



# **Professional Doctorate in Transforming Health and Social Care**

**Lead change.  
Revolutionise systems.  
Transform lives.**

**2026-27**

Academy for Professional Development  
Programme Brochure

**UEA** University of  
East Anglia  
Norwich

School of Health Sciences

# UK Top 30

The Complete University Guide 2025: 21st

The Mail University Guide 2025: =29th

## World Class Research and Sustainability

Times Higher REF2021 Analysis: UK Top 20 for  
research quality and 13th in the UK for quality of  
research outputs.

QS World University Rankings for Sustainability 2024:  
=14th for Health and Wellbeing



Teaching Excellence  
Framework Silver Award



Ofsted Good Provider -  
January 2024

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# Welcome and Introduction

Dr Marie McGee  
Programme Director



It is a privilege to lead the Professional Doctorate in Transforming Health and Social Care. Co-developed with partners and grounded in practice, this programme supports forward-thinking professionals to influence, lead, and transform services for the future.

Designed for health and social care professionals, it will support you to lead, influence, and drive meaningful change across complex health and social care systems. We look forward to supporting you on your journey to becoming a research-informed, transformational leader.

The Professional Doctorate in Transforming Health and Social Care is a part-time, practice-based programme for professionals ready to take the next steps to advance their careers. Whether you are developing your influence or leading strategic change, it combines advanced research with real-world application to help you drive meaningful transformation in complex health and care environments.

Shaped through strong partnerships with employers, this programme is grounded in workforce needs and prepares professionals to lead transformational, research-informed change in practice.

Whether you are working in clinical practice, management, policy, community services across health and social care, or the voluntary services this doctorate will support you to critically engage with challenges and deliver impactful solutions.

# Key Attributes of the Programme

The Professional Doctorate in Transforming Health and Social Care is an interdisciplinary, postgraduate level 8 doctoral programme designed to meet the needs of health and social care practitioners at different stages of their leadership journey, ranging from early-career practitioners to experienced health and social care professionals who wish to develop and lead applied health and care research or quality improvement projects within their own sphere of practice.

The Professional Doctorate award offers an alternative programme of doctoral level study to a more traditional PhD route. It fosters pioneering professional development relevant to personal, professional and organisational needs and aspirations in an engaging, collaborative and supportive learning community of academics and peers from a wide range of health and social care disciplines.

Over the course of the programme, practitioners will identify a research question and design, conduct and write up a research study or quality improvement project that draws on their professional experience, leading to new knowledge and understanding to inform their own professional practice, care provision for service users and wider healthcare practice. The applied nature of the programme develops practitioners' research, quality improvement, and leadership capabilities and confidence. It equips them to critically analyse and manage complex problems, advance their clinical and professional expertise, and identify and address areas for improvement within and beyond their organisation. The programme strengthens communication skills and fosters collaboration across professional networks.

Throughout the programme there is a strong emphasis on the development of the key skills of self-regulated learning, independent research and project development and critical reflection to enable evaluation and improvement of professional expertise and capabilities. These skills can be aligned with or supported by the consultant level practice research capabilities within the NHS England (2024) Multiprofessional Practice-Based Research Capabilities Framework.

## Why choose UEA?

World-class research underpins all our courses and enables development of research collaborations through our partnerships with healthcare providers to address the global challenges and complexities of contemporary health and social care practice. Our research active academic staff are experts in their fields and will inspire you to develop your interests, networks and career.

The School of Health Sciences at UEA runs Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research programmes, as well as Continuing Professional Development courses for registered health and care professionals. We are committed to ensuring that our postgraduate research programmes are of the highest quality and are relevant and progressive in the field of health and social care practice. Our staff are at the forefront of new thinking and teaching methods in the fast-paced and challenging delivery of health services.

