



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

Postgraduate Research at the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Trinity College Dublin

Information for prospective students



The School of Nursing and Midwifery, Trinity College Dublin

Thank you for considering Trinity College Dublin, School of Nursing and Midwifery as the location to complete your Postgraduate Research Studies. Trinity seeks to be an environment where independent enquiry is highly valued and where staff and students are nurtured as individuals with their own unique life stories. We actively support the principle of equal access and promote our student and staff development within an open, liberal, and facilitative environment of learning. The ethos of the school places the patient/client/service user and their families as our primary focus. Through education and research, we seek to make a significant contribution to the delivery of evidence-based, high quality health care at a national and an international level through the activities of our academic staff, international colleagues, and graduates.

The School of Nursing and Midwifery offers full and part time postgraduate research programmes commencing in March and September each year. Our School provides a rich environment for postgraduate students with support from academic staff from multi-disciplinary backgrounds, with established research strengths. You will have the **unique opportunity to work closely with these experts**, receiving personalised guidance throughout your research journey. Our School is a hub of innovation, ranked among the best in the world. With a vibrant research community, and an impressive history of impactful research, we provide the ideal environment for you to **nurture and grow your research ambitions**. In this document we will provide you with some information about doing a research degree at the School of Nursing and Midwifery, including how to apply and some guidance to support the development of your all-important research proposal. At the end of your research degree, you will be equipped with research and other transferable skills that will support you to succeed in diverse careers within and beyond academia.

Research at the School of Nursing and Midwifery

At the heart of Trinity College Dublin is a culture of academic freedom, diversity of scholarship, the pursuit of truth and the highest level of academic standards. Trinity is driven by a passion for research, and it is an essential part of what we do. Our research has a fundamental influence on our teaching and together they form our identity as a university. Our excellent research is one of the factors that makes Trinity the leading university in Ireland and sees us recognised around the world. At the School of Nursing and Midwifery, research is also at the heart of everything we do. Our mission is to advance knowledge, challenge conventions, and create meaningful impact that directly improves the health and wellbeing of the communities we serve. Through strong partnerships with clinicians, public-patient representatives, and international collaborators, we are committed to fostering a research environment that thrives on mentorship, innovation, and teamwork. Our four research centres and our cross-cutting themes focus on critical areas: ageing, healthcare innovation, maternal and women's health, mental health and recovery, healthcare for older adults with intellectual disabilities, and child health. These priorities reflect our core values of justice and inclusion, dignity and respect, and a vision for sustainable and innovative healthcare. You can read more about research at the School of Nursing and Midwifery in our research strategy [here](#).

Starting your Postgraduate Research Journey

If you are thinking of starting a research degree before you apply, you will need to make sure you meet the entry requirements and then develop your research proposal. Candidates are normally required to possess a good Honours bachelor's degree (i.e., an upper-second class (2.1) or first-class Honours bachelor's degree), or equivalent qualification (i.e., a grade point average of at least 3.2). However, possession of such a qualification does not guarantee acceptance. New research entrants with appropriate academic qualifications are normally admitted directly to year one on the Ph.D. register by the Dean of Graduate Studies on the recommendation of the applicant's prospective supervisor supported by the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate). Students may also be admitted to the MSc research to submit an MSc thesis, or they can transfer to the PhD register on completion of a formal

transfer process. Students who do not possess the minimum requirements may be given permission to register and this will be at the discretion of the Dean of Graduate Studies. It is important to note that the first year of the PhD is probationary.

All applicants whose first language is not English and who have not been educated through the medium of English must meet Trinity College's Postgraduate English Language Requirements. The School of Nursing and Midwifery requires applicants presenting the IELTS (Academic version) and IELTS Indicator to have achieved: Grade 6.5 overall **with a minimum of grade of 6 in each category.**

Trinity Bands	Course Entry	IELTS Academic or Indicator	Duolingo English Test	TOEFL iBT	Cambridge Advanced or Proficiency	PTE Academic (Pearson)
Band B (Standard entry)	UG & PG Standard requirements	6.5 overall 6.0 in each band	120 overall, 100 in each sub score	90 overall 21 in each section	180 overall no score below 170	69 overall 59 in each section

English language requirements will be waived for applicants whose first language is not English and who are currently registered as nurses or midwives with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) where that registration with the NMBI was based on the applicant's IELTS score and they have evidence of continued engagement in a high intensity English language environment.

Your Research Proposal

Applicants are required upon registration to state the subject of their research; the subject proposed must be approved by the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) to which it pertains, who must also be satisfied that the applicant is qualified to undertake the research stated to the standard required for the registered degree. If you are thinking about doing a research degree and are unsure about the topic or methodology you should get in touch informally with the Director of Teaching and Learning - Postgraduate for some advice on the next steps. If you have an idea and have started to think about the methodology and writing

your proposal, then have a look at our academic staff and reach out to them to see if they are available to supervise you and if they can support you with the proposal. If you have already identified a supervisor and are working with them, then keep in close contact with them to develop your proposal. You can use the guidelines that are in this document to structure and format that proposal. **Please do not submit an application until you have a viable research proposal and have identified a supervisor.** If you are unsure of what to do next, then get in touch and we will do our best support you. You can contact the Director of Teaching and Learning – Postgraduate at snmpgr@tcd.ie.

