



# Student Handbook

## Research Degrees

2015/16

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## SECTION 1 : USEFUL CONTACTS

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## **SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to your PhD studies in the School of Nursing and Health Sciences, at the University of Dundee. We hope that your time studying at Dundee will be enjoyable and fulfilling. Studying for a PhD is a challenging process which at various times may be daunting, fascinating and frustrating. Ultimately we hope that you will find yourself enriched, rewarded and successful. This handbook will give you guidance about the specific processes, milestones and support relevant to studying for a PhD in the School of Nursing and Health Sciences. The Handbook should be read thoroughly and used as a resource throughout your studies.

This handbook should be used in conjunction with the University webpages related to research degree students. These include Organisational and Personal Development (OPD), Academic Skills, and Registry. All research students can access a range of very useful seminars, workshops and other educational sessions offered by OPD. These are advertised and, in consultation with your supervisors, you should identify which ones you will find useful. Booking is on-line. Further information can be found at <http://dundee.ac./opd>. PhD study requires good time and study management and Academic Skills provides support for this and writing skills (see <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/asc/>). In conjunction with the Postgraduate Study section of the Registry page on the University webpages all the information you require should be available (<http://www.dundee.ac.uk/registry/main/pg/>).

## **SECTION 3: MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH PROGRAMME**

### **3.1 Research School Programme – Administrative Structure**

The Research Degrees Co-ordinator in conjunction with the Research Degrees leads for each research group are responsible for coordinating the PhD programme within the School of Nursing and Health Sciences. This involves overseeing the process through from application, interview, allocation of Supervisors and Thesis Monitoring Committee members, Upgrade Review, Postgraduate Research Forum meetings, and liaising with the Research Degrees Committee. They are available for support and guidance regarding all procedures relating to the PhD process. The staff in the SNM Research Office, led by the Research Office Manager, provides the administrative support to manage all relevant processes. Governance of research degrees is through the Research Degrees Committee; this is the Committee where all official documentation (such as for admission, Upgrade Review, progression from Year Two to Year Three and Intention to Submit) is approved.

### **3.2 Supervision of Research Students**

You will be assigned a supervisory team consisting of a principal supervisor and a second supervisor for the duration of studies. Individual supervision sessions normally take place at least once a fortnight for at least the first six months and then reduce to once a every three or four weeks. On occasion, a student may have three supervisors. A number of students on MPhil and PhD programmes in the School undertake their studies on a part-time basis.

You should negotiate your learning needs with your supervisors and you are expected to attend research workshops/seminars which provide the opportunity to present your work and discuss research issues with other students and staff.

If appropriate, you may be required by your supervisors to attend lectures in the School or wider University. The purpose will be to provide a background to the research programme if your first degree was in another discipline, or additional methodological development is required.

### **3.3 Thesis Monitoring Committees (TMCs)**

The cornerstone of the MPhil/PhD Training Programme is the Monitoring Committee structure. It is this committee that monitors your progress during your PhD studies and the committee members are involved in decisions about your progression. You will meet with your TMC twice a year.

#### **TMCs**

- Monitor and evaluate students' progress throughout their time in the School of Nursing and Health Sciences, and also monitor the quality of students' supervision.
- Comprise 3 members of staff who are not directly involved in supervising the student's research project, and who are experienced senior members of staff. Each Monitoring Committee will be chaired by a member of University academic staff a) with extensive experience in the training and examination of students and b) who has a PhD or equivalent higher research degree. Each Monitoring Committee chairperson will report on the progress of the student. All reports come to Research Degrees Co-ordinator.
- Their purpose is to monitor each student's progress, to identify and resolve problems before they begin to seriously impair progress, to provide practical advice where appropriate and, at the end of the first year (or part-time equivalent), be involved in the decision as to whether a student be allowed to exit the probationary phase and be accepted for full PhD registration: this process is called Upgrade Review (see Section 4.1). Monitoring Committees examine students' reports prior to meetings and discuss their content with them at the meeting. It is anticipated that in contentious cases, the Committee's primary role in this respect will be to demonstrate that the School has (or has not) taken every reasonable action to further a student's progress.
- An essential part of the monitoring process is the production of appropriate documentation to support students' participation in the Training Programme. Students and supervisors are responsible for completing questionnaires in advance of meetings with Monitoring Committees, and Monitoring Committees will complete a Record of Meeting form after each meeting with their students. Specimens of the forms which will be used and Flowcharts to guide you through the monitoring process are available on our MyDundee site.

