

Nursing and Midwifery Research Career Framework (NMRCF)



COUNCIL OF DEANS
OF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY
(Australia & New Zealand)

Creating
The
Future

Australia - Acknowledgement of Country

CDNM acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present.

Aotearoa New Zealand - Mihi

He mihi tēnei ki te Kaihanga, nāna nei ngā mea katoa, māna e whakaoti. Kia mihia e Mātou te Kaunihera ki ngā Iwi Taketake, ko Koutou e ngā Iwi Moemoea, me ngā Iwi o Aotearoa. Tēna, me whakanuia a Kiingi Tuuheitia Pootatau Te Wherowhero VII kua riro atu ki tua o te arai, haere atu e te Ariki, e moe. Koutou te hunga mate ki a Koutou. Hoki ano ki a Tātou te Kanohi Ora, Tēnā Koutou, Tēnā Koutou, Tēnā Tātou Katoa.

This is an acknowledgement to the Creator of all things past and future. We the Council greet all the Indigenous Peoples of Australia and Aotearoa. Let us pay our respects to King Tuuheitia Pootatau Te Wherowhero VII who has passed through the veil of death, farewell, the paramount Chief, and rest in peace. You, the dead to the dead, and turning now to us the Living, twice we greet You all, we greet all of Us.



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Foreword



Professor Brendan McCormack

Elected Board member Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia and New Zealand)

I am delighted to have the opportunity on behalf of the Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia & New Zealand) (CDNM) to endorse this Nursing and Midwifery Research Career Framework (NMRCF) that recognises the important intersection between practice and research and elevates our thinking about how we systematically plan research careers.

The purpose of the Framework is to provide a reflective decision-making pathway for nurses and midwives who wish to pursue a career in research. Working through the framework enables nurses and midwives to develop an awareness of the different opportunities available to create an individual pathway for research career development.

This Framework is being published at a critical juncture in the development of research policy and strategy in Australia and New Zealand, at a time when funding streams are increasingly competitive as the overall pot of funding does not match GDP, and at a time when healthcare is experiencing challenges to its shape, form and function. It is at such times that we need clear decision-making frameworks that enable nurses

and midwives to navigate what are often murky and turbulent waters to arrive at the destination of being a successful researcher.

We are also in a time when the healthcare sector is heavily reliant on innovation and evidence-informed practices, and this framework stands as a beacon for nurturing the next generation of nursing and midwifery researchers to become leaders in these spaces. It is imperative that we support the development of academic careers, ensuring that nurses and midwives are equipped to lead research programs and ultimately deliver improvements in health outcomes for persons, people and populations. Our practice environments need to be places that provide safe, effective, achievable, respectful, responsive and person-centred care to everyone and nurses & midwives know what this looks like, how it feels to achieve and most importantly, the questions that need to be asked to advance knowledge and impact. We have a significant opportunity to lead, navigate and direct research careers that will generate capacity and capability across the health sector for generations to come. The Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery's (Australia & New Zealand) Research Career Framework (NMRCF) is an important step forward towards these overall goals.

This framework was developed by the Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery's (Australia & New Zealand) Research Advisory Committee: Thomas Buckley, Catherine Cook, Tracey Bucknall, Philippa Seaton, Melissa Bloomer, Caleb Ferguson, Nicholas Procter, Matthew Parsons, Allison Cummins (Midwifery Advisory Committee representative).

Introduction

The evolving landscape of healthcare demands a comprehensive academic foundation for nurses and midwives, considering their critical role in patient care and health systems. Research in nursing and midwifery is essential for improving clinical practice and healthcare outcomes. The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasises that effective healthcare systems require professionals who are not only skilled in practice but also engaged in research to inform and guide their work ¹. Nurses and midwives, with their unique insights into the healthcare system, are at the forefront of leading research initiatives that foster safe, effective, efficient, and person-centered healthcare. Their involvement in research is critical for developing innovative solutions to complex health challenges, ensuring that the healthcare system evolves in response to the needs of the people they care for and communities. The literature extensively highlights the significance of nursing research, showcasing that nurses have a proven history of conducting high-quality clinical research that enhances patient care and outcomes ².

