So you’re thinking about doing a PhD…

Prof Katherine Mills

Samantha Lynch

The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and culture.

We pay our respects to those who have cared and continue to care for Country.
What is a PhD?

Things to think about before starting:
  - How, when, where to apply
  - How you’ll be funded / scholarships
  - Other Higher Degree Research options
  - Identifying and approaching supervisors
  - Developing a proposal

During and after the PhD:
  - Facilities available to PhD students
  - Balancing work with your PhD
  - Expectations/milestones
  - Possible career routes both in and out of academia
The role of trauma in the nature and treatment of substance use disorders

Understanding and addressing interpersonal risk and protective factors in the development of substance use among young people

Alcohol aggression and violence among young people: A volatile mix

Risks and harms of binge drinking in young people: Bridging neurobiological cognitive and psychological perspectives

The relationship between traumatic stress problematic substance use and disordered eating behaviours among Australian adolescents

Aetiology of excessive alcohol consumption and alcohol use disorder in young adults: Identifying change mechanisms to inform prevention and intervention strategies

Investigating the relationship between adolescent nutrition and other lifestyle behaviours on onset of chronic inflammation

Healthy body healthy mind: Examining the relationships between six modifiable health behaviours and mental

The seductive allure of neuroscience-based education: Alcohol and other drug harm reduction for young people

The relationship between post traumatic stress disorder and opioid use among adults with chronic non cancer pain

Empowering through change: The treatment of substance use disorders among mentally ill offenders

Therapeutic alliance on the NSW Drug Court

Understanding the general factor of psychopathology and aetiology of mental and substance use disorders in young people: Optimising targets and timing of prevention

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What is a PhD?

Research Project + Thesis + Professional Development
Career paths

About 51% of PhD students hope to enter business or the public sector

Just over half of current Australian PhD students (51 percent) responding to our national survey hope to leave academia and work in business or the public sector once they graduate.

PhD graduates are increasingly finding jobs outside academia

A growing percentage of PhD graduates are finding employment in businesses, government and the non-profit sector. 19 out of the 20 largest Australian companies now have PhD graduates among their senior executive teams.

Public and private health & medical sectors employ the most PhDs

In the public sector, the main area of PhD employment is hospitals and health care, while in the business sector the medical and pharmaceutical industry ranks third. Together these sectors employ the most PhD degree holders outside of academia.

“Advancing Australia’s knowledge economy: who are the top PhD employers”

The University of Sydney
Things to think about before doing a PhD…

Over to Kath

What to expect when you’re expecting a PhD
So you want to do a PhD…

So you are thinking of doing a PhD in…?

- No right or wrong reasons for wanting to do a PhD
- It is a very big commitment – make sure that it is the right step for you
- Ask yourself:
  - Does this degree qualify you, or put you in a better position to do what you want to do?
  - Are you willing and able to put in the work required for that outcome?
Where to apply

- Which university?

- Requirements (e.g., compulsory coursework at Usyd from 2021): [https://www.sydney.edu.au/study/study-options/postgraduate-research.html](https://www.sydney.edu.au/study/study-options/postgraduate-research.html)


- Talk to current/recently completed candidates

When to apply


Applications are open year round.

Start dates have to align with the start of research periods.
- Research Period 2: Start date 1 Mar
- Research Period 3: Start date 1 Jul
- Research Period 4: Start date 1 Oct
When to apply

• When is the right time for you?
• F/T or P/T (3.5 vs 7yrs to complete)
• Can vary candidature during degree

How to apply

  • Determine eligibility and suitable course
  • Develop your research proposal and find a research supervisor
  • Funding your HDR study
  • Gather required documentation and submit online

* Also check the requirements with your faculty.
Eligibility

Need to demonstrate sufficient prior research experience and capability. In most cases, you will have either:

- a *bachelor’s degree* with first or upper second class honours or
- a *master’s degree* performed at a *high academic standard*, and which includes a *substantial component of research* (equivalent to 25% of one year’s full-time enrolment)
- an *equivalent qualification* that demonstrates research experience, excellence and capability.

These are the minimum requirements for eligibility but they do not guarantee admission. That remains at the discretion of the Associate Dean (Higher Degree by Research) for the faculty.