### 3.4 Research Degrees Committee

This committee oversees all aspects of research degrees undertaken in the School of Nursing and Health Sciences, from application to thesis submission. Details of this committee will be provided when the current University restructuring is complete.

The Research Degrees Committee administrator is Mrs. Tracy Sparey, School of Nursing and Health Sciences, 11 Airlie Place ([t.sparey@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:t.sparey@dundee.ac.uk), extension 88541).

### 3.5 Research student training opportunities

Regular opportunities to present your work are an essential component of research degree training. You will be aligned with one SNM research group which has a designated research degree lead. You should meet regularly with the group and use the opportunity to present work, engage in journal clubs etc.

#### Postgraduates Research Conference

Approximately twice a year, you will participate in a 'conference style' event that will be attended by all research degree students, supervisors and external stakeholders, i.e. NHS Tayside, NHS Fife. This is a student-led event where you are expected to present your work at one of the conferences. Attendance is **not** considered optional. These events provide a valuable opportunity for you to present and explain your work in a safe environment and to gain practice in answering questions and defending your decisions. This is essential preparation for the PhD journey.

#### Seminar Series

There are several excellent research Seminar Series within the School and wider University. You **are expected** to attend appropriate School Seminars. These seminars are **not** considered optional. In addition, there may be seminars in other Colleges and Schools that you may find beneficial.

#### Postgraduate Masterclasses

Each academic year, a number of Master classes will be offered exploring various aspects of a researcher's essential toolkit, e.g., 'Introduction to a Systematic Review', 'Writing an Abstract', 'Presenting Research without PowerPoint' etc. Details of the Master classes can be found at <http://nursingmidwifery.dundee.ac.uk/postgraduate-masterclass>

Suggestions for Masters classes sessions are always welcome. Please Email: [nm-higherdegrees@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:nm-higherdegrees@dundee.ac.uk)

## **Annual Student Symposium**

A symposium is held each year for all postgraduate research degree students in the Schools of Medicine, Dentistry and Nursing and Health Sciences. This event gives you the opportunity to participate in a research meeting, as well as to learn about other research activities in these other Schools. It also contributes to your training in communication skills and encourages networking with students and staff out with the School. Please note, you do not have to include in your presentations everything you have ever done during your PhD, as there is not enough time. The presentation should tell the audience about the aims and hypotheses/research questions behind your work, how you are approaching this and what you will do in the future.

The usual format is that:

(1) First year PhD students give a short illustrated presentation (10 minutes, including time for questions and discussion), summarising progress to date and outlining planned work.

(2) Second year PhD students produce a poster (A0 - dimensions 3 foot wide by 4 foot high)

(3) Third year PhD students give a longer (15 minutes, including time for questions and discussion) presentation covering the major results of their research. Part-time students should present on a pro-rata basis i.e. part-time PhD students should give a short presentation in their second year etc. MD and MPhil students give a 10-minute talk in their first year, and a present a poster in their second year. All contributing students should produce an abstract of their presentation, which is included in the symposium programme for circulation at the meeting. In addition to all research students, supervisors and other members of staff attend. Lunch and other refreshments are provided. A prize (normally a £50 book token) for the best presentation in each category is awarded during the post-symposium gathering. All students **MUST** participate and are expected to attend the whole Symposium. It is also advisable that you familiarise themselves with their presentations in the lecture theatre in advance, and ensure that the presentations are accurately portrayed.

### **3.6 Data Protection Implications**

You must be aware of and to adhere to any implications that your project may have in respect of the Data Protection Act. Further information should be available at <http://www.somis.dundee.ac.uk/dataprotect/>

### **3.7 Safety**

You must undertake routine Fire Safety instruction and be aware of the relevant Fire Safety Procedures.

### **3.8 Personal Development Planning**

Personal Development Planning offers an opportunity for you to reflect on your learning and achievements in a structured way via the online MyDundee portal. It can be used to prepare a portfolio (akin to a CV) to

demonstrate to enhance your future personal, educational and career development. Visit the PDP site at <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/careers/mydpd/>.