The integration of nursing and midwifery practice and academic work is crucial for fostering research careers, with calls for nursing and midwifery career frameworks or pathways to help bridge the gap between practice and research ³. The Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia & New Zealand) (CDNM) Nursing

and Midwifery Research Career Framework (NMRCF) builds on the Systems, People, Health, Evidence, Research, and Education (SPHERE) Nursing and Midwifery Clinician Researcher Career Pathway, a comprehensive model designed to enhance the quality and impact of clinical research in nursing and midwifery ⁴. The SPHERE framework encourages researchers to adopt a holistic approach that considers the healthcare system's structure, the needs and experiences of patients and providers, and the integration of evidence-based practices. By fostering collaboration among researchers, clinicians, and educators, SPHERE aims to bridge the gap between research and practice, ensuring that findings are translated into meaningful improvements in patient care ⁵. Other frameworks that informed the development of the CDNM Nursing and Midwifery Research Career Framework include the United Kingdom (UK) Department of Health Strategy for Developing Clinical Academic Researchers within Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions ⁶, the Council of Deans of Health, Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Clinical Academic Research Careers in the UK (pathway) ⁷ the UK National Health Service Clinical Academic Careers Framework: A framework for optimising clinical academic careers across healthcare professions ⁸, and the Australian Government, National Health and Medical Research Council: Report Investigating Clinician Researcher Pathways ⁹.

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The CDNM Nursing and Midwifery Research Career Framework provides a pathway for nurses and midwives who wish to pursue a career in research. This framework acknowledges that nurses and midwives embark on research careers at various stages of their professional career trajectory and often take diverse routes to develop their research capabilities. It outlines the significance of research education and the requirements for undertaking doctoral studies at Australian and New Zealand

universities, the important role of supervision and mentorship, and employment models within a framework that promotes progression of capabilities as a researcher. Additionally, the framework highlights the diverse career trajectories of exemplar nurse and midwife researchers in Australia and New Zealand at different stages of their research careers through academic research profiles.



The Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia & New Zealand) Nursing and Midwifery Research Career Framework

Potential employment models for nurse and midwifery researchers



Established researcher

An established researcher maintains a prominent international profile and demonstrates sustained leadership in high-quality research that addresses significant health consumer needs. They manage research teams, foster collaborations, and secure major funding for impactful initiatives. With an established publication record in top-tier journals, an established researcher mentors students and early-career researchers. Their work contributes to social and economic advancements as well as informing public policy relevant to their field.

Mid-career researcher (5-15 post-doctoral degree completion)

A mid-career researcher is a person who has established expertise and leadership in an area of research with national and international significance. A mid-career researcher leads collaborations as chief investigators on grant applications, successfully securing funding from various sources and lead high-impact publications. By mentoring early-career researchers and supervising research students, they enhance research capacity and capability.

Early career researcher (< 5 years post-doctoral degree completion)

Early-career researchers are typically in the initial stages of their postdoctoral work. An early-career researcher focusses on gaining experience, developing research skills, and building a publication record. This stage often involves mentoring from senior researchers and starting to establish their own research identity.

Research career

Pre doctoral

A pre-doctoral researcher in nursing and midwifery is a person engaged in research activities before completing their PhD. This role involves contributing to specific research projects, assisting with data collection and analysis, and contributing to publications. Typically pursuing a master's degree or preparing for a PhD, pre-doctoral researchers focus on developing their research skills and exploring relevant topics in nursing and midwifery, contributing to evidence-based practice in healthcare.

Post doctoral

A postdoctoral researcher in nursing and midwifery is a person who has completed their PhD and is engaged in further academic or professional research. Their role can vary depending on their career stage: early career, mid-career and established researcher.

Research education

A Doctor of Philosophy, or PhD, is the highest academic degree awarded by universities. It typically involves several years of advanced study and original research in a specific field working under the supervision of PhD supervisors. PhD candidates are required to complete coursework, pass comprehensive examinations, and conduct significant independent research that culminates in a written thesis. The thesis is a substantial piece of original research that presents the candidate's research findings, methodologies, and theoretical contributions to their specific field of study. The thesis typically includes a literature review, a detailed description of the research methods and methodology used, analysis of the results, and a discussion of the implications of the findings. The work must demonstrate the candidate's ability to conduct independent research and contribute new knowledge to the discipline. Once completed, the thesis is submitted for examination and often defended before a panel of experts in the field.

