

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



School of Health Sciences

Mid-year 2025

Higher Degree Research Project Booklet

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Project title:	The Epidemiology of Maternal and Child Health in Low- and Middle-income countries
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Associate Professor Amit Arora
Supervisor contact email address:	a.arora@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Public Health; Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health; Health Equity, Pregnancy, Health services, Nutrition
Project description (maximum 300 words):	International recommendations including the World Health Organization (WHO) recommend infants should be exclusively breastfed for six months and continued further breastfeeding up to 12 months and beyond. Further, these guidelines recommend that parents should introduce solid foods from age 6 months. These guidelines and recommendations are based on overwhelming evidence highlighting the short-term and the long-term benefits of breastfeeding for both the infant and the mother. However, in a number of developing countries these guidelines are not met due to a number of socio-economic, biomedical and health service level reasons. The potential candidate will have the opportunity to use existing datasets from several low- and middle-income countries to develop novel research questions. The major focus of this research will be on maternal and child health and its impact on malnutrition and chronic diseases. However, the scope of the project is open and will be determined in consultation with the supervisory panel and student's interest. Some topics that previous students have undertaken include food insecurity, sexual and reproductive health, malnutrition, obesity, diabetes.
Keywords:	Maternal, Child and Adolescent health, health equity, social determinants, migrant health, infant, developing countries, low and middle income countries

Project title:	The Healthy Smiles Healthy Kids Cohort Study
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Associate Professor Amit Arora
Supervisor contact email address:	a.arora@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Public Health, Child Health, Epidemiology, Health Equity
Project description (maximum 300 words):	The Healthy Smiles Healthy Kids Project is high quality, multi-centre, birth cohort study in Greater Western Sydney, with an aim to address socio-economic inequality in health among children. Over 1000 mother-infant dyads in the former Sydney South West Area Health Service were recruited to this NHMRC-funded study in 2010 and have been followed up at regular intervals since then. The project has a wealth of life-course data on socio-demographics, bio-medical factors, infant feeding, diet, health service use, geo-spatial modelling (how the area you live in affects your health), environmental exposure, physical activity, sedentary behaviour, quality of life, health literacy, and health outcomes. This project will utilise the data on early childhood determinants and assess its impact on health outcomes in children at age 3-4 years and 7-9 years. However, the scope of the project will be determined in consultation with the supervisory panel and is subject to research interest of the potential student given the wide scope of the data. The doctoral candidate under the primary supervision of Associate Professor Amit Arora and will learn relevant skills in longitudinal research. This project will be carried out on the Campbelltown campus of Western Sydney University. However, the candidate will maintain partnerships with other partners including research participants, University of Sydney, University of Technology Sydney, University of New South Wales, University of Adelaide, Curtin University, Sydney Local Health District, and South Western Sydney Local Health District.
Keywords:	Child health, Epidemiology, Health equity, social determinants of Health, migrant health

Project title:	The Impact of Post-Bariatric Surgery GLP-1 Agonist Therapy on Long-Term Metabolic Outcomes.
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☐ Master of Research (MRes) ☐ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Evan Atlantis
Supervisor contact email address:	E.Atlantis@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Clinical obesity and related complications
Project description (maximum 300 words):	This PhD project aims to investigate the efficacy of continued GLP-1 agonist therapy following bariatric surgery in improving weight loss maintenance and comorbidity resolution. Utilising a large patient record dataset, this study will compare outcomes between individuals receiving standard post-operative care and those maintained on GLP-1 agonists. Primary outcomes include long-term weight loss maintenance (beyond 12 months) and resolution/improvement of key comorbidities such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and dyslipidaemia. Secondary analyses will explore the impact of GLP-1 therapy on specific patient subgroups and potential predictors of treatment response.
Keywords:	Obesity, weight loss, disease remission

Project title:	Impact of Intensive Lifestyle Intervention on Bariatric Surgery Outcomes: A Retrospective Cohort Study
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☐ Master of Research (MRes) ☐ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Evan Atlantis
Supervisor contact email address:	E.Atlantis@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Clinical obesity and related complications
Project description (maximum 300 words):	This PhD project will investigate the efficacy of intensive lifestyle intervention (ILI) prior to bariatric surgery compared to standard pre-operative preparation. Utilising a large patient record dataset, this retrospective cohort study will examine whether ILI leads to improved weight loss and comorbidity resolution post-surgery. The project will compare outcomes such as percentage total weight loss, HbA1c, blood pressure, and lipid profiles between patients receiving ILI and those receiving standard care.
Keywords:	Obesity, weight loss, disease remission

Project title:	Lived Experiences of obesity and healthcare delivery in Australia
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☐ Master of Research (MRes) ☐ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Evan Atlantis
Supervisor contact email address:	E.Atlantis@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Clinical obesity and related complications
Project description (maximum 300 words):	This PhD project will investigate the lived experience of obesity in Australia, focusing on two key stakeholder groups: individuals seeking obesity care and healthcare professionals delivering obesity services. The PhD student would focus on developing the scoping review in the first year, followed by studies on lived experience of obesity for individuals seeking obesity care and perspectives of health care professionals about clinical obesity services and treatments they need to help their patients in years two and three. Year 1: The initial year will be dedicated to developing a comprehensive scoping review of the existing literature on lived experiences of obesity and healthcare delivery for this population. This review will identify key themes, gaps in knowledge, and inform the design of subsequent research phases. Years 2 and 3: Building on the scoping review, the project will then employ qualitative methodologies to explore the lived experiences of individuals seeking obesity care in Australia. This will involve in-depth interviews or focus groups and a survey to understand their perspectives on challenges, coping mechanisms, and experiences within the healthcare system. Additionally, the project will explore the perspectives of healthcare professionals delivering obesity services. Interviews with healthcare providers will aim to identify their experiences with current clinical obesity services and treatments, as well as any perceived gaps or areas requiring improvement to better support their patients. The findings from this research will contribute valuable insights into the lived experience of obesity in Australia, informing the development of more patient-centred and effective healthcare services for this population.
Keywords:	Obesity, lived experience, obesity stigma, weight loss, health