## Why Choose This Programme?

- Designed for working professionals in health and social care
- Focus on real-world transformation and innovation
- Develop expertise in leadership, research, and systems thinking
- Apply learning directly to your professional context
- Address key sector challenges, including:
  - Integrated care delivery
  - Workforce sustainability
  - Health inequalities
  - Service transformation

## **Multi-Professional Community of Practice**

The programme is underpinned by a strong Community of Practice, providing peer and academic support and intellectual challenge. Workshops and action learning sets are delivered face to face in the university campus environment to allow each cohort of learners to form their own identity as researching professionals learning from and with each other. Peer support groups provide new ways of learning and developing, with exciting opportunities to present and shape ideas and work in progress in a supportive and nurturing environment. For example, dissemination of the student's own project can be presented at our PGR student conferences, and our learners are part of the International Professional Doctorate Research Network, formed in collaboration with UEA, fostering engagement with international peers in supporting, developing and disseminating their research.

## **Career Impact**

Graduates of this programme go on to:

- Senior leadership roles in health and social care
- Strategic and policy development positions
- Consultancy and advisory roles
- Academic and research careers

You will be equipped to lead transformation across a range of settings, including healthcare organisations, local authorities, and third-sector services.

## Benefits of Completing a Professional Doctorate Programme

Whilst the programme can be challenging at times, the reward is the opportunity for practitioners to develop their professional knowledge and practice over time, see their research, improvement or development project blossom and progress, not just to positively impact the service and the patients for whom they care, but to establish their own research and professional reputation through the opportunity to disseminate their work at a regional, national and international level whilst driving innovation through critical, evaluative and evidence-based approach to their studies.

The Professional Doctorate programme is an ideal qualification to support early career practitioners, consultant level practice, senior leadership positions and clinical academic careers, focussing on taking a critical and evaluative evidence-based approach at an advanced level to improve service delivery and make a difference to patient experience and outcomes. As a result, completion of the professional doctorate programme allows the practitioner to make an active contribution to advancing professional knowledge and practice in their specialist field and in some cases can directly lead to promotion to a more senior role.

The Professional Doctorate will enable you to:

- Strengthen your leadership capability to drive transformation in health and social care
- Develop advanced skills in quality improvement and service innovation
- Gain expertise in applied research and evidence-based practice
- Enhance your critical thinking and strategic decision-making
- Lead and manage complex projects and organisational change
- Build collaborative networks across professional and academic communities
- Increase your professional credibility and influence
- Make a distinctive, practice-based contribution to your field

*“The Professional Doctorate feels as though it is a process of self-discovery, growth and personal and professional development as it is about what I will be researching”*

Current UEA Professional Doctorate student

# Programme Pathway: Your Route to a Professional Doctorate in Transforming Health and Care

There are two routes to the Professional Doctorate. You can either complete an aligned MSc that provides a structured pathway into the doctorate (Stage 1 entry) or progress directly with a relevant Master's qualification (Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Stage 2 entry). These routes are illustrated in the Tables below. Aligned MSc programmes in Research and Quality Improvement in Health and Care or Management and Leadership in Health and Social Care provide a clear pathway into the doctorate, supporting the development of a strong research or quality improvement proposal for your independent study (Stage 1 entry).

The programme builds on prior Master's-level study, with up to the first 180 Level Seven credits recognised through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). This means you can progress directly to developing your doctoral research, applying learning to your professional context from the outset (Stage 2 entry).

## **Taught Stage One: 3 years part-time or Recognition of Prior Learning up to 180 credits at Level 7**

Stage One involves completion of an aligned taught MSc pathway. The 180 Level 7 credits gained are recognised through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), enabling progression to Stage Two, the independent doctoral research stage. Applicants who have already completed relevant Master's-level modules may apply for RPL, allowing these credits to contribute towards the MSc pathway.

Stage 1 can be achieved through the following routes:

### **1. UEA MSc Management and Leadership in Health and Social Care**

This is a multi-professional master's programme developing evidence-informed management and leadership capabilities to inform and enhance health and social care. The MSc programme is suitable for those with both clinical and non-clinical health and social care backgrounds, whether working as a health or social care professional or in another health and care role, enabling the student to enhance service outcomes, develop your own and your team's performance and well-being and evaluate and improve health and social care policy and practice.