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) supervisor

A PhD research supervisor is an experienced academic or professional who provides guidance and support to doctoral candidates throughout their research journey. This role encompasses mentoring doctoral candidates in the development of their research proposals, offering expertise in methodological approaches, and assisting with the interpretation and analysis of data. The supervisor fosters a productive research environment by facilitating critical discussions, encouraging independent thinking, and helping candidates navigate academic challenges. Additionally, the supervisor plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the research adheres to ethical standards and contributes to the advancement of knowledge within the field. At most universities, supervisors are required to undertake initial training and have experience as a co-supervisor before they can fulfill the role of principal or lead supervisor. Ongoing professional development in supervision may also be a requirement and is actively encouraged. By cultivating a collaborative and supportive relationship, the PhD research supervisor supports candidates to achieve their academic and professional goals while preparing them for future contributions to their discipline.

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) proposal

A PhD proposal is a formal document that outlines a proposed research project for a doctoral degree, serving as a blueprint for the intended investigation. It details the research question, objectives, methodology, and significance of the study. A well-structured proposal typically includes several essential components: an introduction that contextualises the research topic, a literature review that summarises existing research and identifies gaps, a clear statement of the research problem, question and sub-questions, and specific aims or hypotheses. Additionally, the proposal should outline the research design and methods, including strategies for data collection and analysis, as well as a timeline for the project and potential implications of the findings. Importantly, the proposal should demonstrate the feasibility of the research, addressing access to necessary resources and ethical considerations.

Summary of general entry requirements for PhD in Australia and New Zealand

Different universities in Australia and New Zealand have established specific entry criteria to ensure that prospective candidates possess the necessary academic foundation and research capabilities to succeed in their PhD studies. This summary is derived from an analysis of the essential criteria for PhD entry across Australian and New Zealand universities, highlighting the importance of academic qualifications, research experience, and alignment with institutional research priorities.

Minimum Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree with First Class or Upper Second Class Honours; or
- Master by Research degree; or
- Master by Coursework with a significant research component (at least 25% of the degree); or
- Equivalent qualifications assessed through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

English Language Proficiency:

- Required for all applicants, with specific score benchmarks (e.g., International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 7.0 with no band less than 6.5 See: <https://ielts.org/>).

Research Experience:

- Evidence of substantial research activity, such as a thesis or significant publications, is required.
- At least six months of full-time research activity is typically expected if applying with coursework master's qualification.

Discipline-Specific Requirements:

- Many universities require the doctoral research to align with the university's or discipline-specific research priorities
- Some programs may require evidence of relevant professional experience or contributions to the field.

Special Considerations:

- Applicants may be considered by some universities based on equivalent qualifications (e.g. specialized professional training or certifications) or significant research experience even if they do not meet the formal criteria.
- Opportunities for upgrading from a master's degree to a PhD may be available.

Approval Process:

- Admission decisions usually involve evaluation by faculty committees, including the Associate Dean or Graduate Research School. A research proposal and agreed academic supervisors are normally required prior to successful enrollment.



Research capabilities



LEVEL 1 Pre doctoral (inc. doctoral candidate)



- **Identification and application of clinical, educational, public health or health policy research Issues:**
Utilises personal experience to identify practice based clinical research issues that inform doctoral research and contribute to the research agenda.

Engages with established researchers, or research groups to develop research questions that address gaps in current knowledge. Demonstrates the ability to conduct research under supervision.
- **Critical appraisal and Evidence-Based Practice:**
Critically evaluates evidence and evidence-based guidelines, integrating knowledge of needs, practice environments, and research to inform practice and influence others, while actively engaging in scholarly activities either independently or as part of a team.
- **Research Methodologies and Knowledge Generation:**
Develops knowledge of theoretical frameworks, research methodologies, and knowledge generation relevant to nursing practice, implementing practice changes and engaging consumers, with a focus on translational research and external collaboration.
- **Research Leadership and Ethical Conduct:**
Initiates, conducts, and disseminates findings from localised, national or international research, ensuring ethical conduct and integrity in all research activities, and demonstrating responsibility for planning and delivering research-based education.