Non-Resident Ph.D. Programme

Trinity College Dublin has launched a Non-Resident PhD programme available to students interested in undertaking a structured Ph.D. who will be able to access our world-class research talent from the comfort of their homes – be that at home in Ireland or even further away. As part of this programme a candidate is expected to be a fully registered student at Trinity College Dublin with access to our libraries and services whether based on or off-campus. A programme of online seminars and discussion groups will be made available to enable connection with fellow Trinity researchers within and across disciplines. Please note that students on the Non-Resident register are not eligible for any internal university funding models. Further information is available in the [Non-Resident Ph.D. Programme fact sheet](#). If you wish to discuss applying for a Non-Resident Ph.D. Programme, please contact genadgso@tcd.ie.

International Students

At the School of Nursing and Midwifery, we take immense pride in fostering a diverse and inclusive community that welcomes international students from all corners of the globe. We understand that studying in a new country can be both exciting and challenging, which is why we are committed to providing a supportive environment that helps candidates thrive academically and personally. Our vibrant campus culture celebrates different perspectives and backgrounds, offering numerous opportunities for you to connect with fellow students, engage in cultural exchange, and join various extracurricular societies. We believe that your unique experiences and insights will enrich our college community, and we are excited to support you as you progress your research.

Tuition Fees

Information about fees can be located on the Student Finance [page](#).

Funding

Funding opportunities are highly competitive and generally involve the submission of an application to advertised positions. To be alerted of these opportunities please visit our website or follow our social media channels.

Your PhD at the School of Nursing and Midwifery (SNM), Trinity College Dublin

All postgraduate research programmes at Trinity College Dublin follow a structured format, regardless of funding. These PhD structured programmes typically take four years for full-time students and six years for part-time students. Throughout the programme, students will need to meet specific requirements at the end of each year to progress. Even though the programme is structured for four years (full-time) or six years (part-time), you can still finish your PhD thesis sooner. However, for part-time students, finishing early might involve additional fees. This structure provides clear milestones and checkpoints throughout your PhD journey. All PhD students must take additional courses (taught modules) and earn between 10 and 30 ECTS credits during their studies. This is a university-wide requirement. PhD students are required to complete a mandatory 5-credit course on research integrity and open scholarship. The MSc by research is conducted over two years full time and three years part time. Students may in consultation with their supervisor, decide to transfer to the PhD register and if they do, they must successfully complete a transfer interview during second year for full time students and third year for part time students.

In the SNM students must complete a minimum of 25 ECTS prior to being 'confirmed' on this PhD register. This happens during year 2 for fulltime students and year 3 for parttime students. Students achieve these 25 ECTS by completing the Research Integrity and Open Scholarship module (5 ECTS), attending the Research Support and Education Day (RSED) (10 ECTS), and completing a mandatory Introduction to healthcare research module for PhD

students (10 ECTS). Students are free to take other modules as part of the structured PhD, but they must complete the minimum set by the SNM. There is a range of modules available based on individual needs and interests, more about these can be found [here](#) in chapter four of the Trinity College Postgraduate Research Student Handbook. Students who wish to do additional modules are advised to spread these over the course rather than trying to do them altogether.

The main elements of the PhD are the monthly **RSED** which include **Peer Support**, the **Research Integrity and Open Scholarship Module**, the **Introduction to Healthcare Research Module**, **Annual Progress Reports**, **Confirmation of the Continuation on the Ph.D. Register**, and finally **Examination of the Research Candidate**. These activities which are compulsory, all happen in the context of **PhD supervision** which is ongoing throughout the entire programme. You can learn more about the process [here](#).

Drafting a Research Proposal for your PhD Application

All applicants to the PhD programme in Trinity College Dublin must submit a research proposal as part of the application process. This proposal serves several functions:

- It is used by academic assessors to determine whether the applicant has identified a clear focus for their PhD.
- It should provide the assessors with confidence that the applicant has the necessary background understanding and competence to undertake the research.
- Finally, a research proposal is a specific genre of academic writing and so is used by assessors to evaluate the academic writing skill set of the applicant.

The research proposal is a high-stakes component of the application process. It requires time and investment by the applicant to ensure that it makes a convincing argument in support of the application. Schools may differ in the specific requirements for research proposals, but there are some core elements that will always be expected. If you do not find specific directions on a School website or do not receive specific guidance from your proposed supervisor, you should use the guide below. Your research proposal represents your thinking at this stage in the research process. It is not a binding commitment to a specific research question, and it is not at all unusual for PhD candidates to find that the thesis they submit has

developed in a quite different direction to that outlined in their research proposal. However, the research proposal will be an important consideration for the School in finding a supervisor with the necessary domain expertise to support you in a successful PhD experience. The more specific you are about your research interest, the better the chances of finding a good match. Sometimes, even strong PhD applicants cannot be accepted into a School because there is no supervisor with the relevant domain expertise. Understanding this from the start makes it more likely you will not be disappointed later in the PhD process.

