



Ulster University Business School

PhD Researcher Subject Handbook

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ULSTER UNIVERSITY

ULSTER UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

PhD RESEARCH HANDBOOK

September 2022

WELCOME

I would just like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the Ulster University Business School. I hope you will find your time as a researcher in the Faculty enjoyable and fulfilling.

You will have already met with your supervisors and understand that their primary role is to offer you guidance and support in your studies. Within the Ulster University Business School several other key members of staff are in place to provide more specific support and guidance (Research Director, Post Graduate Tutor and Executive Assistant) as well as your supervisors and the Doctoral College. It is hoped that the information contained in the handbook will be useful and that it will give you an information about PhD study and what you can expect during your time as a PhD researcher. If you have any problems or queries you can contact the following key individuals:

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Alternatively, you may contact our administrative support assistant:

Mrs Heather Brown
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Tel: 028 95365055

NB: Please consult the website for general information: <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/research/topic/business-and-management>

Specific guidelines on Ulster University PhD procedures and regulations are available in the Research Studies handbook that can be downloaded from:

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/handbooks/research-studies-handbook>

Finally, I would just like to wish you every success in your studies and indeed in the future.

PROFESSOR MARTIN McCracken - RESEARCH DIRECTOR
ULSTER UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

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INTRODUCTION

All PhD researchers within the Ulster University Business School can avail of support from the Research Director and Postgraduate Tutor. It is the role of these two individuals to oversee the PhD researcher's progress from first application to the final examination.

The Research Director works with Doctoral College staff to facilitate support and training and development of PhD researchers, co-ordinate the management and monitoring of their progress, ensure the provision of adequate resources for the researchers' needs and their general welfare. It is also a key objective to grow the number of PhD researchers in the faculty and to develop the UUBS as a centre of excellence in post-graduate research in Ulster University.

Currently there are approximately 50 PhD researchers enrolled within the Ulster University Business School, two thirds full-time and one-third part-time. All PhD researchers in the Faculty are affiliated to Faculty structures in two ways. They belong to a subject-based Department (Hospitality, Tourism Management; Leadership, Management and Marketing; Accounting, Finance and Economics; Global Business and Enterprise) and are also closely aligned with the Business and Management Unit of Assessment (formerly known as the Research Institute) in the faculty.

The Research Director and colleagues have a managerial and administrative responsibility for all aspects of PhD researcher experience from initial application to final examination. Details of their role, structure, terms of reference, and the processes it oversees are provided in Sections 3-8 of this handbook.

PHD RESEARCHER AFFILIATIONS IN THE FACULTY

All PhD researchers are affiliated to the Faculty in a variety of ways. This affiliation is normally determined by the respective attachment of their first supervisor (Chair of Supervisors) and is not negotiable except via changes in the arrangements for supervision.

Subject-Based Departments

The subject-based Departments provide the key structure for the Faculty in terms of teaching and management of academic staff. All members of academic staff are also members of an appropriate Department, and the Head of Department is their primary line manager. At present the Faculty has six Departments:

- Department of Accounting, Finance and Economics (Belfast)
- Department of Global Business and Enterprise (Magee)
- Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management (Belfast and Coleraine)
- Department of Management, Leadership and Marketing (Belfast)
- Economic Policy Centre (Belfast)
- Business Engagement Unit (Belfast)

Business and Management - Unit of Assessment

The Business and Management Unit of Assessment (UoA) is a virtual centre and focal point for academic research across the Faculty. There are approximately 35 members of academic staff within the Faculty classified as research active (with Significant Research Reasonability) and who are members of the UoA. The Associate Dean of Research - Professor Paul Humphreys and Research Director – Professor Martin McCracken are responsible for the strategic development of research within the UoA.

Considerable emphasis is placed upon developing a strong creative and innovative research culture. Research within the faculty complements and reflects government thinking at a regional and national level in terms of supporting an agenda for change within the private and public sector. The UoA has developed collaborative linkages both nationally and internationally through its close relationships with the British Academy of Management, Academy of Marketing, Academy of International Business, and a range of professional bodies, such as, CIMA, ACCA, CIPD and ICSA.