LEVEL 2 **Early career** researcher (ECR), < 5 years post-doctoral degree completion



- **Research planning and collaboration:**

Plans, develops, and conducts innovative research in collaboration with organisations, e.g. Local Health Districts, universities, industry, state or commonwealth government.

Actively seeks partnerships with established researchers, at national or international levels, contributing to large grant applications as an associate or co-investigator, and begins to lead seed funding or small grant applications.

- **Educational development and knowledge dissemination:**

Advances evidence-based practice through the development and delivery of educational programs.

Acts as credible research trained academic, facilitating education and mentoring novice researchers while disseminating new knowledge through scientific conference presentations and publications in high-impact peer-reviewed journals.

- **Focused research program development:**

Leads and develops a coherent research program informed by a detailed understanding of practice, educational, public health and/or educational contexts and needs.

Demonstrates research integrity and ethical conduct in all phases of research, ensuring compliance with the relevant research guidelines, such as Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, the New Zealand HRC Research ethics guidelines and the Investigator and Site Personnel Good Clinical Practice (ICH GCP) principles.

- **Research Excellence and Impact:**

Contributes to national research excellence through successful grant applications (as a chief investigator in collaboration with other researchers) and impactful publications.

Establishes a reputation as an emerging authority within the discipline, evidenced by notable conference presentations, involvement in professional associations, and membership in research teams funded by substantial grants from government and industry partners.



LEVEL 3 **Mid-career** researcher (MCR) 5-15 years post-doctoral completion



- **Establishment of research expertise and leadership:**

Cultivates a high-quality area of research with national and international significance, establishing a specific research expertise within collaborative teams, including multidisciplinary groups and leaders in the field.

- **Grant application and funding acquisition:**

Actively leads collaborations with established researchers for local, national or international grant applications, taking on the role of Chief Investigator.

Maintains research networks to enhance engagement in impactful research programs, demonstrating the ability to secure funding from internal and external sources.

- **Mentorship and capacity building:**

Enhances the capacity of research-ready staff by mentoring early career researchers and supervising honours, master's, and/or doctoral students.

Disseminates new knowledge through high-impact publications and presentations, while ensuring research integrity and ethical conduct in all activities.

- **Contribution to research excellence and community engagement:**

Contributes to excellence in research through grant income and high-impact publications. Engages in translational research and collaborates with external partners to establish impactful case studies that deliver social and economic advancements, while participating in broader public debates relevant to the discipline.



LEVEL 4 Established researcher



- **Sustained research leadership and international profile:**

Maintains a prominent national and international research profile in a specific research area, demonstrating leadership in developing and conducting a coherent program of high-quality research that addresses significant health consumer needs. Actively ensures that research findings are translated into policy, clinical guidelines, workforce education, and practice improvements.

- **Team management and collaborative partnerships:**

Develops, manages, and supervises research teams within health service research centres, establishing productive collaborations with national and international colleagues, industry partners, and other health professionals to facilitate impactful research initiatives.

- **Knowledge Translation:**

Actively ensures that research findings are translated into policy, clinical guidelines, workforce education, and practice improvements.

- **Strategic funding acquisition and high-quality outputs:**

Secures major competitive and non-competitive research funding to support high-quality outputs, sustaining a significant record of publications in top ranking peer-reviewed international journals that align with Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) guidelines or Research Charter for Aotearoa New Zealand.

- **Mentorship, ethical conduct, and community engagement:**

Supervises honours and higher degree research students, providing expert advice on best practices in research conduct.

Mentors early carer (ECR) and mid-career doctoral supervisors. Demonstrates research integrity and ethical standards in all phases of research, while engaging in initiatives that deliver social and economic advancements and contributing to broader public debates.