Project title:	Optimising Bariatric Surgery Outcomes: The Impact of Preoperative GLP-1 Agonist-Induced Weight Loss in High-Risk Patients.
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☐ Master of Research (MRes) ☐ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Evan Atlantis
Supervisor contact email address:	E.Atlantis@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Clinical obesity and related complications
Project description (maximum 300 words):	This PhD project investigates the potential of preoperative weight loss achieved with GLP-1 agonists to enhance outcomes in high-risk patients undergoing bariatric surgery. Utilising comprehensive patient record data, this retrospective cohort study will analyse the impact of GLP-1 agonist-induced preoperative weight loss on post-surgical weight loss, length of hospital stay, and metabolic improvements. The research will focus on high-risk patients, defined by factors such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and severe obesity. Comparative analyses will be conducted between patients receiving preoperative GLP-1 agonists and those undergoing standard preoperative protocols.
Keywords:	Obesity, weight loss, disease remission

Project title:	Lived Experiences in Sport Coaching from the perspectives of First Nations, Para-sport, and LGBTQI+ communities
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Andrew Bennie
Other supervisors:	Dr Sarah Kennedy; Dr Andy Grainger
Supervisor contact email address:	a.bennie@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Diversity in coach education
Project description (maximum 300 words):	Sport plays an important and powerful role for many Australians. For First Nations, Para-sport, and LGBTQI+ communities, sport provides opportunities for social participation, social identity construction and meaningful engagement in the workforce. Yet little is known about First Nations sport coaches. Considering sport can play a positive social, psychological, and physical role in the lives of diverse populations, it is problematic that there is a dearth of academic literature exploring the experiences of First Nations coaches. This study aims to address this gap by being the first study of its kind to specifically explore First Nations, para-sport, and LGBTQI+ peoples' lived experiences in sport coaching roles. Guided by Indigenous and ethnographic research strategies, this project will involve in-depth connections with a range of First Nations, para-sport, and/or LGBTQI+ sport coaches and their teams throughout a sporting season. The purpose will be to better understand how they live and work as sport coaches to better understand what they do, why, how, and when during sport seasons. Data will be gathered with coaches via observations and conversations during training, meetings, and competition settings. The coaches and researchers will engage in a range of self-reflective journaling (audio and written) to enable a thorough and rich description of the experiences. Data collected in this manner prioritises respect for the agency and voice of diverse communities while deepening understanding about their lived experiences in these roles. This research will consider multiple team and individual sports, working with community based and professional sport organisations. Existing relationships include Netball Australia, Netball NSW, AFL NSW/ACT, National Rugby League, Australian Rugby Union, Athletics Australia, Football NSW, Football Federation Australia, Tennis NSW, Tennis Australia, and Cricket NSW. The findings will be particularly relevant for First Nations, para-sport, and LGBTQI+ community members, academics, policymakers, and sporting organisations interested in better understanding diverse sport coaching experiences. Please note: Students can choose one or multiple intersecting components of the proposed project
Keywords:	First Nations; Para-sport and LGBTQI+ sport coaching; Indigenous and qualitative research

References:	1. Townsend, R. Bennie, A., and Russell, K. (2024). Advancing Diversity and Inclusion in Coach Development. In Rynne, S.B., & Mallett, C.J. (Eds.). <i>The Routledge Handbook of Coach Development in Sport</i> (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003160939 2. Bennie, A., Hapeta, J., Henhawk, D., & Giles, A. R. (2023). Addressing the needs of Indigenous children? Coach education programs in Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand, and Australia. In M. Toms and R. Jeanes (Eds.). <i>Routledge Handbook on Coaching Children in Sport</i> (pp. 345-355). Routledge. 3. Bennie, A., Apoifis, N., Marlin, D., & Caron, J. G. (2019). Cultural connections and cultural ceilings: exploring the experiences of Aboriginal Australian sport coaches. <i>Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health</i>, 11:3, 299-315. doi:10.1080/2159676X.2017.1399924
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Project title:	Becoming an elite athlete in Australia: journeys toward excellence through the National Institute Network
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Andrew Bennie
Supervisor contact email address:	a.bennie@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	High performance sport; elite athlete development; mixed methods research
Project description (maximum 300 words):	The aim of this research is to explore female elite athlete development pathways in Australia, focusing on the transition from pre-elite to elite level participation. Australia's high-performance model, the National Institute Network (NIN), is unique, with State Institutes playing a vital role in athlete development. However, there is limited understanding of the lived experiences of athletes, particularly female athletes, and their coaches as they navigate this transition. This knowledge gap presents challenges in making meaningful improvements to the athlete transition process. A mixed methods approach will be used, combining large-scale surveys with individual interviews and focus groups to capture perspectives from athletes, parents, coaches, and other stakeholders. Additionally, an ethnographic approach will offer in-depth insights into the challenges athletes face during their transition. Learning diaries and logs will track athletes' development over time. The project intends to improve our understanding of female athlete progression within the elite sporting pathway, leading to better athlete outcomes, increased sporting achievements, and more effective resource allocation. The findings will be particularly relevant for academics, policymakers, and sporting organisations interested in better understanding female talent development within high performance sport in Australia.
Keywords:	High Performance Sport; Female elite athlete development
References:	1. Bennie, A., Walton, C., O'Connor, D., Fitzsimons, L., Hammond, T. (2021). Exploring the Experiences and Well-being of Australian Rio Olympians during the Post-Olympic Phase: A Qualitative Study. <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i> 12, 1964 2. Huxley, D. J., O'Connor, D., & Bennie, A. (2017). Olympic and World Championship track and field athletes' experiences during the specialising and investment stages of development: a qualitative study with Australian male and female representatives. <i>Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health</i>, 10(2), 256–272. https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2017.1393452