PHD RESEARCH SUPPORT - ULSTER UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

Aims and Objectives

To support the development of PhD researchers within the Faculty by:

- improving the quality of research induction and training
- co-ordinating and structuring the monitoring and management of progress
- providing training in supervision for academic staff
- working to improve resources for PhD researchers and their general welfare
- increasing the numbers of PhD researchers, and
- developing the Faculty as a centre of excellence in graduate research.

Terms of Reference

To formulate and implement policy for the Faculty in relation to:

- the education and training of PhD researchers including administering procedures and policies related to PhD researcher admission, supervision, report of performance and progress and examination
- the range of research programmes and qualifications, and means of support for PhD researchers
- any other matters relating to research degrees and PhD researchers which the UUBS Board may require
- the admission of PhD researchers, their programmes of study / research and the appointment of supervisors and advisers
- nominations for the appointment of Boards of Examiners for PhD researchers
- postgraduate studentships and similar awards

Structure

The Research Director and Postgraduate Tutor are responsible for all PhD researchers across the current Faculty structures outlined in Section 2. Administrative support is provided by **Heather Brown** in the Deans Office on the Belfast campus (see contact details above). All matters relating to policy and practice are discussed and agreed by the **Faculty Research Committee**, which reports directly to the UUBS Faculty Leadership Team. This Board meets normally four times per year and has the following membership:

Associate Dean Research and Innovation; Research Director (Chair); Executive Dean of the Ulster University Business School; Heads of Departments within the Faculty; All members of the Business and Management UoA; One full-time postgraduate researcher; One part-time postgraduate researcher.

Policies and Procedures

Details of the University's policies and procedures relating to postgraduate research can be found in the Research Studies Handbook can be downloaded from:

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

BEING A PhD RESEARCHER

Introduction

Being a PhD researcher is not like being an undergraduate or “taught” postgraduate student. Firstly, PhD researchers are not obliged to go to very many classes. Most of your time will be spent on “self-directed” research and study where you with the advice of your supervisors prioritise what you work on dependent upon the PhD study stage. Ultimately your supervisors are in place to provide you with support and guidance in your self-directed efforts.

The roles and responsibilities of both the PhD researcher and the supervisor are highlighted in **Appendices 1 and 2**.

Typical stages in the research process include the following:

- Designing and planning the project
- Critically reviewing the literature
- Collecting data
- Analysing the data
- Writing the thesis
- The examination

Although these are listed as discrete steps, in fact the process is more circular in nature in that you will find yourself at different times revisiting steps you thought you had already completed and rethinking issues, concepts and ideas that you felt you had already addressed satisfactorily. For this reason, studying for a PhD qualification can at times be very frustrating. At other times, however, it can be exhilarating, particularly at the data collection, analysis and writing up stages.

You also need to be aware that studying for a research degree can at times be a lonely experience. This is because you are perhaps one of the very few people in the world who is fully immersed in your particular area of research. It is important therefore that you make full use of the support networks available to you. These networks are discussed throughout this handbook and include: your supervisory team and other academic colleagues, other PhD Researchers, and research conference networks.

It is important that you have regular contact with your supervisors. The university requires that full-time funded PhD researchers will attend the campus regularly (at least twice a week) unless there is agreement which allows for more flexibility with supervisors. Clearly the recent experience of the Covid pandemic has altered working patterns for many of us and we have become more open to working more flexibly. Given this I would expect you to find a working pattern that works optimally for yourself and your supervisors.

It is anticipated that initially you will need to have relatively frequent supervisory meetings. However, when you settle into a more familiar pattern of work, meetings may become less frequent although at various times you may need more support (approaching assessments or during the final writing up stage). The actual supervisory procedure and systems adopted should be agreed by yourself and your supervisors, but for clarification UUBS would expect that full time PhD researchers should have substantive meetings with their supervisors *at least once a month* and that part-time PhD researchers *at least once during a three-month period*. The PhD Manager system allows uploading of digital records of supervisory meetings, and it is the responsibility of the PhD researcher to ensure that a full record of meetings is held.