Potential employment models for nursing and midwifery researchers



Appointment in healthcare settings

Nursing and midwifery researchers primarily employed in a healthcare organisation who engage in research activities in hospitals, clinics, community health organisations, or other healthcare environments. Their primary purpose is to engage in research that would have a direct impact on the quality of people and family care practices and experiences, as well as enhancing overall health and wellbeing outcomes. In such roles, nurses and midwives lead practice-relevant research as well as engage in interdisciplinary research to implement and evaluate interventions and new practices, determine cultural and contextual characteristics that promote the uptake of interventions and new practices, with an overarching focus on creating safe, effective, efficient and person-centred healthcare systems. Like all researchers, their work focuses on the generation of new knowledge to 1) inform methodological developments in translating research into practice, 2) implementing interventions, new practices and innovations in practice, 3) reducing the impact of human factors on patient, family and community safety, 4) addressing health systems factors that impact on the provision of safe, effective, efficient and person-centred services; 5) building future nursing and midwifery research capacity and capability.



Honorary appointments:

Honorary affiliations refer to positions where nursing and midwifery researchers are recognised as affiliated with an academic institution or research organisation without receiving financial remuneration for their contribution to research in the organisation. This model enables researchers to collaborate with specific projects or initiatives, access resources, and engage in scholarly activities while maintaining their primary employment in a healthcare organisation. Honorary appointments often foster partnerships between nurse and midwifery clinicians and academic organisations, enhancing research translation, knowledge sharing and supervision of the next generation of researchers.



Conjoint appointment:

A conjoint appointment involves a collaborative role between a healthcare organisation and an academic institution. Nursing and midwifery researchers in this model typically divide their time between healthcare practice and academic responsibilities, enabling them to apply research findings directly to practice while contributing to teaching and research within the academic setting. Conjoint appointments embrace the same purpose and foci as that of a researcher employed by a healthcare organisation, but with the added responsibilities brought about by an academic appointment, albeit within a balanced workload model. Conjoint appointees usually have a shared and often integrated set of role objectives that meet both healthcare and academic employee requirements.



University appointment:

In a university appointment, nursing and midwifery researchers are primarily employed by an academic institution. Their roles focus on conducting research, teaching, leadership, governance, community service, and mentoring students and other academics. While they may engage in healthcare practice on a part-time basis or collaborate with healthcare organisations, their main responsibilities are within the university environment, contributing to the academic community and advancing

nursing and midwifery knowledge through research and teaching.

These models illustrate the diverse pathways available for nursing and midwifery researchers, emphasising the importance of collaboration between healthcare, industry, policy and academic research to advance nursing and midwifery science and improve patient and family experience.



Researcher profiles



Nursing is about caring for people at the bedside, in clinics, and in the community. But nursing is also about seeking answers, challenging the status quo, and shaping the future of healthcare. Through research, we generate the knowledge that improves care, enhances patient outcomes, and transforms lives.

Professor Debra Jackson AO

RN BHSc(Nsg) MN(Ed) PhD FRCSI SFHEA FCNA

Professor Debra Jackson AO is a Professor of Nursing at the Susan Wakil School of Nursing, University of Sydney, Australia. She is a leading global nurse scientist and scholar with a career that has spanned clinical practice, academic work, research and scholarship. In 2019, her work was honoured through her being awarded Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for distinguished service to medical education in the field of nursing practice and research as an academic and author.

Debra leads research programs in patient safety, pressure injury, medication errors and primary care; and workforce development and adversity with a particular focus on leadership, role development and workplace culture.

Through out her career, she has focused on equity and social justice in health care and in reducing preventable harm to patients and others engaging with health services. She is also an experienced mentor and supervisor of developing researchers, scholars and leaders.

Debra began her nursing career in New Zealand at the Auckland Hospital Board School of Nursing. She has a Bachelor of Health Science in Nursing from Southern Cross University and a Master of Nursing from the University of Sydney. She then went on to complete a Doctor of Philosophy from Flinders University and advanced leadership training at the University of Oxford.



I firmly believe that midwives and nurses have a huge contribution to make in ensuring the right research gets done to improve outcomes for those we serve, but more importantly, midwives and nurses are the key to getting the evidence into practice and ensuring everyone has better care.

Professor Caroline Homer AO

RM, MNurs, MMedSci (Clin Epi), PhD FAAHMS

Professor Caroline Homer is an Australian midwifery researcher and international advocate for women's health rights. She is a scholar and leader in maternal and newborn healthcare and service delivery. Her current roles at the Burnet Institute in Melbourne are Deputy Director, Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Co-Head, of the Global Women's and Newborn Health Group.