## **SECTION 4: IMPORTANT INFORMATION RELEVANT TO YOUR RESEARCH DEGREE**

### **4.1 Progression points**

There are two progression points during PhD study, a) Upgrade Review and b) progression from Year 2 to Year 3.

#### **Upgrade Review**

On admission, you are registered as 'research students'. After approx. 9 months (for full-time 3 year research degrees) a decision must be made to either transfer registration to the planned research degree or a lower award, delay transfer for a defined period, or terminate the registration. This period during which you are registered under Ordinance 12 should be viewed as a probationary period. The timing of this event for part-time students and those on the 4 year programme will be calculated on a pro rata basis.

It is of critical importance that the correct decision for your future is made at this stage. Within the School of Nursing and Health Sciences, this decision is made currently by supervisors, TMC members, postgraduate student adviser, and the Dean. If there are any doubts about your suitability for a given research degree, the Upgrade Review should be delayed at the very least. In rare cases where there is disagreement about the way to proceed or in borderline cases; advice should be sought from the Research Degree Co-ordinator in the first instance or the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee in cases where early resolution does not occur, and ultimately the Research Dean or Dean of the School of Nursing and Health Sciences.

*At Upgrade Review for the Degrees of PhD, MPhil, MD, and MSc: All students are required to:*

1. *Meet with their Thesis Monitoring Committee (TMC) on at least 2 separate occasions prior to the Upgrade Review.*
2. *Submit a substantial written report, of an appropriate standard, to the TMC. The format of this may reflect the variation of PhD study.*
  - This substantive piece of work should be approximately 10,000 words in length; it should normally consist of a literature review and present a clear exposition of the planned methods but this may vary according to the research design.
  - Supervisors should also submit a short comment about this work.
3. *Give a satisfactory oral presentation at an appropriate forum of peers.*

- This will be a formal presentation to peers, supervisors and TMC members and separate to other student presentations that form part of the research training programme.

4. *Participate fully in compulsory aspects of the Postgraduate Training Programme.*

In addition to attending two TMC meetings, students will be expected to:

- Present at the Annual Student Symposium held in June
- Complete 5-10 days generic skills training for part time and full time students respectively
- Attend a Health & Safety and Fire Safety lecture

*Only under exceptional circumstances will this requirement be waived.*

5. *Satisfy their supervisors, Head of Division/School and TMC of their suitability for candidacy of the named research degree, and of their ability to perform as a member of a research team.*

6. *Demonstrate analytical and research planning ability; where appropriate, students should be capable of data analysis and planning subsequent experimental steps.*

If the criteria are not met, it can be recommended that the Upgrade Review is delayed for a specified period, or that you are registered for a lower award than originally intended, or, where it is clear that the criteria are highly unlikely to be met, that your registration be terminated.

In cases where the Upgrade Review is delayed you will have an additional opportunity to demonstrate appropriate progression. The nature of this will be decided on an individual basis but may require resubmission of the written work, and/or another oral presentation. This will be decided by your supervisors, TMC and Research Degrees Co-ordinator.

*The procedures for the Upgrade Review are:*

The Research Administrator receives an Upgrade Review form from Registry, which will include the options for continuing studies outlined above. Where possible, TMC members, supervisors and the research degrees co-ordinator will meet (if possible, immediately after the oral presentation) to decide the outcome. If the progression is recommended, the form will first be signed by the students' supervisors, the Research Degree Co-ordinator and the Dean. The signed and completed form is sent to Mrs. Tracy Sparey, Research Office, for consideration by the Research Degrees Committee (RDC). The RDC will return the form to Registry who will confirm the Upgrade.

## Progression from Year Two to Year Three

This progression point will be amended depending upon whether the student is undertaking the 4 year PhD programme or is part-time.

This decision will be made by the supervisory team and TMC members.

### 4.2 Intention to Submit

The timing of this is decided by the supervisory team but is normally at time of first full draft. The principal research supervisor is responsible for ensuring that a completed Intention to Submit *proforma* is completed and submitted via Mrs. Tracy Sparey, Research Office at **least three months** before the planned date of the research students *Viva Voce* examination. The purpose of this *proforma*, which the student must countersign, is to establish the proposed composition of the examining committee of the thesis. The examining committee composes an internal examiner, external examiner and convenor (two external examiners are required for academic members of staff). Once the external CV has been received, the examining committee must be approved by the Research Degrees Committee.