PhD researchers are reminded that their first port of call for all matters of concern should be their supervisor, or the Research Director / Postgraduate Tutor. PhD researchers are strongly discouraged from approaching the Doctoral College staff directly. Contact on all matters relating to the Doctoral College is normally handled by the faculty.

Facilities

In conjunction with the subject-based Schools and the UoA, UUBS undertakes to provide its **full-time** PhD researchers with facilities for study. UUBS has dedicated Postgraduate Research accommodation – where full-time researchers have access to desk space and printing facilities. Full time funded PhD researchers are also provided with suitable technology to be used for research purposes during the duration of the programme and should be returned at the end of your studies. Please note this equipment remains the property of the University It should be noted that space is limited on the Belfast campus and the room we have been allocated has 12 desks – BA-02-004 for full-time researchers. As a consequence of this limited space researchers may be required to share desk space at certain times and hence, we are operating a ‘clean desk’ policy where researchers should not leave their possessions on any desk but should use lockers provided to store equipment and personal belongings (at the time of writing this handbook we are awaiting lockers to be installed in Room BA-02-004).

All researchers obtain an e-mail address when they officially register for PhD study. This will be the address used by the faculty for all correspondence in relation to their research studies and researchers should access their university e-mail account regularly. If you wish to use a different e-mail address it is your responsibility to set up his or her private e-mail programme to read mail delivered to the University address.

PhD Researcher Liaison Committee

UUBS has formed a PhD Researcher Liaison committee to discuss issues linked to your experience as a researcher. All PhD Researchers are encouraged to attend the Liaison committee which meets twice a year and is Chaired by the Research Director. The remit of the committee is to deal with any general issues impinging on or likely to impinge upon your studies. There is also researcher representation on the Faculty Research Committee and the Doctoral College Board. It should be noted that you can also contact the Research Director and/or the Postgraduate Tutor at any time by phone or email (details on page 2) if you have any pressing concerns.

Examination Forms

The Doctoral College utilises the PhD Research Manager system to manage the PhD researcher journey including authorisation of PhD researcher progress, changes in the initial specification of the research programme, supervision, location, mode of study, or timing. Once submitted within PhD Manager, approvals are automatically sent to the Chair of Supervisory Panel, Research Director and ultimately the University’s Doctoral College Board as appropriate.

Research Ethics

Before you commence any data collection involving human participants you will need to complete an ethics approval form (RG1A) available from: <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/research/our-research/research-integrity>

Please note that this form *must* be completed for any study involving data collection with human participants (i.e., if you plan to hold interviews, conduct surveys, focus groups, observation etc.). The process involved in obtaining Research Ethics clearance is shown below:

1. The completed form for Research Ethics clearance (RG1A) should be completed at least two months in advance of when you plan to collect data. The form is normally completed in collaboration with your supervisors, who will give advice if changes are needed.
2. When an agreed form is produced the supervisor sends a copy and other relevant materials (e.g. information sheets, consent forms, interview questions etc.) to the Chair of the UUBS Research Ethics Committee (Dr Kristel Miller).
3. The UUBS Research Ethics committee will then review the RG1 ethics form and communicate to the Chair of the supervisory panel and the researcher involved if there are any possible ethical issues with the planned research approach. A UUBS research Ethics Filter Committee meeting is held once a month to consider applications.
4. The researcher is advised if any changes are needed and given the opportunity to revise and resubmit the form and materials. These are then reconsidered by Research Ethics committee and normally Research Ethics permission is granted.

MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

The progress of PhD researchers is monitored both at university level, by means of annual reports completed using the PhD Manager system by both researchers and their supervisors, and at faculty level through a programme of researcher presentations and written reports. The purpose of monitoring is to facilitate the completion of the thesis within the given time limit. The time limit for a full-time PhD researcher is three years from registration, whilst part-time PhD researchers can complete their studies four - six years from registration.

Written Reports and Presentations

Progress is monitored through a series of assessment reports submitted by the PhD researcher which are supported by follow up presentations. Two major assessments are carried out during the first 12 months of study for full-time and the first 24 months for part-time researchers.