Project title:	First Nations Peoples Socioemotional Wellbeing and Health Promotion through Sport Coaching
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☐ Master of Research (MRes) ☐ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Andrew Bennie
Other supervisors	Dr Sarah Kennedy
Supervisor contact email address:	a.bennie@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	First Nations Sport Participation, Health Promotion, Socioemotional Wellbeing, Community Development, Education
Project description (maximum 300 words):	This research project will involve the design and delivery of an innovative mentoring program that takes a unique approach to First Nations community development by educating sport coaches to promote health within their communities through their sporting contexts. For many years, sport has been used as a tool to connect First Nations communities with health, social, education, and employment opportunities. Currently, there are a broad range of worthwhile sporting programs delivered within First Nations communities that focus on youth development, elite athletic performance, and school to work transition. However, there are no programs that utilise sport coaches as health promoting agents within First Nations communities. Informed by the Ngaa-bin-ya health and social program evaluation framework (Williams, 2018) and a steering committee with First Nations peoples, this study will take place within and with the support of various First Nations sporting clubs across a sports season. The coaches will receive formal coach accreditation training alongside a series of educational workshops related to First Nations coaching. They will then be mentored by Indigenous and/or non-Indigenous sports coaches to develop their coaching capacity across a season. Data will be collected via Indigenous research methodologies and Western approaches including conversations pre-, during, and post-season; observations of coaches during training and competition fixtures, as well as post workshop conversations so as to gather data about the program's impact on the coaches, their players, and local community. Data collected in this manner prioritises respect for the agency and voice of First Nations coaches (and communities) with the goal of better understanding of how their experiences in sport coaching roles may shape the socioemotional wellbeing of their communities. This research will consider multiple team and individual sports, working with community based and professional sport organisations. Our team has existing relationships with Netball Australia, Netball NSW, AFL NSW/ACT, National Rugby League, Australian Rugby Union, Athletics Australia, Football NSW, Football Federation Australia, Tennis NSW, Tennis Australia, and Cricket NSW.

	The findings will be particularly relevant for First Nations community members, academics, policymakers, and sporting organisations interested in better understanding First Nations sport coaching experiences.
Keywords:	First Nations Sport Participation, Health Promotion, Socioemotional Wellbeing, Community Development, Education
References:	1. Townsend, R. Bennie, A., and Russell, K. (2024). Advancing Diversity and Inclusion in Coach Development. In Rynne, S.B., & Mallett, C.J. (Eds.). <i>The Routledge Handbook of Coach Development in Sport</i> (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003160939 2. Bennie, A., Marlin, D., Apoifis, N., & White, R. (2021) 'We were made to feel comfortable and ... safe': Co-Creating, Delivering, and Evaluating Coach Education and Health Promotion Workshops with Aboriginal Australian Peoples. <i>Annals of Leisure Research</i>, 24(1), 168-188. doi:10.1080/11745398.2019.1622430 3. Marlin, D., Apoifis, A., & Bennie, A. (2020). Aboriginal sports coaches, community, and culture. Springer.

Project title:	Relationship Between Walking Postures and Hip Biomechanics in Stair Climbing
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☐ Master of Research (MRes) ☐ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Professor Roy Cheung
Other supervisors	Dr Manish Sreenivasa, University of Wollongong
Supervisor contact email address:	Roy.Cheung@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Biomechanics
Project description (maximum 300 words):	This research project aims to investigate how modifications in walking posture can influence hip biomechanics during stair negotiation, with a particular focus on hip osteoarthritis, a significant public health concern in Australia. As stair climbing is a common activity that places considerable demands on the hip joint, understanding the biomechanical implications of different walking postures is essential for developing effective rehabilitation strategies and preventive measures for hip-related injuries. The study will employ a purely quantitative approach, utilising an instrumented staircase and a motion capture system to gather precise biomechanical data. Participants will be recruited from local community centres and will include individuals of varying ages and fitness levels. They will perform stair negotiation tasks under different postural conditions, including natural walking posture and various modified postures. In addition to capturing joint angles and ground reaction forces, we will employ musculoskeletal modelling techniques to compute three-dimensional contact forces in the hip joint. This advanced analysis will allow us to quantify the effects of posture on hip biomechanics, providing insights into optimal gait strategies for stair negotiation. The findings of this project are expected to contribute valuable knowledge to the fields of biomechanics and rehabilitation. By identifying effective walking posture modifications, we aim to enhance hip joint function and reduce the risk of injury in individuals engaging in stair-related activities. Ultimately, this research could inform clinical practices and guide the development of targeted interventions for individuals suffering from hip osteoarthritis.
Keywords:	gait; kinematics; kinetics
References:	1. Chan DOM, Subasinghe Arachchige RSS, Wang S, Chan PPK, Cheung RTH. Whole-body angular momentum during stair ascent and descent in individuals with and without knee osteoarthritis. Sci Rep. 2024 Dec 28;14(1):30754. doi: 10.1038/s41598-024-80423-0. PMID: 39730473; PMCID: PMC11681112. 2. Wang S, Chan KHC, Lam RHM, Yuen DNS, Fan CKM, Chu TTC, Baur H, Cheung RTH. Effects of foot progression angle adjustment on external knee adduction moment and knee adduction angular impulse during stair ascent and descent. Hum Mov Sci. 2019 Apr;64:213-220. doi: 10.1016/j.humov.2019.02.004. Epub 2019 Feb 20. PMID: 30784892. 3.

Project title:	Transcutaneous versus arterial CO₂ responses during exercise: advancing the diagnosis of exertional breathlessness using non-invasive CPET
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☐ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	A/Prof Simon Green (Exercise Science, Physiology)
Other supervisors (optional):	Rocco Cavaleri (Physiotherapy) Belinda Cochrane (Respiratory Medicine) Soo-Wei Foo (Respiratory Medicine)
Supervisor contact email address:	simon.green@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Respiratory medicine, exercise physiology
Project description (maximum 300 words):	Unexplained breathlessness is associated with loss of cardiorespiratory fitness, often has a complex aetiology involving multiple organ systems, and affects approximately 1 in 10 Australians [1]. Exertional breathlessness is the most common form of breathlessness. The cardiopulmonary exercise test (CPET) is the gold-standard procedure for diagnosis of exertional breathlessness [2]. Although CPET is a sophisticated clinical technique, its diagnostic insight into breathlessness is often limited by lack of accurate measurement of arterial carbon dioxide levels (PaCO₂). Even though CPET is considered to be a non-invasive test (there is an invasive version), measurement of PaCO₂ requires an 'arterial line' and sampling of arterial blood in the hand or forearm. Many patients are not willing to consent to an arterial line, it is expensive, and few CPET centres in Australia have the capacity to perform it. A common non-invasive method of estimating PaCO₂ involves measuring CO₂ levels at the end of each expiration – referred to as 'end-tidal' PCO₂ - but this method in the context of CPET is of questionable accuracy [3]. An alternative non-invasive method is transcutaneous PCO₂ (tcPCO₂), which requires a CO₂ sensor to be attached to the forehead, earlobe or finger. Although this method is widely used in neonatal care, its validity for the diagnosis of breathlessness during CPET is unclear [3]. The aim of this project is to establish the accuracy of tcPCO₂ during CPET by comparing tcPCO₂ estimates of PaCO₂ with those obtained from direct sampling of arterial blood. The project will be conducted in the Department of Cardiology at Campbelltown Hospital and involve healthy participants and patients with undifferentiated breathlessness.
Keywords:	Breathlessness, cardiopulmonary exercise testing, carbon dioxide, arterial sampling, transcutaneous
References:	1. Poulos, L.M., et al., Prevalence and burden of breathlessness in Australian adults: The National Breathlessness Survey—a cross-sectional web-based population survey. <i>Respirology</i> , 2021. 26: p. 768–775.