### 4.3 Publishing

You may be encouraged to publish your work during your research degree. This will normally be in association with your supervisors, both whilst you are a student of the University of Dundee and also once you have left the institution.

### 4.4 Data

During the course of your postgraduate research, it is essential that you store all data appropriately and in accordance with research programmes. For example, this may be in the form of lab books, electronic data or other forms of written data. Remember that data must be kept for a number of years and you may be required to produce raw data relating to your thesis during your *Viva Voce* examination.

### 4.5 Research Governance and Ethics

For students involved in clinical research, you **will** require ethical approval. Your supervisor will advise you on this. The type of ethics approval will depend upon the nature of the study. The University Ethics Committee (UREC), if your study does not involve patients, is likely to be the committee to which you will submit an ethics application. Research involving people such as healthy volunteers or school children (i.e. anyone) (not NHS patients) **must** obtain ethical approval from the UREC.

If, as part of your research for your postgraduate degree, you are going to contact NHS patients, you **MUST** apply for:

1. **Sponsorship.** The Sponsor is the organisation taking responsibility for securing the arrangements to initiate, manage and finance your study, including providing insurance and/or indemnity. You can find more information on the role of the Sponsor in the Research Governance Framework (RGF). To obtain Sponsorship contact the Research Governance Manager (RGM), based at Tayside Medical Sciences Centre (TASC) as early as possible. You will need to submit your study protocol before a Sponsorship Review can be conducted.
2. **Ethical approval.** Ethical approval is required from an NHS Research Ethics Committee (REC). Application for an NHS REC review is through the Integrated Research Application System (IRAS) (<https://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/Signin.aspx>). You will find information on how to apply on the Health Research Authority (HRA) website (<http://www.hra.nhs.uk>). The East of Scotland Research Ethics Service (EoSRES) offers advice and support throughout the process (Email: [ethicahelpline.tayside@nhs.net](mailto:ethicahelpline.tayside@nhs.net)). There are 2 REC within EoSRES, each of which sits monthly; your application must be submitted electronically via IRAS which should be completed with your supervisor.
3. **R+D approval.** The R+D team can provide support for registering your study and undertake any NHS & NHS Support cost calculations. They will also undertake a generic and local review of the research governance issues and grant NHS management approval.

**You will not be able to start your study until you have ALL these approvals in place. Please also consider these important points:**

The participant information sheet (PIS) should describe the purpose of your study, clearly stating that the study is part of an educational qualification, and give details of potential risks or benefits to the participant as well as detailing what is expected of him/ her should he/she decide to take part. All participants must be offered reassurance that they can refuse to join your study (or leave it at any point) without giving you a reason and without it affecting their present or future health care. When writing a PIS, you should be aware that the average reading age in the UK is 12 years.

Anyone who agrees to take part in your study must sign an informed consent form. There should be a copy of the consent form for the participant in the Trial Master File (TMF) which should be stored in a secure place e.g. in a locked cupboard in your supervisor's office. If your work involves patients, it should not be left in their notes. Contact includes all invasive procedures, such as taking blood or taking an X-ray etc., and non-invasive procedures, such as asking questions, interviews or handing out a questionnaire(s).

For more information contact:

Caroline Ackland, Scientific Officer, EoSRES. Email: [ethicshelpline.tayside@nhs.net](mailto:ethicshelpline.tayside@nhs.net)

Catrina Forde, Senior Research Governance Manager, TASC. Email [C.Forde@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:C.Forde@dundee.ac.uk)

## **SECTION 5: AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH TRAINING**

The aim of an MPhil or PhD training is to provide a programme of studies which will support you to conduct a research study and writing a dissertation/thesis based on that research and to support you to make the transition from practitioner to practitioner-researcher. Your research will involve the critical evaluation of theory and practice in nursing, midwifery or a related field.

The key objectives are:

### **5.1 Research Design and Planning**

To enable you to define the topic of research, operationalise key concepts, decide on appropriate research methods and to draw up a structured schedule of research.

### **5.2 Research, Literature and Theory**

To provide you with the opportunity to acquire expert knowledge in a special field and to enable you to carry out a critical review of the theoretical and research literature relevant to the topic.