For full-time researchers the first assessment, known as the *Initial Assessment*, ordinarily takes place not more than four months after the researcher has first registered. For example, for those registering in September, assessments normally take place during January. The second assessment, known as the *Confirmation Assessment*, happens 9-10 months into the study (normally in June). For part-time researchers the Initial Assessment is usually arranged for 9-10 months after first registration. For example, for those registering in September, initial assessments will normally happen in the June assessment period.

For both initial and confirmation assessments researchers are expected to present their work (written report and oral presentation) to be assessed by a panel of research active UUBS staff. The panel make recommendations about the direction, organisation or other aspects of the research and report back to the Research Director and supervisory panel on researcher progress.

At the assessment meetings there is a chairperson (normally the Research Director or Postgraduate Tutor) and up to two examiners (usually one from the researcher's 'home' department and one from another UUBS department). The supervisors attend the assessment meetings but do not answer questions.

The Initial Assessment meeting normally lasts around one and half hours and the Confirmation Assessment around two hours. There are three main elements to the assessment meetings:

- Researcher presentation
- Questions from the panel on the presentation and submitted written material
- Feedback from the panel on your progress.

It is essential that the panel have enough time to read the written report and researchers are expected to submit through the PhD Manager system at least two weeks prior to the assessment event (i.e. for the September 2022 intake – 2nd January 2023). Those presenting in June should submit their written reports by the 29th May. Researchers should ensure that sources are referenced correctly and that the reports are free of plagiarism. The written reports will be checked for plagiarism through the Turnitin.

The Nature of the Reports and Presentations

Initial Assessment

In the Initial Assessment the PhD researcher is required to illustrate how they have advanced their work from application and proposal stage. They should provide a comprehensive description of the proposed programme of work and illustrate that an initial wide-ranging review of the literature has been carried out. At this stage there should clearly be some awareness of the types of methodologies available to carry out the research. The initial assessment report should be developed in close co-operation with supervisors and include the following information:

- The background to the project
- The overall aim and more specific objectives of the research
- Overview of key literatures
- The potential methodology that could be used
- Further work to be completed to develop the PhD.

A short report (ideally around 1000 words long but up to a 1,500 limit [excluding appendices and references]) should be produced to accompany a brief presentation – up to fifteen minutes (PowerPoint slides are normally used but are not compulsory). The word limit for this assessment is deliberately set quite low, and it is acknowledged that at this stage researchers will have written much more, but the purpose of this assessment is to provide a concise report that allows the panel to understand the key elements of the PhD study.

After the presentation the members of the panel will ask questions and seek clarification on key issues arising from the presentation (normally around 20 minutes). They may also offer suggestions on how the study could be improved or developed. The purpose of this assessment is not only to monitor researcher progress but also to offer advice, support, and constructive feedback. After the panel has deliberated on the presentation, report and Q&A session, the chair will communicate the decision – to either proceed to the next stage of the PhD or to resubmit the report and present again.

It should be noted that at the Initial Assessment presentation, new PhD researchers may present to their peers. Other new and existing PhD researchers are normally invited to attend presentations (attendance will only be allowed for the presentation and questions part and not for the panel feedback element at the end of the meeting). This practice has been approved by the Doctoral College and is seen as good practice as it helps to develop a stronger PhD research community allowing new PhD researchers to gain experience of presenting to peers.

Confirmation Assessment

The second assessment, called the confirmation assessment, is an important assessment for all researchers as it marks the confirmation of the PhD project and PhD researcher. The main purpose of this assessment is to provide assurance to supervisors, the assessment panel and to the Research Director that the topic of the PhD is now clearly defined and well understood and that the scope of the study is appropriate to PhD level (i.e., not more suitable for MPhil or too ambitious and unlikely to be completed in time).

At this stage it would be expected that the candidate will have considered a suitable methodology that it is appropriate for the study and will ensure its successful completion. It is also expected that a viable and realistic plan for progress over the next two years is presented at this assessment. In both the written report and oral presentation, the panel will want to see evidence that a substantial amount of progress has been made since the initial assessment and consideration will be given to the extent to which earlier comments have been addressed.