	2. Sietsema, K.E., et al., Wasserman & Whipp's Principles of Exercise Testing and Interpretation. Sixth ed. 2021, Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer. 586. 3. Cao, M., et al., Transcutaneous PCO₂ for exercise gas exchange efficiency in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. COPD: Journal of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, 2021. 18(1): p. 16-25.
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Project title:	Co-designing exercise-based rehabilitation to optimise care for people with anterior cruciate ligament injury: towards a collaborative, bio-psycho-social model of care
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Luke Jenkins
Other supervisors (optional):	A/Prof Camila Quel De Oliveira (Internal co-supervisor) A/Prof Bruno Tirotti Saragiotto (External co-supervisor) Dr Joshua Zadro (External co-supervisor) Prof Arianne Verhagen (collaborator)
Supervisor contact email address:	Luke.jenkins@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Anterior cruciate ligament exercise rehabilitation, Physiotherapy, Co-design, Implementation science
Project description (maximum 300 words):	ACL injuries are common and costly, often affecting young, active individuals [1]. According to evidence-based guidelines, three management options exist, early surgery, delayed surgery or conservative (including exercise-based) management [2]. Our team has conducted extensive research that we believe highlights a clear gap in current evidence-informed models of care. Firstly, we believe it is critical to develop clear and standardised rehabilitation protocols for non-operatively managed ACL injuries as it is a valid management option compared to surgery for some patients (unpublished data, PROSPERO registration: CRD42022337300). Second, the psychological impact of ACL injury should not be underestimated and optimally addressing this could increase the effectiveness of rehabilitation protocols in the future (unpublished data, PROSPERO registration: CRD42024502468). Third, interest-holders (e.g. patients, clinicians, parents, researchers) must work collaboratively (i.e. co-design research and interventions) to develop and implement effective rehabilitation protocols in clinical practice (unpublished data, protocol: https://osf.io/tbvy9/). Based on this extensive prior work we plan to conduct a series of studies that aim to: 1.) Examine current evidence for interest-holder involvement in the development of knee rehabilitation paradigms; 2.) Explore interest-holders experiences managing the injured ACL non-operatively; 3.) Develop a co-designed intervention that appropriately addresses the bio-psycho-social nature of non-operative ACL management, and; 4.) Assess the acceptability and feasibility of the co-designed intervention within clinical practice.

	The successful candidate would be involved in addressing one or all these study aims depending on candidature duration.
Keywords:	ACL, co-design, implementation, psychological, exercise, conservative, operative
References:	1. Maniar, N., et al., Trends in Australian knee injury rates: An epidemiological analysis of 228,344 knee injuries over 20 years. The Lancet Regional Health–Western Pacific, 2022. 21. 2. Filbay, S.R. and H. Grindem, Evidence-based recommendations for the management of anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) rupture. Best Practice & Research Clinical Rheumatology, 2019. 33(1): p. 33-47.

Project title:	Gender equity and intersectionality in sport and physical activity in Western Sydney
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Hazel Maxwell
Other supervisors (optional):	Dr Michelle O'Shea Dr Jennifer Cheng
Supervisor contact email address:	h.maxwell@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Gender equity, physical activity, sport, diversity, inclusion
Project description (maximum 300 words):	Aim - To investigate organisations, facilities and policies in Western Sydney which offer opportunities for women and girls to participate in sport and physical activity. Background - The interdisciplinary project seeks to contribute to understanding and improving health and community development outcomes for women and girls in Western Sydney. Despite some recent wins for women sport, women and girls in sport and physical activity continue to be underrepresented (O'Shea and Maxwell, 2021). In additions marginalised groups such as LGBTI+, Indigenous women and women living with a disability continue to face significant barriers to their participation. This intersectionality is currently an under explored area. The project looks to raise awareness of and contribute to redressing the barriers and constraints shaping women and girls sport and physical activity participation in Western Sydney.
Keywords:	Gender, Sport, physical activity, intersectionality
References:	O'Shea, M., & Maxwell, H. (2021). Exploring new media and sport through a gendered lens: Enabling possibilities and/or reproducing inequities for women? In Insights on reporting sports in the digital age (pp. 65-83). Routledge.