Usually completed part-time over three years and comprising the following modules:

- Foundations of Health Research
- Using evidence to Lead and Advance Practice
- Policy Innovation and Evaluation
- Leading Projects in Health and Social Care
- Managing Yourself and Leading Others
- Principles of management in Health and Social Care
- Work Based Extended Project

On completion of the Master's programme students can graduate with an MSc Management and Leadership in Health and Social Care or, if eligible, progress to the Professional Doctorate. Eligibility requires a robust, achievable project proposal and at least 60% in both the overall MSc and extended project. The programme builds essential foundations for doctoral study.

<b>MSc Management and Leadership in Health and Social Care</b>			
Year 1	Foundations of Health Research	Using Evidence to Lead and Advance Practice	Policy Innovation and Evaluation
Year 2	Leading Projects in Health and Care	Managing Yourself and Leading Others	Principles of Management in Health and Social Care
Year 3	Work-based Extended project with recommendations for policy, practice or research (60c)		

For further details on this programme please see the [course brochure](#).

## **2. UEA MSc Research and Quality Improvement in Health and Care**

This multi-professional programme provides fundamental research-related knowledge and skills applied to health and care and an opportunity to extend and apply these in an individualised pathway using optional modules. The MSc programme is suitable for those with both clinical and non-clinical health and care research interests, whether working as a health or care professional or in another health and care research-related role, enabling them to improve outcomes, enhance individuals' well-being and influence health and care policy.

Usually completed part-time over three years and comprising the following modules:

- Foundations of Health Research
- Using Evidence to Lead and Advance Practice
- Implementation Science or Research Practice Portfolio
- Leading Projects in Health and Care
- Principles of Qualitative Research
- Principles of Quantitative Research
- Work Based Extended Project

On completion of the Master's programme students can graduate with an MSc Research and Quality Improvement in Health and Care, or, if eligible, progress to the Professional Doctorate. Eligibility requires a robust, achievable project proposal and at least 60% in both the overall MSc and extended project. The programme builds essential foundations for doctoral study.

<b>MSc Research and Quality Improvement in Health and Care</b>			
Year 1	Foundations of Health Research (20 credits)	Using Evidence to Lead and Advance Practice (20 credits)	Implementation Science or Research Practice Portfolio (20 credits)
Year 2	Leading Projects in Health and Care (20 credits)	Principles of Qualitative Research (20 credits)	Principles of Quantitative Research (20 credits)
Year 3	Work-based Extended project with recommendations for policy, practice or research (60 credits)		

For further details on this programme please see the [course brochure](#).



### 3. Recognition of Prior Learning

If you already hold an MSc or equivalent Level 7 study, you may be able to gain credit towards the Professional Doctorate through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). This is assessed based on how recent and relevant your previous study is (Accreditation to Prior Certificated Learning - APCL) and the knowledge and skills you've developed through professional practice (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning - APEL).

#### Option 1: Up to 120 credits

You may be awarded up to 120 Level 7 credits if your prior learning meets the outcomes of three core modules on the MSc Pathways – MSc Management and Leadership in Health and Social Care or MSc Research and Quality Improvement in Health and Care and the development of capability within professional practice

- Foundations of Health Research
- Using Evidence to Lead and Advance Practice
- Leading Projects in Health and Care

If your prior learning does not fully meet all the three core module outcomes, you may need to complete an MSc module as a standalone CPD module to attain the learning and academic credit required. This will be reviewed on an individual basis.

All applicants through this route must complete the **60-credit Work-based Extended Project**, which prepares you to develop your doctoral proposal. This module is also available as part of a standalone PGCert in Leading Improvement in Health & Social Care (available from 2027/28).

## **Option 2: Up to 180 credits**

You may be awarded up to 180 Level 7 credits if your prior learning meets the outcomes of three core modules on the MSc Pathways – MSc Management and Leadership in Health and Social Care or MSc Research and Quality Improvement in Health and Care and the development of capability within professional practice. For example, if you hold a relevant MSc with a strong focus on research methods, and can demonstrate strong professional experience and impact, you may be eligible for up to 180 Level 7 credits through RPL.