The written report and oral presentation should cover the following areas:

- A thorough background to the area
- A clear overall aim and specific research objectives
- A critical literature review illustrating the key gaps in knowledge surrounding the area of study
- A discussion of the proposed research methodology and strategy for data collection. This will involve giving details of its rationale and how it may be operationalised.
- A timetable for the completion of the study within the given time frame (i.e. three years for a fulltime PhD researcher or up to six years for part-time).

The written report for this assessment should be between 8,000-10,000 words and the presentation should last between 25-30 minutes and is normally accompanied by PowerPoint slides etc. It is acknowledged that this is a relatively short word limit, but the panel will be interested in the key elements as noted above and they do not need

to see everything that has been written to date. At the presentation they will ask questions and seek clarification on key issues linked to the study and will normally make recommendations about the direction, organisation and other aspects of the work. It is important that these comments are considered with your supervisors.

The outcome of the confirmation can result in several decisions 1) a straightforward confirmation, 2) confirmation with recommendations or 3) deferral (i.e., repeating the assessment within a specified period), 4) recommendation to transfer to an MPhil or 5) withdrawal from the programme. You will be given oral feedback directly after the meeting and written feedback on behalf of the panel is posted on PhD manager within a few days of the assessment. This feedback is considered by the Research Director and the Associate Dean for Research and Impact in UUBS before the researcher is formally transferred/confirmed.

Please remember that for the initial and confirmation assessments researchers are required to submit their written reports through the PhD Manager system at least two weeks in advance of the meeting date. If, for any reason, you cannot meet the deadlines set or present as arranged, you must let your supervisor and the Research Director know immediately.

Final Assessment

Researchers who successfully complete the Confirmation Assessment are required to provide evidence of progress in the final years of study. Ultimately your progress is closely monitored by your supervisors as you move towards completion, but after the confirmation event you may evidence your study progress in several ways:

- A 2000-word progress report; or
- A presentation within their department or the Faculty (e.g. a presentation at a faculty / dept seminar or workshop or the annual PhD research day); or
- A conference paper presentation; or
- A journal article submission.

You should work closely with your supervisory team to ensure that *one* of the above pieces of evidence can be provided to the Research Director for the final year of study for which they are registered, following the Confirmation Assessment.

If you choose to submit a progress report it should be no longer than 2,000 words and should include:

- the aims and objectives of the study
- progress to date
- any issues or problems that may affect the completion of the project
- expected date of completion of the study.

When you are ready to carry out this assessment (normally 30 months after registration for full-time Researchers and 60 months after registration for part-time Researchers) you should initiate the process on PhD Manager (Final Assessment section) and notify the Research Director that you have submitted.

Submission of one of the above items is imperative as it allows the faculty to monitor your progress and to liaise with your supervisors and the Doctoral College to provide support/advice as required.

Supervisor Meetings

In addition to the key processes outlined above, the faculty monitors researcher and supervisor performance through PhD Manager where minutes of meetings should be uploaded and shared between the PhD researcher and supervisors. It is the responsibility of the PhD Researcher to record the initial minutes as comprehensively as possible, as they are important as a record of the amount of supervision a researcher has received and offer a way of signalling problems at an early stage, thus helping the faculty to improve its provision for both researchers and supervisors.

Annual Reports

By the first week in May each year, researchers and supervisors are required to report formally on progress during the year, again using the PhD Manager system. These reports are reviewed at the annual Postgraduate Progress Board, which is part of the faculty's examination schedule in June, and decisions with regard to any necessary action regarding progression are made at that point. **Any researcher for whom the necessary reports are not available to the Board may not be allowed to register for the next academic year.**

Submitting the Thesis and Final Examination

Researchers normally submit their thesis for examination around three years of full-time research or five to six years of part-time research. The final examination takes the form of a viva voce and is normally held within three months of the date the thesis is submitted. The viva voce consists of three panel members – a Chair (normally the Research Director, AD Research and Impact or another Professor / Senior academic from the UUBS), an External Examiner from another university and an internal panel member (a member of academic staff from UUBS). It should be noted that a member of the supervisory team may also attend but that they are not permitted to speak during the formal viva proceedings. The criteria for examining research theses are outlined on the Doctoral College website:

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/current-phd-researchers/handbooks-and-policies/examiners-handbook> .