Project title:	Aquatic therapy and disability
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Nicole Peel
Supervisor contact email address:	n.peel@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Health science
Project description (maximum 300 words):	This project is part of a larger project on looking at aquatics and people with a disability to enhance. Many projects exploring aquatics that make a real impact for people with disabilities. By working on adaptive swim programs, inclusive water sports, and accessibility innovations, you can help create a more inclusive environment where everyone can enjoy the benefits of aquatic activities. These projects allow you to gain hands-on experience while making a positive difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities, fostering both personal growth and community inclusion. Join us to create lasting change through the power of water.
Keywords:	Aquatics, leisure, health promotion, disability

Project title:	Motivations of Animal Therapy Handlers
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Nicole Peel
Supervisor contact email address:	n.peel@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Health science
Project description (maximum 300 words):	This project will explore the motivations, meaning and experiences of animal-assisted activities for dog handlers engaging in an animal-assisted activity program. We are seeking a motivated candidate to undertake a small research project working with animal therapy organisations where you will research animal dog handlers. You will be expected to undertake a literature review, data collection and data analysis for the project, using either qualitative or quantitative methods.
Keywords:	Animal therapy, motivations, psych

Project title:	Leisure Literacy
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Nicole Peel
Supervisor contact email address:	n.peel@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Public Health, Health Sciences
Project description (maximum 300 words):	This project is part of a broader initiative aimed at integrating leisure literacy into the NSW schooling system. It encompasses various sub-projects, including exploring the concept of leisure for children in both primary and secondary schools, as well as examining teachers' understanding of leisure and its role in education.
Keywords:	Leisure education. Health promotion. wellbeing

Project title:	Foster Carers Health and Wellbeing
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Nicole Peel
Supervisor contact email address:	n.peel@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Public Health, Health Sciences, Social Justice, Education
Project description (maximum 300 words):	This project is part of a longitudinal study into foster carers health and wellbeing. Understanding barriers and facilitators to engage foster carers. Young people in foster care are reported as one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged social groups. This project is part of a larger project aiming to make a change in the pre and post-transition of children and young people in foster care to an independent life.
Keywords:	Foster Carers. Health promotion. wellbeing

Project title:	Exploring the experiences of e-bike or e-scooters
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Nicole Peel
Supervisor contact email address:	n.peel@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Health science
Project description (maximum 300 words):	The purpose of this research is to examine the process of learning to ride an electric bike (e-bike) or e-scooter, identifying the challenges, learning curve, and perceived benefits or barriers associated with adopting this mode of transportation. The study aims to gather insights into the user experience, focusing on comfort, confidence, safety, and environmental perceptions. The project can include qualitative and quantitative methodologies.
Keywords:	e-mobility, health, education, urban planning

Project title:	Reducing barriers to physical activity participation for people with physical disabilities (with a focus in spinal cord injuries).
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Camila Quel de Oliveira
Supervisor contact email address:	c.queldeoliveira@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Physical activity, disability inclusion
Project description (maximum 300 words):	Our previous research shows that Australians with a spinal cord injury (SCI) are among the most sedentary in the nation, with minority meeting physical activity guidelines ^{1,2}. Regular exercise and physical activity can prevent complications from reduced mobility, and are critical for enhancing function, well-being and community integration post-discharge from rehabilitation. ^{3,4} However, people with SCI in the community encounter many barriers to engaging in physical activity. ⁵ We surveyed 105 Australians and found that affordable and accessible services, skillful and knowledgeable clinicians (especially in rural and remote areas) and an inclusive environment are needed to improve consumers' confidence for engaging in physical activity. Furthermore, participants expressed a wish to exercise in their local community. ^{6,7} Therefore, we propose a series of research projects aimed at reducing the barriers to access exercise in the community for people with SCI, which could later be translated to other physical disabilities. The candidate will focus in one of the 3 topic areas below. Each topic area will consist of a series of studies including a) a systematic or scoping review on topic area; b) collaborative studies (qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys) with the relevant stakeholders (people with SCI, clinicians, services managers, etc) to inform the development of a co-designed strategy to increase physical activity participation; c) implementation clinical trials to test the effectiveness the implementation of the co-designed intervention. Topic areas: 1- Implement and evaluate a solution that aims to increase individual access to physical activity by upskilling the exercise workforce in the community to deliver safe exercise at low cost for people with SCI, and that could later be scaled to other physical disabilities. 2- Implement and evaluate a Disability Awareness training program designed to make fitness centres a more welcoming place for people with SCI (and other physical disabilities) 3- Develop, implement and evaluate an information online database with opportunities for adaptive physical activities available in the community in NSW. The projects I will be developed in partnership with Spinal cord injuries Australia (SCIA), a not-for-profit organisation that aims to reduce barriers to access to community participation to people with SCI and other physical disabilities.

Keywords:	Physical activity, exercise, accessibility, community participation, spinal cord injuries.
References:	1. Watson PK, Arora M, Middleton JW, <u>Quel de Oliveira C</u>, Heard R, Nunn A, Geraghty T, Marshall R, Davis GM. Leisure-Time Physical Activity in People With Spinal Cord Injury-Predictors of Exercise Guideline Adherence. <i>Int J Public Health</i>. 2022 Dec 12;67:1605235. doi: 10.3389/ijph.2022.1605235. PMID: 36579138; PMCID: PMC9790928. 2. Stendell L, Stubbs PW, Rogers K, Verhagen AP, Middleton JW, Davis GM, Arora M, Marshall R, Geraghty T, Nunn A, <u>Quel de Oliveira C</u>. Leisure-Time Physical Activity Participation in Middle-Aged and Older Adults With a Spinal Cord Injury in Australia. <i>Int J Public Health</i>. 2024 Jul 3;69:1607276. doi: 10.3389/ijph.2024.1607276. 3. Hicks AL, Martin Ginis KA, Pelletier CA, Ditor DS, Foulon B, Wolfe DL. The effects of exercise training on physical capacity, strength, body composition and functional performance among adults with spinal cord injury: a systematic review. <i>Spinal Cord</i>. 2011 Nov;49(11):1103-27. doi: 10.1038/sc.2011.62. Epub 2011 Jun 7. PMID: 21647163. 4. Hicks AL, Martin KA, Ditor DS, Latimer AE, Craven C, Bugaresti J, McCartney N. Long-term exercise training in persons with spinal cord injury: effects on strength, arm ergometry performance and psychological well-being. <i>Spinal Cord</i>. 2003 Jan;41(1):34-43. doi: 10.1038/sj.sc.3101389. PMID: 12494319. 5. Robertson T, Bucks RS, Skinner TC, Allison GT, Dunlop SA. Barriers to Physical Activity in Individuals with Spinal Cord Injury: A Western Australian Study. <i>The Australian Journal of Rehabilitation Counselling</i>. 2011;17(2):74-88. doi:10.1375/jrc.17.2.74 6. Watson PK, Stendell L, <u>De Oliveira CQ</u>, Middleton JW, Arora M, Davis GM. Perceived Barriers to Leisure-Time Physical Activity Among Physically Active Individuals With Spinal Cord Injury. <i>Arch Rehabil Res Clin Transl</i>. 2024 Nov 2;6(4):100380. doi: 10.1016/j.arrct.2024.100380. PMID: 39822206; PMCID: PMC11734005. 7. Watson, P.K., Stendell, L., <u>Quel de Oliveira, C</u>. et al. Leisure-time physical activity motives and perceived gains for individuals with spinal cord injury. <i>Spinal Cord</i> (2024). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41393-024-01013-5.