Your prior learning will be assessed against the outcomes of:

- Foundations of Health Research
- Using Evidence to Lead and Advance Practice
- Leading Projects in Health and Care
- Work-based Extended Project

### **Project Proposal Workshop**

Proposed project proposals from applicants seeking full 180-credit RPL will be discussed with the programme team as part of the application process. For applicants whose proposals would benefit from further development or refinement, initial feedback will be provided on the feasibility and development of their proposal, and they will be invited to attend a 'Project Proposal Workshop' focused on proposal development. The Project Proposal Workshop will explore the key elements of what makes an effective proposal and provides practical guidance on structure, clarity and impact. Applicants will also be offered individual feedback and expert guidance on their ideas and draft proposal from members of the programme team and supervisors with extensive experience in developing successful proposals.

## Work-based Extended Project Module

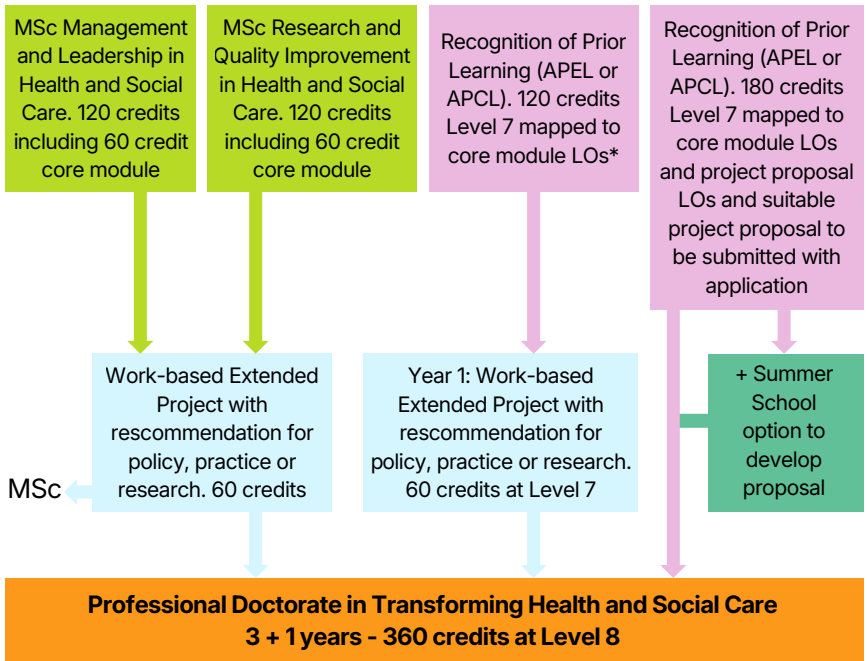
The co-taught Work-Based Extended Project module for both MSc degrees is explicitly designed to enable you to plan, design and conduct a work-based evidence review to develop your capability and gather data to support a project proposal suitable for completion at a doctoral level, and with the potential for impact within professional practice. You will be supported to design and conduct an initial work-based evidence review, consisting of research-based and policy literature in addition to service and stakeholder data, through academic-led group supervision and tripartite meetings with a work-based supervisor. Following submission of this evidence review, you will present your proposals for a substantial practice-based project to peers, academics and practice stakeholders to refine their project plan. This presentation will also enable the identification of appropriate supervisors to provide individual support and guidance with their substantial project proposal to ensure it is of suitable quality and scope for completion at the doctoral level. The assessments for the Work-based Extended Project module will be:

- 4000-word evidence review
- Oral presentation with Q&A
- 6000-word substantial project proposal

The combined marks from which must be at a minimum of 60% to transfer to the Programme for the independent conduct of the project proposed.



# Overview of programme outline and RPL possibilities



\*E.g MSc Advanced professional Practice, MSc Global Public Health

Students may progress to Stage 2 only after successfully completing Stage 1, assessed through RPL. The award is conferred only when both stages have been completed and certified in accordance with UEA's Doctorate Award Regulations. For those students who have chosen to enrol on the Programme through either taught MSc pathway, withdrawal during Stage 2 will allow them to exit with the original MSc award for that pathway. There will be no other available exit awards from the Programme due to use of RPL at Stage 1.