Researchers are required to note their Intention to Submit using the PhD Manager system three months prior to the intended submission date. This will start the process for all final examination procedures – your Chair of supervisors will handle the process in terms of assembling the examiners etc. It is recommended as good practice that all researchers undertake a mock viva before the actual viva itself. Researchers should consult with their supervisors to make the arrangements for the mock viva.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Researcher Development Programme

The Doctoral College at Ulster University wants to ensure that all PhD researchers receive the highest quality of research education and training and therefore the Researcher Development Programme (RDP) is an integral part of your doctoral programme. The RDP is a suite of workshops, specialist skills sessions, online training and personal development planning activities designed for you to gain the experience and skills required to be a competent and professional independent researcher. The sessions are delivered through both the Doctoral College and the various faculties, by academics and external facilitators committed to delivering excellence in supporting postgraduate research.

Researcher development courses include training (both online and face to face) which covers technical elements, specific to the individual and their project as well as their personal and professional development requirements. The Doctoral College is committed to delivering a programme that is high quality, flexible and responsive to the needs of PhD researchers.

Details of courses are available on the Researcher Development Programme portal:

www.ulster.ac.uk/researcherdevelopment

All PhD researchers should 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). The Training Needs Analysis is structured around the Vitae Researcher Development Framework 'domains'. This will be used to develop your own Personal Development Plan which will map to the various offerings within the RDP. Ideally your plans should be individualised according to your own needs and requirements, whatever stage you are at in your doctoral study. The templates are on the Researcher Development Portal.

Courses and workshops can be viewed by 'Domain (area)' by 'Year', by 'Date' in the forthcoming workshops section in the Portal – and the programme listing is fully searchable.

However, if you are unsure of where to start, there are sessions that could be 'recommended' for Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3. These recommendations are by way of guidance and you should explore all the courses on offer and agree your Personal Development Plan with your supervisors.

Getting Started

1. Assess your current skills against the Researcher Development Framework on PhD manager (you need to be logged on to use this facility) regarding researcher development planning. You should carry this out at the beginning of your doctoral study and liaise with your supervisor(s) while doing this.
2. Where you recognise gaps in your skills, or areas where your skills could be improved, identify which workshops and online training would best address these gaps. Summary descriptions of the workshops, and online training, are available on the Researcher Development Portal. There will be additional Faculty level, and discipline specific training available from which to choose. The programme of workshops, online training you choose and plan to attend becomes your own personal development plan. You should try to have completed your initial plan for Year 1 before your initial assessment.
3. Book the relevant courses online within PhD Manager – course offerings will be updated throughout the year and you will receive email notifications of such additions, and the Portal will be continually updated.
4. Ensure that you sign in at the workshop so that your attendance can be recorded and automatically updated to your records.
5. You will receive an email inviting you to complete an online feedback questionnaire when your attendance has been recorded. This is anonymous and will be used to provide essential information on the quality of the workshops provided.

6. On an annual basis, revisit your Personal Development Plan and Training Needs Analysis to ensure that they remain relevant.

Further details are available in the Researcher Development Handbook available on the Doctoral College website.

Teaching and Learning Development

The following courses are organised by Staff Development to support post-graduate researchers in their part-time teaching roles:

Introduction to Teaching and Learning for Post-graduate Tutors and Demonstrators (a half-day session compulsory for all who teach in the Ulster University)

For further information go to: <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/rdp/workshops/engagement-influence-and-impact/first-steps-to-teaching-and-learning-in-higher-education>

First Steps to Supporting Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (an accredited course leading to Associate Status of the Higher Education Academy)

Library Support

All new PhD researchers will be invited to attend a Library induction session at their campus of study. This session will provide an important source of information on the Library resources (such as online databases, search engines, reports and company data) that will provide key secondary sources for research. Library staff also provide training on Refworks, which is an important tool for collating and organizing reference lists.