Project title:	Nature-based Solutions for Health and Wellbeing
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Associate Professor Arianne Reis
Other supervisors (optional):	Dr Nicole Peel
Supervisor contact email address:	a.reis@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Public health, leisure studies, nature-based recreation
Project description (maximum 300 words):	With an ever-growing demand for mental health services and a sector that struggles to have the available resources to meet this demand, there is a pushing agenda to ensure that we review all approaches that may be available to improve individuals' mental health and wellbeing. There is burgeoning interest in the benefits of being in nature within the literature; however, studies are limited and dependant on individual interventions. There is a need to undertake a larger scope and analysis of the wider benefits for health and wellbeing that nature immersive activity brings. This is an umbrella project that has the capacity to accommodate a variety of sub-projects investigating the connections between nature-based leisure and wellbeing. Projects may include nature-based interventions and their health benefits, audit of tools used to assess the effectiveness of nature-based activities/interventions on improving mental health and wellbeing, as well as surveys of researchers and practitioners on their views of tools and interventions. The methodology adopted will depend on the level of the project (i.e. PhD or MRes/MPhil) as well as the interests and skills of the candidate.
Keywords:	Leisure; recreation; nature; wellbeing; mental health

Project title:	Leisure and ageing
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Associate Professor Arianne Reis
Other supervisors (optional):	Dr Nicole Peel
Supervisor contact email address:	a.reis@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Leisure studies, public health; community development
Project description (maximum 300 words):	This project explores the role of leisure activities in enhancing the quality of life, well-being, and social connectedness among ageing populations. As global demographics shift toward older age groups, understanding how leisure contributes to healthy ageing becomes increasingly important. This project takes a broad, inclusive approach, examining diverse ageing populations, including elderly individuals in aged care facilities, ageing prisoners, retirees, and those ageing in place within their communities. By investigating the intersections of leisure, health, and social inclusion, the project aims to identify how tailored leisure interventions can address the unique needs and challenges faced by different groups. The methodology adopted will depend on the level of the project (i.e. PhD or MRes/MPhil) as well as the interests and skills of the candidate. Key areas of inquiry include the impact of leisure on mental and physical health, the role of leisure in fostering social connections, and barriers to participation in leisure activities. Sub-projects will focus on specific populations, such as the role of structured leisure programs in aged care facilities, the challenges of providing meaningful leisure opportunities for ageing prisoners, and the ways in which community-based leisure activities support independent living.
Keywords:	Leisure; wellbeing; ageing

Project title:	Supporting carers of consumers at risk of suicide to optimise and sustain positive consumer outcomes
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Associate Professor Arianne Reis
Supervisor contact email address:	a.reis@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Suicide prevention; public health
Project description (maximum 300 words):	The aim of this project is to build capacity to support consumers at risk of suicide. Reports of exhaustion among informal caregivers are common, with evidence suggesting that providing informal care represents a risk for role burnout (Gérain & Zech, 2020). Considerable research has been conducted with informal carers of individuals with a physical disability, dementia or in palliative care, but little to no research has examined informal carers in suicide prevention. Similarly, significant research has been conducted on peer work initiatives in Australia (Sinclair et al., 2024), but more needs to be done to understand the particularities of peer work in suicide prevention (Hawgood et al., 2023). In delivering on suicide prevention initiatives in NSW, it has become apparent that suicide prevention peer work is more dynamic and active than more traditional peer work. This has prompted the realisation that support for the carers of consumers in the form of a carer peer worker could bring benefits beyond the support of the carer themselves, but more broadly to the consumer experiencing a suicidal crisis/distress. By acknowledging that carers are primary partners in recovery for consumers in our communities, and that their wellbeing is also paramount in the recovery journey of consumers, we are creating safer spaces and will be better equipped to achieve the TZS goal of dramatically reducing suicide in our State. The methodology adopted will depend on the level of the project (i.e. PhD or MRes/MPhil) as well as the interests and skills of the candidate.
Keywords:	Suicide prevention; carer; peer worker
References:	Gérain, P., & Zech, E. (2020). Is providing informal care risky? A mental health perspective in a Belgian population-based sample. <i>European Journal of Public Health</i>, 30(Supplement_5), ckaa166-1114. Hawgood, J., Betteridge, C., Kölves, K., Edwards, B., Spence, S. H., Arensman, E., ... & Ownsworth, T. (2023). Lived experience perspectives guiding improvements to the Systematic Tailored Assessment for Responding to Suicidality protocol. <i>Frontiers in Psychiatry</i>, 14, 1074805. Sinclair, A., Fernandes, C., Gillieatt, S., & Mahboub, L. (2024). Peer work in Australian mental health policy: What ‘problems’ are we solving and to what effect(s)?. <i>Disability & Society</i>, 39(7), 1656-1681.

Project title:	Leisure and Urban Open Spaces: the impact of urban spaces for leisure on community health and wellbeing
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Associate Professor Arianne Reis
Supervisor contact email address:	a.reis@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Leisure studies, human geography, urban design, public health
Project description (maximum 300 words):	It is widely recognized that the environment in which one lives is a significant determinant of health. Evidence suggests that an individual's neighbourhood environment impacts the frequency and intensity of physical activity participation, with several factors mediating this relationship. Holliday et al. (2017) state that parks and roads (e.g., sidewalks and bike lanes) are two of the most frequently utilized resources for leisure-time physical activity. Public spaces for leisure are particularly important in low socioeconomic status (SES) communities, as the ability to join commercial clubs and activities is limited by the population's socioeconomic conditions. Existing research highlights that the quality of public spaces is poorer in low SES communities, with many also possessing fewer features and amenities supportive of active living. Also, research suggests that low SES communities have fewer public spaces available for leisure. This program of research intends to explore the impacts urban spaces used for leisure and recreation have on community health and wellbeing. The methodology will likely use a mixed methods approach, but details will be dependent on the degree being pursued (i.e., Master or PhD).
Keywords:	Leisure, recreation, urban spaces, urban parks, wellbeing
References:	Holliday, K., Howard, A., Emch, M., Rodriguez, D., Rosamond, W., & Evenson, K. (2017). Where are adults active? An examination of physical activity locations using GPS in five US cities. <i>Journal of Urban Health</i> , 94(4), 459–469.