## Training and Development

All programme students will complete a Training Needs Analysis with their supervisors at the commencement of Stage 2 of the Programme. Training needs and suitable opportunities to address them will be identified, including through a Personal & Professional Development Plan, which will shape and inform their engagement in UEA's doctoral Personal & Professional Development programme. Students will also have access to study support and other guidance delivered by the Library's Learning Enhancement service.

## Project Proposal Workshop

Proposed project proposals from applicants seeking full 180-credit RPL will be discussed with the programme team as part of the application process. For applicants whose proposals would benefit from further development or refinement, initial feedback will be provided on the feasibility and development of their proposal, and they will be invited to attend a 'Project Proposal Workshop' focused on proposal development. The Project Proposal Workshop will explore the key elements of what makes an effective proposal and provide practical guidance on structure, clarity and impact. Applicants will also be offered individual feedback and expert guidance on their ideas and draft proposal from members of the programme team and supervisors with extensive experience in developing successful proposals.



## Stage Two: Independent Stage of the Research, 3-4 years part-time

- Independent doctoral research project
- Practice-based innovation within your organisation
- Supervision by experienced academics and researchers

**Study Mode:** Part-time / Blended learning

**Duration:** Typically, 3-4 years



## Programme Delivery

The independent project involves the design and delivery of an independent research, policy or improvement-focussed project, which advances wider professional knowledge, leadership capability, research and/or evaluation expertise, all closely aligned with the individual's scope and area of professional practice.

During Stage 2 of the Programme, you will be supported through a structured and responsive supervisory model (Student and Supervisory Handbook and the Research Degree Policy: Guide to Good Supervisory Practice), which prioritises accessibility, continuity, and personalised guidance. Supervisory meetings are tailored to the nature and stage of the project. Clear progression milestones, including probationary and annual progress reviews, are structured around the Research Development Framework to ensure students are well supported, appropriately monitored, and able to sustain confidence, engagement, and momentum.

A key feature of the programme is its community of practice- based approach fostering peer support, collaboration, and shared learning through interactive workshops and peer led sessions and action learning sets. It is underpinned by the Knowledge to Action (KTA) framework (Graham et al., 2006), which integrates knowledge creation (the gathering and synthesis of evidence) with action, enabling learners to apply learning to real-world challenges. This approach supports the development of system and service leaders who can translate evidence into sustainable improvement across health and social care.

Learners are inspired and challenged through the analysis and application of a range of research and quality improvement methodologies. They develop skills in the critical appraisal and evaluation of research and practice-based evidence, supported by discussion with peers and academics. This prepares them to design, implement, and evaluate their own research or quality improvement project, culminating in the development of a doctoral thesis.



Learners will be guided by two supervisors throughout their doctoral project, with regular, tailored meetings and clear milestones in place. This structured and supportive approach ensures you remain engaged, confident, and on track during the independent research/project stage.

A Mentor in Practice provides workplace insight to complement academic supervision, supporting the application of research in context. This fosters a coordinated and collaborative approach between the university and the employing organisation.

## Independent Project

Final assessment will consist of the submission of a 70,000-word thesis that demonstrates originality, critical insight, and applied impact, followed by a thesis examination and viva voce, conducted in accordance with institutional PGR assessment regulations.

## Learning and Teaching Approach and Support

The learning environment is purposefully challenging, supported by researchers with expertise in their specialist field and in educational pedagogy, to intellectually stimulate and stretch our learners. The expert researchers in the school and faculty will be familiar with the challenges of facilitating and implementing change in real world settings and can guide students through their research journey. Importantly, throughout the programme, students will be supported by a team of advisors and supervisors, who will provide guidance and mentoring throughout the professional doctorate journey. Students can also draw on a wide range of student support services to promote success as a student at UEA.

## Expectations for Students and Employers

This part-time programme requires a strong commitment, with the expectation that practitioners will carry out their studies alongside their employment as a health or social care professional. We recognise that balancing work, life and study can be both challenging and rewarding, with practitioners expected to prioritise attendance for the action learning sets, workshops and supervisory meetings and ringfence study time equivalent to around two days per week.