Formal Research Skills and Methods Classes

The Ulster University Business School offers several research-based modules (Research Skills and Research Methods), mostly in the second semester for a range of Postgraduate MSc Programmes. All new PhD researchers may attend these sessions and you should seek advice from your supervisors as to the benefits of attending them. Again, these modules will be assessed by coursework and it is up to the supervisor to advise the researcher regarding assessment.

Faculty Level PhD Seminars and Workshops

The faculty will organise and co-ordinate specific training in selected areas during the year. This will include invited guest speakers on PhD research and methodologies, for instance:

- Critical Literature Review;
- Getting Published;
- Understanding and Getting Organised for Academic Research.

A PhD research day and evening social event for PhD researchers will be held in June. Further details and dates for this and other events where external and internal UUBS staff present their research will be circulated during the year.

The University's Student Services

The University's Student Support offers researchers several services including accommodation, health care, and guidance and support on a number of issues. Professional counsellors can offer advice and support in the following ways: individual counselling, information about and sources of help for personal problems, personal development groups, advice on examination stress, understanding depression, and settling into university. There is also a

specifically designated Educational Guidance section which offers educational advice, guidance and support to allow researchers to reach their full potential. Information about Student Support services can be found by logging on to the University's home page and clicking on the appropriate links.

Fellow PhD Researchers

Given the isolating nature of being a PhD researcher a very important part of the researcher's support network is other researchers who encounter similar problems and issues as you are likely to face. You will be sharing an office with other PhD researchers and this will help to provide some exchange of ideas and experiences, especially from researchers who are at a later stage of their PhD. Also we expect you to engage in formal and informal research networking and knowledge exchange activities with fellow UUBS researchers (academic faculty staff and Research Associates as well as PhD researchers) and we expect you avail of these opportunities. Also, be sure to visit the Doc at your campus, where you will be able to meet with researchers from other faculties.

Conferences

As part of your development as a PhD researcher it is hoped that during your period as a researcher you will present at least one paper at an appropriate conference, agreed upon by you and your supervisors. Provision for helping with the costs of attending a conference exists within the funding arrangement for researchers supported by the Department for Economy and the VCRS award. For those not receiving this type of funding the faculty may be able to offer support (depending on the availability of funding at the time). Researchers should approach their supervisors about this and how it might be accessed when they are considering putting together a paper for a conference.

Publishing Papers

The faculty strongly encourages researchers, in conjunction with their supervisors, to write up significant findings from their research for publication in a refereed academic journal. Issues around authorship and publishing should be discussed between PhD researchers and their supervisors early in the PhD so that both researcher and supervisor are clear about arrangements. It is normally the case that the PhD researcher is named as a lead author on work from their PhD with their supervisors named as co-authors. Any additional named authors on PhD work, outside of the supervisory team, would be in exceptional circumstances and this should be discussed and agreed between PhD researchers and their supervisors at an early stage.

Teaching Opportunities

It is beneficial from a career development point of view for PhD researchers to obtain some teaching experience during their period of study.

The opportunities for teaching will depend to a great extent on the teaching needs within UUBS at any given time and PhD researchers' area of expertise. All PhD researchers will be asked to record their areas of teaching interest with the Research Director and these details will be forwarded to Heads of Departments for consideration, should any teaching opportunities arise.

Please note:

- Teaching allocations are at the discretion of Heads of Department and not the Research Director.
- Full-time funded PhD researchers may only teach a maximum of 6 hours per week.
- Teaching would involve mostly seminars and to a lesser extent lecturing.
- Where PhD researchers have been offered teaching, it would be expected that they are provided with teaching support materials where possible.