Project title:	Transforming interprofessional pharmaceutical pain management, nociception and wellness praxis: alternate and allied health interventions toward theory, policy and clinical praxis
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Yu-Ting Sun
Other supervisors (optional):	Dr Isabella Leung and Dr Navin Naidoo (Other expertise may be recruited)
Supervisor contact email address:	yu-ting.sun@westernsydney.edu.au i.leung@westernsydney.edu.au navin.aidoo@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Indigenous knowledge systems, Pain management and Nociception, non-pharmaceutical pain interventions, equity in pain praxis, clinical guidelines, educational and praxis competency framework
Project description (maximum 300 words):	Inter-professionalisation implies the sharing of professional knowledge and clinical practices. We recognise that current paramedic pain management practices have an unmet need such as: (a) patients' preference for non- pharmaceutical interventions (b) for patients allergic to anaesthesia (c) or with an untenable side- effect profile or (d) Health care users recovering from opioid addiction. Further, mild-moderate pain may be undertreated as Paramedicine has a practice bias toward moderate to severe pain interventions. There is also a need to widen patients' (and practitioners') treatment choices notwithstanding (b) and (c) above. Diversity in patient population and treatment preferences implies the reciprocal need for inclusivity in treatment options. Current practices are largely drug oriented and biomedical in approach. Allied health education generally encompasses the primary health care approach but does not explicitly include TCM (outside of China). Acupuncture is therefore absent from the repertoire except in some military settings and Traditional Chinese Medicine. The 'value proposition' of acupuncture in Allied Health (as an alternative or co- therapy) deserves inquiry. The opportunity is to intersect indigenous knowledge systems with evidence-informed health care as they are not mutually exclusive. There is probable socio- economic cost-benefit as the need for analgesics is obviated and reduces risk of addiction and rehabilitation. Economic evaluation may be possible downstream. In Chief: What is the educative and practice feasibility of Acupuncture in [Allied Health profession X] Pain Management Praxis?
Keywords:	Indigenous knowledge systems, Pain management and Nociception, non-pharmaceutical pain interventions, equity in pain praxis, clinical guidelines, educational and praxis competency framework

Project title:	Improving physical activity advice given by psychologists to more optimally promote mental health through physical activity.
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Rhiannon White
Supervisor contact email address:	Rhiannon.White@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Physical activity, mental health, professional development, behavioural activation
Project description (maximum 300 words):	Physical activity has been shown to have abundant benefits for mental health. Despite health professionals accepting and valuing the role that physical activity plays in promoting mental health, many health professionals struggle to provide physical activity guidance. While exercise professionals have extensive exercise expertise, psychologists are well positioned to provide one on one advice to those most in need, and are well placed to guide clients through exercise from a behavioural activation approach, rather than an exercise prescription approach. However, most guidelines and resources that focus on physical activity focus on the time, amount, duration, and intensity required for benefits. This project will interview psychologists, develop resources based on their guidance, that bring together both evidence and resources that suit the work of psychologists. The project will then also meet with clients, and evaluate the impact on both physical activity and mental health, of this improved approach to exercise prescription by psychologists.
Keywords:	Physical activity, mental health, psychologist

Project title:	How can journaling after physical activity improve motivation and mood and help people engage in physical activity in ways that are likely to maximise mental health benefits.
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Rhiannon White
Supervisor contact email address:	Rhiannon.White@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Physical activity, mental health, journaling, cognitive engagement, mood
Project description (maximum 300 words):	Physical activity holds abundant mental health benefits. However, those with poor mental health often have lower levels of engagement in physical activity. Many people often focus on the amount of exercise required, or the intensity needed for mental health benefits. However, research shows that aspects of physical activity such as the social context, the environment, and mood following exercise are vital to continued engagement and longer-term mental health improvements. Limited research suggests that the action of writing down a summary of one's experience of exercise can help identify exercise options that are more enjoyable, and also serve as a reminder of the intrinsic joy that comes from exercise. In limited cases this has shown to increase physical activity in ways that optimally enhance mood, however research is sparse. This project will design a series of physical activity opportunities, and writing, drawing, and journaling activities to examine how these processes could be useful for promoting both physical activity and mental health at a much larger scale.
Keywords:	Physical activity, mental health

Project title:	Improving mental health and wellbeing for students and teachers in school environments. What's missing?
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Rhiannon White
Supervisor contact email address:	Rhiannon.White@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Mental health and wellbeing in schools
Project description (maximum 300 words):	Mental health is one of the main priorities for young people, and young people spend a large amount of their time at school. Over the last two decades, several approaches have been trialed to improve mental health, with many approaches focusing on teacher training. However, many teachers also report poor mental health and high levels of stress. This project will involve the development of several studies which aim to connect these different elements together, and better understand how to improve wellbeing more globally across entire school environments.
Keywords:	Mental health, wellbeing, schools, young people, teachers.