### **5.3 Research Methods**

- To furnish you with training in research methods, including the use of professional literature and published materials, and the techniques of empirical research in qualitative and/or quantitative paradigms as appropriate.
- To enable you to demonstrate an understanding of the appropriate use of sampling techniques, data collection and to carry out appropriate and rigorous analysis of the data.

### **5.4 Research Writing and Plagiarism**

- To enable you to develop skills in writing and organisation of a thesis/ dissertation.
- To raise your awareness about plagiarism and academic dishonesty. You are encouraged to review your work regularly for plagiarism and each student has access to the recommended plagiarism software Turnitin. There will be two formal occasions where you are required to demonstrate that submitted work does not contain plagiarised material: Upgrade Review and Thesis submission. Please familiarise yourself with our plagiarism policy.

### **5.5 Academic Skills**

- To foster the development of a capacity for constructive criticism, originality and independence of thought.

- To develop skills in a range of strategies appropriate to research dissemination.
- To provide experience of participation in the activities of an academic environment.

## **5.6 Attendance**

Your attendance is recorded. For some students this is a Visa requirement and we must do this to meet UKVI regulations. However we know that if you are experiencing difficulties, attendance tends to be affected. Therefore we monitor all students' attendance and if your attendance falls below a certain level, your supervisor will be alerted. This is not a punitive process but intended to alert your supervisors to any potential difficulties.

Annual leave entitlement for full-time research degree students is 35 days per annum.

## **5.7 Organisational and Professional Development: skills training for postgraduate students**

A centrally-organised generic skills training programme for postgraduate research students is well established. The programme comprises a variety of courses, including foundation level training in statistics, time management, Endnote training, advanced Word for thesis writing, research project management, grant writing, viva preparation, career management and interview techniques.

A summary of the timetable can be viewed, and on-line bookings can be made from the [Organisational and Professional Development Web Site](#).

## **5.8 Skills Training Requirements for Full-Time Students**

In order to satisfy the requirements of the Roberts Review, Full-time research students are now expected to spend the equivalent of 2 weeks (10 working days) per year on generic skills training. Of that, at least 6 days should be spent on specific University led activities, and the remainder could be incorporated into other activities such as journal clubs. The University has no objections to individuals taking more training in one year than another, although it is not recommended that this is a heavy imbalance.

## **5.9 Skills Training Requirements for Part-Time Students**

The Research Funding Councils suggest that part-time students take 5 days of generic skills training per annum if, for example, the part-time PhD is expected to be achieved within a six year period as opposed to the three expected for a full time student. Overall if a student takes a total of 30 days generic skills training over the course of a PhD then the research councils will be satisfied. For other research degrees, the recommendation would be that 5 days of generic skills training per annum should also apply where students are truly studying on a part-time basis and do not anticipate an early thesis submission.

# **SECTION 6: MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

## **6.1 Some Suggestions for Effective Organisation of your Work**

- Keep a log or diary of your reflections on the process of research. You will forget why, what and how you reached the decisions that you made in your research journey. Keeping a log will help you justify your choices when you write and defend your thesis and is a useful learning strategy.
- Research data tends to come in diverse forms, such as printouts, plots, field notes, transcripts, photographs, etc. and often in such volume as to quickly become unmanageable. It is important to file this information in an organised manner. Make sure you keep a note of all your raw data and experimental conditions - it can be infuriating, time consuming and even disastrous when you come to write your thesis and cannot retrieve an important piece of information.
- Keep a list of references of previous work and current work in your research field - preferably on a computer-based system (the School currently has a User License for Endnote) as this will make writing your thesis much easier. Speak to your supervisor for further information.
- Plan your work around anticipated delays. Use this time to do background reading, writing reports, writing introductory chapter of your thesis, etc.
- Become familiar with the School/University computer facilities, e.g. word processing, spreadsheets, databases, graphics, statistics, e-mail, etc. A huge amount of extremely useful information is available online. Learning to use these at the beginning of your course will be of substantial benefit when the time comes to write your thesis. Consider learning to type - there are now some very good computer-based typing tutors which are both inexpensive and effective.
- *There are a number of useful texts to help students with PhD study.*

## 6.2 Researching the Literature

Information provision in nursing, midwifery and other health-related disciplines is widely available via the University of Dundee's Library & Learning Centre (LLC) through a variety of search tools. These tools permit the construction of systematic literature searches and also integrate with reference management tools such as *EndNote*.