Refer to the *University of Sydney (Higher Degree by Research) Rule 2011* for full policy details.

Develop your research proposal

- Cohesive program of work to answer a set of research questions:
  - Feasible
  - Substantive contribution to new knowledge
- Approx 2,000 words
- Guidance on how to develop research proposal: [https://www.sydney.edu.au/study/how-to-apply/postgraduate-research/how-to-write-a-research-proposal-for-a-strong-phd-application.html](https://www.sydney.edu.au/study/how-to-apply/postgraduate-research/how-to-write-a-research-proposal-for-a-strong-phd-application.html)
- Not set in stone
Finding a research supervisor

• Supervisory team

• In approaching potential supervisors, be guided by:
  • Area of study
  • Content / methodological skills required
  • Consider mix of senior and early career researchers

• Discuss expectations

• Talk to current / recent students  

Funding / scholarships

• Domestic students do not pay tuition fees (covered by the Australian Government)

• Scholarships are highly competitive and tend to be for a set amount (e.g., RTP 2021: $35,629 per annum)

• Stipends may go towards living expenses, research costs, or both.

• Some scholarships are specific to a research project or discipline  

• Scholarships:  

• Egs: RTP; NHMRC Postgraduate Scholarships; Rotary Health; other (depending on funding Matilda Centre or specific project scholarships)
Things to think about before doing a PhD…
Over to Kath

What to expect when you’re expecting a PhD
What to expect when you’re expecting a PhD

Milestone requirements

Annual Progress Reviews

**Early**
- Refining proposal
- Literature review
- Planning research
- Writing (maybe publishing & presenting)

**Middle**
- Doing the research
- Collecting & analysing data
- Writing, publishing, presenting

**Final**
- Writing thesis
- Writing, publishing, presenting

Milestones

**Milestones are set by**

- University: e.g. compulsory online modules, writing integrity check
- Faculty: e.g. lit review, research training, presentations
- You!

University milestones and faculty milestones can be found in the Progress Planning and Review for HDR candidates policy in the Policy Register.
Annual Progress Reviews (APRs)

**Purpose:** to help keep you on track & give you an opportunity to discuss issues or get feedback/assistance with your candidature

**Comprised of:**
- 1. Online Progress Review Report + supporting documentation
- 2. Progress Review Interview (approx. 30 minutes)

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Coursework

- HDR degrees from 2021 include a **compulsory coursework component**
- **No fees** (though additional courses may involve costs)
- Must complete **12 credits** (most units are 6 credits) **by the end of Year 2**
- **Over 270 units to select from**
- Units available in
  - Quantitative & qualitative analysis
  - Ethics
  - Research methods
  - Project management
  - Discipline specific
- Check out links below for more info…

*Full list of subjects available online in Table R of the HDR Handbook*
Coursework: Insights from current Matilda Students

- Some units only available in Semester 1 or 2
- Important to consider timing and workload of subjects in your planning
- Talk to your supervisor when selecting subjects and planning
- Select and enroll in subjects early so you don’t miss out and have to wait 6-12 months
- Grades appear on your transcript
- Embrace the opportunity to upskill early in your PhD!

Full list of subjects available is available online in Table R of the HDR Handbook

Facilities & support

University/Faculty
- HDRAC (HDR Administration Centre)
- Research Education Team
- Learning Centre
- Library research support & services
- FMH HDR Workshops
- Informatics Hub
- General support & services

Matilda Centre
- PhD Group
- Stats Drop In
- Highly collaborative & supportive environment
Balancing Work & PhD

- Treat your PhD like a job – establish set hours/days
- Plan your time – be realistic about what’s achievable and try to minimize overlap of busy times in PhD and work
- Schedule down time
- Give yourself time to figure out what works best for you

Questions & Discussion

Questions about applying, eligibility, requirements
Katherine Mills: katherine.mills@sydney.edu.au

Questions for current students
Samantha Lynch: samantha.lynch@sydney.edu.au
Logan Harvey: logan.harvey@sydney.edu.au

PhD Group Queries
Christina Marel: christina.marel@sydney.edu.au
Katrina Champion: katrina.champion@sydney.edu.au