Caroline was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2017 for distinguished service to medicine in the field of midwifery as a clinician, researcher, author and educator, through the development of worldwide education standards, and to professional organisations. She was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences in 2019, and is a former president and life member of the Australian College of Midwives.

Caroline completed her Master of Nursing at the University of Technology Sydney prior to her PhD. She later studied a Master of Medical Science (Clinical Epidemiology) at the University of Sydney.

She has over 30 years of experience as a clinician, educator and researcher and has led numerous research and development projects locally and internationally in relation to implementing midwifery models of care, improving maternal and newborn health and strengthening midwifery education. She has more than 350 peer reviewed publications and has written numerous books and book chapters in the area of midwifery, maternal health and stillbirth.



Find your people, find your passion...no one but you, will get your PhD done.

Dr Reakeeta Smallwood

RN, BN, PhD

Reakeeta Smallwood (RN, BN, PhD) is a proud Gamilaroi Calala murri yinarr, Registered Nurse and Senior Lecturer at the University of Sydney's Susan Wakil Nursing and Midwifery School. She trained as a registered nurse through the NSW Health Aboriginal Cadetship program and has held various roles in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing across health and higher education sectors. As a proud recipient of UTS's Jumbunna Indigenous Higher Degree Postgraduate scholarship, Reakeeta completed her PhD exploring the historical trauma inquiry and resilience with Aboriginal young people in Australia. Reakeeta proudly locates her work within the Indigenous research paradigm and the examiners of her thesis recommended her work for a Special Commendation. Her thesis is one of the first studies in Australia to explore historical trauma

with Aboriginal young people. Reakeeta's early career researcher work is deeply rooted in community-led health research, with a focus on improving outcomes and research capacity with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Since publishing in 2020, Reakeeta's most cited work examined the lasting impact of British colonisation on Indigenous communities worldwide. Reakeeta's research interests are driven by her local community's needs and priorities with a specific focus on ensuring strength-based approaches that account for lasting continuing impact of colonisation including topics and approaches that centre Aboriginal knowledge systems (ontologies/epistemologies/axiologies). When, presenting her work, Reakeeta privileges the voices of her community she remains obligated too using storytelling and poetic inquiry.



Clinical research bridges gaps in knowledge. In my opinion, nurses make amazing researchers as we always question what we are doing. Why did it work? Why didn't it work? What can we do differently to improve outcomes for our patients, their families and our colleagues?

Associate Professor Rachael Parke

Dip Nurs, BHSc Nurs, MHSc, PhD

Dr Rachel Parke is an Associate Professor at the University of Auckland in the School of Nursing as well as the Nurse Senior Research Fellow in the Cardiothoracic and Vascular ICU at Auckland City Hospital. Rachael's research is embedded in clinical practice and addresses areas of importance to clinicians, patients and families worldwide. She designs novel interventions to improve patient-centred outcomes for cardiothoracic surgical and intensive care patients, including programmes of research into oxygen therapy, acute kidney injury and fluid management.

Rachael has previously been the Secretary of the Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Society Clinical Trials Group (ANZICS-CTG), one of the world's leading

trials groups in critical care. The first non-physician to have held an elected office-bearer position within the ANZICS-CTG. She has a passion for establishing the next generation of researchers and has been instrumental in developing two research courses: BASIC Clinical Research and BASIC Research Coordination which have been run successfully in seven countries to date.

Rachael completed her Diploma in Nursing at Manukau Technical Institute and went on to complete a Bachelor of Health Science in Nursing. She then completed a Master of Health Science in Nursing (1st Class Honours) and her PhD in 2014 where she was awarded the Vice-Chancellors Award for Best Doctoral Thesis.



My career in midwifery began with a passion for providing one-to-one care throughout pregnancy, birth, and the early parenting period—what we call midwifery continuity of care. Over time, my focus has shifted from improving the experience of individual women to educating entire cohorts of midwifery students about this beneficial model. My research aims to provide the evidence needed to scale up midwifery continuity of care, ensuring that more women have access to the highest standards of evidence-informed quality care.