Before you start, consider the following:

- Have you discussed your ideas with your potential supervisor? Does the supervisor expect to review your proposal before you submit it?
- Have you checked whether there are specific requirements within the School to which you are applying?
- Are you confident that you have identified key background literature/evidence relevant to your proposal?
- You are not expected to have thoroughly explored the literature – that can happen once you are accepted into the PhD programme. You are expected to be aware of key publications or research within the domain you intend exploring. You may not be able to access all these resources, but demonstrating your awareness of their existence is important.
- Have you identified a topic that genuinely interests you? Undertaking a four-year programme of research requires an equal mix of passion and persistence. It is important that you are excited by the area you have chosen.
- Have you considered what kinds of research questions most interest you? Are you drawn to theoretical constructs or to empirical data? These issues will be especially important in deciding on what research methods are compatible with your research interest and your research skill set.

In drafting your research proposal remember:

- √ Be clear and concise in your writing. The proposal should not normally exceed 3-4,000 words.

- √ Your proposal may be read by several assessors, and some may not have expertise specific to your topic. Write the proposal in a way that makes it easy for a non-expert reader to understand.
- √ Be aware of the importance of referencing conventions within your discipline. The reference list is not included in the word count but is an important source of evidence that you are familiar with the foundational literature in your area of interest.
- √ Check for grammatical and typographical errors. These can distract the reader and detract from the essence of your proposal.

Key elements in a research proposal:

Any research proposal must address at least the following questions:

- What is the question/puzzle/phenomenon you want to investigate?
- Why is that question/puzzle/phenomenon important?
- How are you going to explore/investigate it?

These questions are usually addressed through the following core sections and in the following order:

Title: This should be concise and give an idea of your area of study. It can (and will) change over the course of your studies, but a clear title helps to make sure your project is identifiable.

Introduction (200-300 words)

This section should give a clear, concise description of your main research aim and objectives. If you already have a well-formulated research question, this section should set that out for the reader. Do not be fooled into thinking that this short section will be the easiest part – often it is much easier to write this section after you have completed a full draft of your proposal.

(Preliminary) Literature Review (1,500-2,000 words)

In this section, you are expected (i) to briefly summarise what is already known in the academic literature about the question/puzzle you described in your introduction, (ii) to highlight important gaps in knowledge or disagreements within the field, (iii) to

demonstrate how your area of interest relates to what is known and what remains unknown or disputed, and (iv) to showcase your critical analysis skills. A literature review is not a summary of everything you have read. It is your opportunity to show why your research is important considering your critical review of existing knowledge and what the impact would be, if you successfully resolve the puzzle that you have described. Key points to consider include:

- What are the main relevant concepts within the area of interest? (Consider any specific terminology you may need to define).
- What are the key theories and questions within this area? (Consider selecting a subset of these to ensure you keep your focus tight).
- What empirical support exists for (or against) these theories?
- What are current key gaps in knowledge or areas of disagreement?
- How does your proposed focus of research address a current gap or area of disagreement?
- Why is addressing that gap/disagreement important? How will your research make a valuable contribution?

Proposed Method (800-1,000 words)

This section is where you explain how you intend answering the question you have outlined above and demonstrate your understanding of the research process. Important considerations here are the kinds of data you intend using in your research and whether considering these decisions, quantitative, qualitative, or mixed research methods will be most appropriate. It is also important to think about any specific resources that may be critical to your research. You may already have a clear vision of the sequence of steps that will form your research plan but that is not always the case. Research methods evolve as questions become clearer and more focused. What you are setting out is your plan at this point – a plan that is likely to go through many different iterations before it is implemented. In reviewing this section, make sure that you have clearly demonstrated your understanding of the research process.

Reference list:

Consider the reference list as your opportunity to demonstrate your awareness of the existing academic literature base as well as your competence in the conventions of citing existing sources. Ensure it includes all and only those sources you have cited in the proposal (including in the Method section) and that the references are sufficiently recent to indicate you are in touch with the latest developments in the field. Quantity is not the most important measure here – relevance, importance and accuracy are weighted much more heavily. In the School of Nursing and Midwifery, the American Psychological Association (Seventh Edition) approach to citations is used.

Submitting your Postgraduate Research Application

Once you have secured a supervisor and your research proposal has been accepted, you can submit your application which is done online [here](#). When you apply, you will have the option to upload your supporting documents. The following information will be required before a decision can be made on your application:

- Two academic references
- Academic transcript(s) which must be certified by the issuing body:
Please note that graduates of the University of Dublin, Trinity College Dublin do not need to provide academic transcripts or copies of award parchments.
- Certified copy of degree certificate(s):
Please note that graduates of the University of Dublin, Trinity College Dublin do not need to provide certified copies of degree certificates.
- A recognised certificate of [English Language Competency](#) if English is not your first language.
- Your research proposal which has been endorsed by your supervisor(s).

Additional information on the application process for international students is available [here](#).

We look forward to welcoming you to the School of Nursing and Midwifery and if you require any assistance please get in touch snmpgr@tcd.ie



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The University of Dublin

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