Project title:	Improving the effect of instructor led group exercise sessions on participants mood post-exercise
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Rhiannon White
Supervisor contact email address:	Rhiannon.White@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Physical activity, mental health
Project description (maximum 300 words):	Physical activity is beneficial to mental health, and structured exercise classes hold particular value. However, despite the benefits of physical activity for mental health, most exercise trainers or instructors do not have in-depth understanding of how physical activity leads to improved mental health. However, recent research highlights a series of mechanisms with the strongest evidence as to how physical activity can improve mood post-exercise. This research will involve literature reviews, and a delphi study with exercise instructors to map out the specific instructor behaviours that align with the mechanisms that are responsible for the effect of physical activity on mental health. The project will then examine the effect of those instructor strategies on mental health and mood post-exercise in a range of exercise settings. This work will result in a blueprint for exercise instructors as to how they can target certain mechanisms and boost the potential for their classes to improve mental health.
Keywords:	Physical activity, mental health, exercise professionals

Project title:	Physical activity and mental health: What messages are we portraying and how are they being interpreted.
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Rhiannon White
Supervisor contact email address:	Rhiannon.White@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Physical activity, mental health
Project description (maximum 300 words):	Physical activity holds abundant benefits for mental health. However, most people do not know how to best utilise exercise for their own mental health, with many people turning to online sources for advice, rather than professionals. However, it's unclear what messages are being portrayed online (through social media, news stories, academic research, and government documents), and if they are being interpreted in the way they are intended. The messages that are being taken away from these sources will influence people's behaviour and their mental health. This project will examine meanings and messages across a range of sources, and involve working with professionals, text based data, social media, and running interactive workshops with the general population.
Keywords:	Physical activity, mental health, social media, news, communication, messages

Project title:	The influence of an after-school physical activity program on habitual physical activity, academic achievement, socioemotional wellbeing, and mental health, among children residing in a socioeconomically disadvantaged community.
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Dr Rhiannon White
Other supervisors (optional):	Dr Andrew Bennie
Supervisor contact email address:	Rhiannon.White@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	School, adolescent wellbeing, physical activity, whole-of-person
Project description (maximum 300 words):	Research shows that physical activity can be beneficial to young people's physical health, mental health and wellbeing, and academic achievement. Research also shows that extra-curricular physical activity that is not tied to school content or curriculum and involves students across multiple year groups, can improve social wellbeing and foster a greater sense of identity within the broader school environment. This research aims to determine the influence of an after school physical activity program on habitual physical activity, academic achievement, socioemotional wellbeing, and mental health among disadvantaged children. The first stage of the proposed research will involve conducting content analysis on international data (research literature), national data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and community based data. Based on the research findings from Stage 1, Stage 2 will design an after school homework and physical activity program. Stage 3 will involve implementing and evaluating the program. The program will run one 90 minute session per week over a six month period.
Keywords:	Physical activity, active after school, mental wellbeing, social wellbeing, academic

Project title:	From Survival to Thriving: Will Traditional Chinese Medicine Redefine Cancer Survivorship? (A series of research projects)
Suitable for:	Please select one or more options below: ☒ Master of Research (MRes) ☒ Master of Philosophy (MPhil) ☒ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Name of Principal Supervisor:	Professor Xiaoshu Zhu
Other supervisors (optional):	The research will be guided by a distinguished team of supervisors, including experienced Australian researchers and renowned international scholars from leading institutions such as: • The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Centre, USA – A global leader in cancer care and research. • Assistance Publique – Hôpitaux de Paris (AP-HP), France & Sorbonne University – Europe’s largest hospital system, specialising in integrative medicine. • Beijing University of Cancer Hospital, China – A leading oncology hospital known for its advanced cancer treatment, research, and multidisciplinary approach to patient care. • Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, China – A premier institution specialising in TCM education and research. • China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences Xiyuan Hospital, China – Renowned for integrating traditional Chinese and modern medicine. • Shanghai Qigong Research Institute, China – A leading institution in Qigong research and its applications in health and rehabilitation.
Supervisor contact email address:	x.zhu@westernsydney.edu.au
Research area(s):	Health, Cancer Survivorship, Consumer-driven research, Cultural impact, Methodology integrating science and practice of traditional interventions, International study
Project description (maximum 300 words):	In Australia, approximately 1 in 2 men and 1 in 3 women will be diagnosed with cancer before the age of 85, with an estimated 413 new cases detected daily, (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2022), improving cancer survivorship has become a global health priority. While advances in modern oncology have extended survival, many cancer survivors continue to struggle with fatigue, depression, insomnia, pain, and cognitive impairment, significantly impacting their quality of life (Vardy et al., 2019). Consumer-driven research is crucial to understanding these unmet needs and shaping evidence-based, patient-cantered survivorship care models (Jefford et al., 2013). This research series will explore whether Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)—including acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine (CHM), and Qigong (mind-body exercises)—can redefine cancer survivorship by integrating ancient healing wisdom with modern scientific methodologies. The study will investigate the cultural impact of TCM-based interventions across countries, ethnics, diverse healthcare systems, addressing both patient experiences and clinical outcomes.

	As an international study, this series of research will employ a methodology that integrates science and practice, utilizing mixed-methods approaches such as cross-cultural surveys, qualitative interviews, and clinical trials. The findings will provide insights into TCM's role in survivorship care, examining barriers to access, healthcare system integration, and patient-perceived benefits. By bridging traditional interventions with contemporary research, this study aims to foster a holistic and sustainable survivorship model. The series of research project will be guided by a distinguished international supervisory team from leading institutions, ensuring academic rigor and global impact. See above. Based on the candidate's interests and strengths, as well as their HDR level, a suitable research topic will be decided through discussions between the principal supervisor and the applicant. This ensures that the project aligns with the candidate's expertise while contributing to the broader research agenda on TCM in cancer survivorship led by the principal supervisor. By merging consumer-driven research, cultural perspectives, and scientific rigor, this study will reshape integrative oncology, enhancing the long-term health and well-being of cancer survivors worldwide.
Keywords:	Health, Cancer Survivorship, Consumer-driven research, Cultural impact, Methodology appropriate to integrative cancer care, International study
References:	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (2022). Cancer in Australia 2022. Retrieved from https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/cancer/cancer-in-australia-2022 Jefford, M., Rowland, J., Grunfeld, E., Richards, M., Maher, J., & Glaser, A. (2013). Implementing improved post-treatment care for cancer survivors in England, with reflections from Australia, Canada and the USA. <i>British Journal of Cancer</i>, 108(1), 14-20. https://doi.org/10.1038/bjc.2012.554 Vardy, J., Chan, R., Koczwara, B., Lisy, K., Cohn, R., Joske, D., & Jefford, M. (2019). Clinical Oncology Society of Australia position statement on cancer survivorship care. <i>Australian Journal for General Practitioners</i>, 48, 833-836.