This brief guide lists the most useful databases and search tools. Please check with LLC staff if you have problems accessing any of them.

### 1. University of Dundee Library Search

This is a database containing records for all material stocked by Dundee University Library, books and journals (many of which are available in **full-text**). It's useful for an initial search to access only the resources which the Library provides, but you should note that is not exhaustive in its coverage. It can be accessed at **[www.dundee.ac.uk/library](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/library)**

### 2. Journals database search tools

There are several key databases in the field of nursing, midwifery and health. Access to the following is available using your University of Dundee login details (your username & password). You should always

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access these resources by clicking on the links contained in the LLC's *Subject Resources* pages, available at [www.dundee.ac.uk/library/subjects/nursing](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/library/subjects/nursing). Many of the journal articles you will retrieve from the search tools listed below are available in full-text from the LLC via the *Link To* button, which is often built into the search tools or search platforms which host the individual databases.

- **CINAHL Plus**

**CINAHL Plus** is the *Cumulative Index to Nursing & Allied Health Literature* and it is provided to the University of Dundee via the EBSCO platform. CINAHL Plus contains references to millions of articles published in nursing & health-related journals across the world since the 1980s.

- **Medline**

**Medline** is the equivalent of CINAHL in the medical/clinical field, covering articles in several thousand key journals since the 1950s. It is also offered via the EBSCO platform, so is searched in exactly the same way as Medline Plus. There is a free version available to the public called **PubMed**, which contains exactly the same data but with a less straightforward search tool, so the LLC recommends Medline rather than PubMed.

- **SCOPUS**

**SCOPUS** is a database focusing on broader scientific journals in areas such as life science, materials science, physics, chemistry, engineering and others. It contains all Medline records, but uses a different search platform.

- **Web of Science**

**Web of Science** is part of a larger family of databases called *Web of Knowledge*, with an obvious emphasis on the sciences. It includes a great many references also found in Medline and SCOPUS, but is particularly useful as a search tool in that it indexes many conferences and symposia, something which the other databases listed here do not cover in great detail.

- **British Education Index/ERIC**

The **British Education Index** and its US counterpart **ERIC** (Educational Resources Information Centre) do for the field of education what CINAHL and Medline do for nursing & medicine, covering journals in all aspects of educational theory and practice. They are useful if you are studying pedagogy alongside the caring professions. Once again, they use the EBSCO platform, so search techniques will be the same as for CINAHL & Medline.

### 3. Clinical evidence search tools

There are several tools which allow you to search for systematic reviews of research, results of clinical trials and other clinical evidence to support decision-making in the dispensation of health or medical care. Again, all can be accessed using a University login, and via the LLC homepage.

- **Cochrane Library**

**The Cochrane Library** contains systematic reviews or 'meta-analyses' of multiple randomized controlled trials (RCTs), and also results of the individual trials themselves.

- **TRIP (Turning Research Into Practice)**

The **TRIP** search tool retrieves evidence-based guidelines and clinical/nursing standards from a number of UK and international organisations including NICE, SIGN and NGC.

#### 4. Other useful resources

- **National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)** This database lists ongoing and recently completed research projects funded by, or of interest to, the United Kingdom's National Health Service. It is available on the internet at [www.nihr.ac.uk](http://www.nihr.ac.uk). No ID/Password is required.
- **NHS Knowledge Network**  
This service is provided by NHS Education Scotland, offering access to many key databases (including *Embase*) and a vast collection of over 4,000 full-text electronic journals in the fields of nursing, medicine and health care. It is open to all NHS employees and people working for or with the NHS. Access is via an ATHENS ID & password - please note this is a *different* ID to the one used to access University of Dundee electronic resources. You can set up an ATHENS account to access the NHS Knowledge Network at [www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/login.aspx](http://www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/login.aspx)

#### 6.3 Other Points for Consideration

The PhD and MPhil is a **research training degree**. It is also much more. It is a time to develop your skills, organise yourself and develop the ability to interact with others. Employers consider more than just the ability to work in a laboratory when making decisions about who to employ. This section outlines some aspects which can help you achieve your goals.