Employer support is essential, and applicants are encouraged to agree appropriate study time and support arrangements in advance. Therefore, we encourage applicants to negotiate sufficient study time with their employer to enable successful completion of the programme. The study time employers may allow will be at the employers' discretion. Therefore, before considering whether to embark on a professional doctorate, applicants are advised to discuss their intentions with their employer to establish what organisational support can realistically be expected from them.

# Admissions Process

Applicants are invited to interview to discuss their proposed project, its feasibility, and alignment with the programme, as well as to explore potential supervisory support. This process is designed to provide detailed constructive feedback on the applicants proposed project. Depending on individual needs, a tailored approach is taken to ensure they are fully prepared for the independent research stage. Where appropriate, they may be advised to complete an extended project or additional research methods modules to strengthen their proposal and research skills.

These tailored recommendations support a confident and successful transition into the independent stage of the doctorate.



# Entry Requirements

## Direct Entry onto Stage One: Masters Programme (Level 7 - 180 credits)

To apply for the MSc Research and Quality Improvement in Health and Care or MSc Management and Leadership in Health and Social Care at UEA, you must meet the following criteria:

- Have employer-supported practice-based supervision and assessment, ensuring you can apply learning directly to your professional role.
- Demonstrate motivation and ability to study at Master's level, evidenced by achievement of any of the below, within the past five years. \*
  - A bachelor's degree (2:2 or above) ideally in a health-related subject)
  - Level 6 module achieved at 55% or above (or two modules if no bachelor's degree)
  - Level 7 module achieved 50% or above

If English is not your first language or if your degree was not taught in English, you will need to provide evidence of IELTS 7.0 (minimum 6.5 in all components) or an equivalent qualification.

If you cannot demonstrate academic ability as outlined above, please contact [admissions@uea.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@uea.ac.uk) who will put you in touch with a member of the course team to discuss your options.

Note: Students may progress to Stage 2 only after successfully completing Stage 1, assessed through RPL.

## Direct Entry onto Stage Two: Independent Project (Level 8 - 360 credits)

### Entry Criteria:

- Master's degree or equivalent
- Previous knowledge of Research Methods or Research experience are required
- Relevant Practice or Professional experience, normally a minimum of 3 years in a health and social care field, and submission of a proposal on an area related to your practice that you wish to research
- IELTS : 6.5 overall, with no element below 6.0



# Fees, Funding, Start Dates and Delivery

- Tuition fees: Current tuition fees are published on [this website](#).
- 2026/27 entry: Part-time per year £3,550
- Employer sponsorship
- Flexible, part-time study designed around professional commitments
- Blended delivery: online learning with occasional on-campus sessions

## Take the Next Step

[Apply now](#) and begin your journey towards transformational leadership.

Email: [profdhasc@uea.ac.uk](mailto:profdhasc@uea.ac.uk)

Open Evening: 2 June, 5 - 6pm

Interview Dates: 16 June Time, 9am - 2pm

Summer School: 20 June, 11 July or 18 July

# Key Information (summary)

Award: Professional Doctorate in Transforming Health and Social Care

Mode: Part-time (approximately 15 hours per week)

Duration: Minimum 3 years, maximum 4 years.

Intake: October 2026

Tuition Fee: £3,400 per year (2026-27 academic year)

Delivery:

- Stage 1- Blended online learning.
- Stage 2 - face to face workshops and action learning sets, plus independent study, and project supervision.

*Note: Students may progress to Stage 2 only after successfully completing Stage 1, assessed through RPL.*

Entry Criteria:

- Master's degree or equivalent
- Previous knowledge of Research Methods or research experience required
- Relevant practice or professional experience, normally a minimum of 3 years in a health and social care field, and submission of a proposal on an area related to your practice that you wish to research.
- IELTS : 6.5 overall, with no element below 6.0

Disclaimer: Information is correct at time of print; however programme details can change. This course will run subject to sufficient interest and applications to make a cohort educationally viable.