Prior Approval number will be returned by Finance. This can be used to book travel through Key Travel following the University's travel policy.

After Travel
- Receipts for expenses incurred whilst travelling can be claimed back (includes: food and transport - no alcohol).
- Complete a Travel Subsistence claim form.
- Attach original receipts.
- Have this signed by Supervisor.
- Take the completed form, along with receipts to the school office for approval by Research Director or Head of School.

13 Demonstration and Teaching Opportunities

Many PhD Researchers provide support to teaching and assist with laboratory practical's within the School. PhD Researchers can provide **up to 6 hours per week** in demonstration.

Demonstration and tutorial duties may include:
- Demonstration and assistance with practical classes
- Delivery and co-ordination of small group activities, e.g. tutorials
- Participation in student-led activities
- Participation in student-led seminars

These opportunities are useful for your CV. If you are interested, please discuss with your Supervisor or Head of School.

PhD Researchers wishing to gain experience in demonstration and teaching opportunities must complete training offered by the Researcher Development Program (see Section 14). The two training courses are:

1. **Introduction to Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (Postgraduate Teaching Assistant).**
This course is compulsory for all PhD Researchers who wish to teach; which aims to:
   a. Provide key information regarding the role of the Postgraduate Teaching Assistant (PGTA) and the Code of Practice for PGTAs
   b. Provide introductory guidance on delivering effective sessions

2. **First Steps to Teaching and Learning in Higher Education – 2 Day Course**
This is a Higher Education Academy (HEA) accredited award, which aims to:
   a. Support the University's Code of Practice for postgraduate tutors and demonstrators
   b. Support the development needs of part-time tutors
   c. Satisfy the requirements of the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education
   d. Take account of Ulster priorities in learning and teaching

Similar to all Researcher Development Program courses, these can be booked online via PhD Manager.

14 Researcher Development Program

The Researcher Development Programme (RDP) is an essential aspect of the PhD experience at Ulster. It is a suite of workshops, specialist training skills sessions, online courses and personal development planning activities which provide the PhD Researcher with opportunities to gain the experience and skills required to be a competent and professional Researcher. PhD Researchers are advised to keep updated with upcoming activities by frequently referring to the RDP website. The Doctoral College also sends email alerts in relation to upcoming workshops.

All PhD Researchers are expected to undertake a Training Needs Analysis at the beginning of their studies and to review this on an annual basis, in consultation with their Supervisor(s). This will be used to develop your own Personal Development Plan which will map onto the offerings within the RDP Programme.

All courses may be booked online via PhD Manager. If one can no longer attend a booked course due to unforeseen circumstances, it is advised that the PhD Researcher unregister online as soon as possible so that their place may be offered to the next person on the waiting list.

15 PhD By Published Work

If you are a member of staff or an individual a close link to the University, with a body of research already published, you may be eligible to apply for the PhD by Published Work, which is a one-year programme pulling together themes from your existing publications.

Find out more about this route by viewing the regulations, which explain the entry criteria and the requirements of the programme.

You may apply for this route to PhD via the online application system.

16 Health & Wellbeing Support

Ensuring PhD Researchers have a positive wellbeing experience whilst at Ulster University is paramount. Within the School of Sport, we naturally advocate that one way to achieve this goal is through physical activity, *i.e.* a healthy body equates to a healthy mind! Therefore, we encourage our PhD Researchers to take regular active breaks from office desks, consider walking meetings, get involved in various University-led physical activity initiatives/campaigns and join the University Sports Gym at your local campus. To find out information about the outstanding sports facilities offered at Ulster University, competitive membership and fitness packages, classes and facility hire, click here.

Student Support provides a number of services to guide you through your time at Ulster University. These services include Health and Wellbeing, Finances and Disability support.

Occupational Health aims to provide protect and promote the physical and psychological health of the workforce at Ulster.

Declaring a Disability

If newly joining Ulster University, Student Experience and Wellbeing will automatically issue a link to an 'Additional Study Needs' form for the Researcher to provide information on their condition and medical evidence. When this is complete, the Researcher is invited to an appointment, which will advise on how to apply for funded disability support (however international PhDs are not eligible for this funded support). Following this appointment, the PhD Researcher will receive a full copy of the recommendation email. The Researcher is responsible for sharing the recommendations with their supervisor(s) and Postgraduate Tutor, unless they have agreed that the AccessAbility Adviser can forward it to a named supervisor.

If the PhD Researcher had previously studied at Ulster University, they need to notify Student Experience and Wellbeing so that their RAR can be reviewed and reissued to the new course director/relevant contacts. The PhD Researcher will also have to reapply for disability support allowance annually.