#### 6.4 A Research Diary

The 3 years of your PhD should be a time to develop your independence. To do this it is important that you monitor your own success and failures. One good way is to keep a research diary. This is designed to help you to:

- **Plan** your work
- **Manage** your time
- **Keep a record** of your **achievements**

Remember - it will only be of benefit to you if you **use it** and keep it **up to date**

#### 6.5 Task Management and Interpersonal Skills

You should aim to improve your capabilities in these areas.

**Task Management** refers to your ability to get things done, and includes:

- Making headway with tasks
- Planning and organisation
- Carrying out instructions
- Working independently

- Writing up the results

**Interpersonal Skills** refers to your ability to get on with other people and includes:

- Co-operation with others in your group
- Responding positively to help and advice
- Developing a team spirit
- Developing skills of presentation, verbal and written
- Dealing with bureaucracy

## 6.6 Target Setting

The use of formalised target setting, provided the targets are realistic, is an excellent way of keeping on top of your workload. Try to set yourself targets and meet them.

**WHY?** To help you make decisions about your progress.

**WHO?** Target setting involves a partnership between you and your supervisor.

**HOW?** You should be given the chance to look at your performance and set targets in chosen areas which **you** feel require work.

**WHEN?** Continue throughout your project but you should aim to begin early in the first year. The Monitoring Committee structure can be a basis for your target setting.

Targets should be **SMART**

### **Specific**

eg I will read the *Journal of Advanced Nursing* each month.

**NOT** *I will read the literature.*

### **Measurable**

eg I will produce a summary of my work each month.

**NOT** *I'll do more work.*

### **Agreed**

eg My supervisor and I have agreed that this is a worthwhile target areas for me.

**NOT** *Well - it's my target so I'll do what I want!*

### **Realistic**

eg I will aim to produce a paper for each year of study.

**NOT** *I will finish my project in 2 years.*

### **Time-contained**

eg I have four weeks to work on this target starting on ... and I will review progress on ...

**NOT** *I'll think about this target when I remember it.*

## 6.7 Study Skills

- Take an *active* part during group discussions. Make sure you understand the major points - ask if you do not.
- Review your results the same day that you have taken them.
- One way to review your results is to go through underlining to highlight the major findings. This is useful to concentrate and focus your study.
- Start to read the literature early in your study. Your first year literature review can form the basis for the introductory chapter to your thesis. Do not put off reading the literature, aiming to catch up later on. You will run out of time and cause yourself an enormous amount of work.
- Have daily and weekly plans for work and study.
- Describe each item clearly in your plan taking into account any special items, e.g. library visits, booking time on shared equipment, etc.
- Decide on the order of importance of the work, e.g. immediate work, next week's work - realistically estimate the time needed to complete it. ***Remember things always take longer than you anticipate.***
- Organise presentations within the School and wider University, at the Annual Student Symposium, and external conferences etc. plenty of time in advance. Preparation of slides, a poster etc. is more time-consuming than you might think.
- The end product of your work is usually a publication. Make sure you know the format of journals in your field. Think of your results in terms of figures or tables for a paper. Ask yourself often: "are these data good enough for publication?" Instructions for Authors for a wide range of journals can be found online at <http://ezproxy.mco.edu:2048/>

## 6.8 Learning Skills

### Review

- Can I use what I have done to solve similar problems?
- Can I draw any conclusions from this solution?
- Can I use what I have learned here in other situations?

### Evaluation

- Have I done all I wanted to do?
- Could I improve my presentation/solution?
- What have I achieved?
- Is it novel?

### Investigation

- Which resources are available to me?
  - people
  - materials
  - skills
  - information - book and non-book

### **Production/Presentation/Communication**

- Carry out the task
- Present ideas in their final form
- Present information in an appropriate form

### **Task Analysis and Planning**

- What do I have to do?
- Plan how you will tackle the task

### **Considerations**

- Which resources will I use?
- How will I use them?
- What will I make a record of?

### **Final Idea/Proposed Solution**

- Have I got all I need to carry out this task?
- How will I present my ideas/information?

Much useful help and advice can be found by visiting the Postgraduate Portal which can be found on the University website at <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/advancedundee/PG/>