IMPORTANT HOUSEKEEPING

Research Funds

All DfE-funded and VCRS PhD researchers are awarded a budget each year to be spent on developmental activities to support their research (for instance a training event, attending a conference, collecting data). This sum may vary from year to year but is projected to be around £900 in 2022/23. **Prior approval for all DfE/VCRS expenditure must be obtained from the Research Director.** The following steps must be followed:

- As early as possible in advance of a trip or the date of expenditure (at least 3 weeks beforehand), a **prior approval** form must be sent to the Heather Brown to allow for signatures and processing.
- This form must be accompanied by a letter or email of endorsement from their supervisors justifying the expenditure and pointing out its relevance to the researcher's research project.
- 2-3 weeks following submission of the prior approval form, PhD researchers should contact the Finance Department for a prior approval number. This number will be needed to make travel arrangements (see below), to prepay conference registration fees and to claim back expenses following the trip.
- Following trips, a travel and subsistence expenses form, for expenses incurred, should be submitted to Heather Brown. Please note: all claims for expenditure must be accompanied by original receipts. Photocopies of receipts or credit card slips are not accepted as proof of expenditure.

Copies of the prior approval, travel expenses and subsistence, and mileage claim forms can be downloaded from: <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/finance/staff/forms>

Please note: Claims for expenditure will only be processed if a prior approval form has been submitted in advance of the trip (and a prior approval number has been received) and if original receipts for expenditure are attached to the claim form.

Researchers funded from other sources may seek funding, though there is no guarantee that the request will be met. In this case, prior approval for all such expenditure must be obtained from the Research Director and/or Head of Department.

Types of Expenditure

Air travel must always be booked using the University's approved travel agent – Key Travel. Key Travel may be contacted at tel. no. 0161 8199773. Before booking, Key Travel will require a prior approval number and a cost centre code (you must contact the secretary for the cost centre code). For low cost airline travel (e.g. Easyjet, Ryanair etc.), Key Travel will require this to be booked via their website – please provide your trip details to Heather Brown who will advise on online booking issues.

Conference fees may be paid in advance to the conference organisers through the University Finance Department. Please provide a copy of the conference registration form and payment details, along with your prior approval number, to the Finance Department.

Car mileage for research trips may be claimed using the car mileage claim form.

Accommodation expenses are normally reimbursed after the trip, though it may be possible to book hotel accommodation in advance of a trip through the University's travel agent (Key Travel).

Please note:

- It is expected that the most economical forms of travel should be used whenever possible (e.g. public transport rather than taxis).
- Claim forms for expenses must be submitted within 2 months of the date of the trip.

Leave of Absence

The University expects full-time PhD researchers to attend regularly at the campus where their first supervisor is located. Any alternative arrangements need to be recorded in writing, and, where they involve regular and/or prolonged absence, may require the approval of the Faculty and Doctoral College. Applications for a period of study involving more than three months away from the University may be made using PhD Manager. There may be occasions when, for health, family or other reasons, a researcher may wish to interrupt his or her research studies for a period of time. In these situations, and only then, an application for formal "Leave of Absence" should be made using the PhD Manager Change request. Leave of absence cannot be requested near the end of the period of official registration (especially when the leave of absence sought is longer than the amount of time left to complete the three-year registration process). Leave cannot be sought after the official three-year period is over.

Full-time PhD researchers are entitled to 40 days annual leave. This is part of your work year. You should consult your supervisor(s) if you are planning to be away for more than three days. There are times during the year when it is not appropriate to take leave, and your supervisor(s) will be able to advise you accordingly. You should also let them know where you will be during your absence.

Time Extensions

If you do not complete your thesis in the time limit set by the University – that is, three years for full-time researchers and six years for part time researchers you may be granted an extension. You may apply initially for a free four month period of extended registration via [PhD Manager](#). At this stage, your progress will be assessed by your Research Director prior to approving the extension to ensure that there is evidence that a properly prepared plan of work is in place. If approved, this extension will be authorised by the Research Director and there will be no fee for this initial extension.

Following this period, you may apply for further periods of extension in three-month blocks. Please note – such extensions are not guaranteed and you will be required to provide a detailed summary of progress, a revised plan of work and medical or other evidence in support of your application (particularly if you wish to request a fee waiver under exceptional circumstances). These periods of extension require the approval of the Head of the Doctoral College and rates for such extensions are reviewed annually.

Please note this information is given here for guidance. The University's Regulations are in the process of being amended. You should check the Doctoral College website for the latest version. The faculty will periodically advise you of any substantive changes that may affect you. It is therefore important that you use your University e-mail account and keep the Research Director /Postgraduate Tutor informed of any change of postal address.