Professor Allison Cummins

RM, MEd (Adult), PhD

Professor Allison Cummins is the Head of Midwifery at the University of Newcastle, where she has led the implementation of an innovative curriculum, conducted impactful translational research, and enhanced the visibility of the midwifery profession.

Allison is dedicated to advancing research and informing policy on quality maternal and newborn care. With extensive experience in providing midwifery continuity of care in both community and facility settings, Allison began her academic journey as a midwifery educator in a tertiary hospital while earning her Master of Adult Education. She later completed her PhD at the University of Technology, Sydney, where she served as a Lecturer and Senior Lecturer in Midwifery for over a decade before joining the University of Newcastle in (2021).



Professor Nicole Marsh

RN, MAdvPrac, PhD

Dr. Nicole Marsh is the Nursing and Midwifery Director at Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital in Australia. She has been a Clinical Trial coordinator for more than 30 single and multi-center clinical trials and has over 25 years of experience in nursing, with specialist qualifications in Neurosurgical Nursing.

After completing her Bachelor of Nursing degree she completed a Master of Advanced Practice and specialised in Nursing and Midwifery. Her subsequent PhD at Griffith University focused on risk factors for peripheral intravenous catheter failure in the adult population. Nicole's research focused on improving patient outcomes and decreasing complications associated with vascular access across acute clinical care and community setting.



I grew up in public housing and was inspired by a family friend to consider nursing. I initially worked in aged care later progressed to mental health settings. I commenced university in my early 20's as a mature age student. I have always been drawn to the central challenge of trying to improve people's lives and decrease mental distress and suicidal suffering. Understanding how to prevent distress and respond to people who are struggling through public policy and nursing practice is ever present.

Professor Nicholas Procter

RN, BA, Grad Dip Adult ED
MBA, PhD, MACN, MACMHN, MAICD

Professor Procter is Professorial Discipline Lead Nursing, Professor of Nursing and Chair: Mental Health Nursing, Clinical and Health Sciences at the University of South Australia.

Nicholas is Australia's national representative to the International Association for Suicide Prevention. He acts regularly as an advisor to State and Federal Departments, notably the National Mental Health Commission and National Suicide Prevention Office. Following registration as a general nurse Nicholas completed a Certificate of Advanced Clinical Nursing at Flinders Medical

Centre and education as a mental health nurse. He subsequently studied a Bachelor of Arts (Sociology) at Flinders University and a Graduate Diploma of Adult and Community Education at the University of South Australia before completing a Master of Business Administration at the University of South Australia, and a PhD at Flinders University.



As a researcher in healthcare you have a great responsibility to investigate a problem and to come up with the evidence to make an impact. I am proud of the findings of my PhD, where I investigated a problem and worked with clinicians to develop tangible practice recommendations for the provision of culturally sensitive communication at the end of life in the ICU that can be tailored to individual ICU contexts. That's where we can make the impact, where research gives you a platform to be able to gather the information and make positive change.

Dr Laura Brooks

PhD, RN, MN, PGDip Crit Care, GCHLT

Dr Brooks is a Lecturer in Nursing and Course Director for Bachelor of Nursing (Honours) students in the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Deakin University, and former critical care nurse. Laura completed her PhD at Deakin University in early 2025, and a Master thesis in 2014. After completing a Bachelor of Nursing, she specialised as an intensive care nurse and worked across metropolitan and regional ICUs where she held clinical, education and research roles. Dr Brooks commenced as a Lecturer in 2014, where she taught into undergraduate and postgraduate nursing programs, supervised Honours and Master thesis students, and built a program of research around communication at the end of life.

The aim of Laura's PhD was to explore practices related to culturally sensitive communication at the end of life in ICU. With a multimethod design, the PhD included a retrospective descriptive study of deceased patient medical records in four tertiary ICUs, and a modified eDelphi study including expert ICU clinicians recruited from a national sample. The thesis includes five manuscripts published in Q1 journals, inclusive of a concept analysis, systematic review, and three results publications. Laura's PhD culminated in the development of evidence-based practice recommendations for the provision of culturally sensitive communication at the end of life in the Australian intensive care context. Dr Brooks has a reputation at the national level and is emerging as an international expert for her research focused on culturally sensitive communication at the end of life in ICU.





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