

# Graduate School Conference

## Live Well, Learn Well

Providing Insights to Health and Resilience Within  
Postgraduate Study

28th February 2025

11.30am - 4.30pm

The Thomas J Moran Graduate School

# Welcome

We are delighted to announce our second Graduate School Conference of this academic year, which will take place on Friday 28th February, starting at 11.30am, at the Thomas J. Moran Graduate School.

This interdisciplinary event is open to PGT and PGR students. Centred on the theme of 'Live Well, Learn Well', it will bring together internal staff, external experts, and showcase leading-edge research and personal experiences from our talented postgraduate students.

*Professor Colin McCoy and Katy Madden*



## **Professor Colin McCoy**

Dean of the Thomas J. Moran Graduate School, Professor Colin McCoy will open the conference. Colin has more than 25 years of research expertise in the development of systems to improve the performance of biomaterials, particularly medical devices. As Dean of the Graduate School, he provides academic leadership and strategic direction and support for postgraduate matters across Queen's.



## **Katy Madden**

Katy Madden, Head of Postgraduate Student Services at Queen's, will close the conference. With extensive experience in student services and academic support, Katy leads initiatives to enhance the academic success and campus experience of postgraduate students. Her leadership focuses on fostering collaboration and contributing to the overall strategic direction of student support services at Queen's.

# Itinerary

- 11.30 - 12.15**      **Student Registration and Networking Lunch**
- 12.15 - 12.30**      **Welcome and Introduction**  
Professor Colin McCoy, Dean of the Thomas J Moran Graduate School, Queen's University Belfast.
- 12.30 - 14.00**      **Keynote Speaker: Provoking Thought**  
Hugh Roarty, Project Worker, [Action Mental Health](#).
- 14.00 - 14.15**      **Tea/Coffee Break**
- 14.15 - 14.20**      **Delegates Move to Break Out Rooms**
- 14.20 - 15.20**      **Breakout Sessions as Below:**
- Breakout No.1 (TR7)**      **Plant-Based Diets and Flavonoids: A Path to Sustained Health and Well-Being**  
Dr Alysha Thompson, Research Fellow, Co-Centre for Sustainable Food Systems, Queen's University Belfast.
- Breakout No. 2 (TR6)**      **The 4Cs of Thriving: Unlocking Confidence, Curiosity, Compassion, and Courage**  
Dr Carolyn Blair, Research Fellow, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Queen's University Belfast.
- Breakout No. 3 (TR2)**      **The Importance of Emotional Resilience in Postgraduate Study**  
Neil Whiteside, Training and Development Consultant, Queen's University Belfast.
- 15.20 - 15.30**      **Delegates Move to Break Out Rooms**
- 15.30 - 16.15**      **Wellbeing Research, Personal Insights and Innovative Approaches**  
Led by Postgraduate Students at Queen's University Belfast. Details of Speakers and Topics can be Found Below.
- 16.15 - 16.25**      **Student Support at Queen's**  
Megan O'Brien, Postgraduate Wellbeing Adviser at Queen's University Belfast.
- 16.25 - 16.30**      **Closing Remarks**  
Katy Madden, Head of Postgraduate Student Services, the Thomas J Moran Graduate School, Queen's University Belfast.

# Breakout Rooms

## **15.30 - 16.15 Wellbeing Research, Personal Insights and Innovative Approaches from QUB Postgraduates**

### **Personal Insights and Recommendations (TR7)**

Presentation 1: Mindfulness Moments: Cultivating Calm, Confidence, and Success, with Emily Bond.

Presentation 2: Leveraging Behaviour Change Theory to Enhance Personal Health and Wellbeing During PhD Studies, with Hazel Haworth.

### **Wellbeing Research 1 (TR6)**

Presentation 1: An Acceptability and Feasibility Study Comparing the Butterfly Hug / Safe Calm Place Technique to Tetris: Can Either Method Successfully Minimise Post-traumatic Stress Symptoms of Preterm Parents in the Neonatal Unit? with Victoria Craig.

Presentation 2: Navigating Emotional Wellbeing in Qualitative Research – Insights for Emerging Researchers in Arts and Social Sciences, with Kristyna Ilek.

### **Wellbeing Research 2 (TR5)**

Presentation 1: Mindfulness Through Kenosis as an Informed Social Processes in the Effective Adaptation of Desires and Feeling of Emptiness Among College Students, with Merin Saji.

Presentation 2: Stories That Nourish, with Jan King.

### **Innovative Approaches to Wellbeing (TR2)**

Presentation 1: MenstroSync: An AI-Powered Solution for Menstrual Health, Mental Well-Being, and Academic Productivity, with Krupali Shankar Thakur.

Presentation 2: Resilience and Burnout: A Gameplay, Solution-Focused Approach for Software Practitioners, with Michael Sampson.

Presentation 3: Tools Readily at Hand: A Tangible Toolkit to Scaffold Self-Tracking for Creative Mental Wellbeing Support, with Jingxin Yu.

# Presentations



## Keynote Speaker: Provoking Thought

Our keynote speaker for this conference is Hugh Roarty from [Action Mental Health](#). In this Action Mental Health session, 'Provoking Thought', Hugh will look at how we can continue to break down the barriers of stigma around mental health in our society in 2025, and improve our own wellbeing and resilience skills.



## Plant-Based Diets and Flavonoids: A Path to Sustained Health and Well-Being

Dr Alysha Thompson discusses the role of plant-based diets and flavonoids in promoting health. She will explore how components of plant-based diets contribute to disease prevention, and emerging research into their potential influence on psychological well-being, as well as strategies for making nutritious, sustainable dietary choices.



## The 4Cs of Thriving: Unlocking Confidence, Curiosity, Compassion, and Courage

Postgraduate life is full of challenges - academic pressures, career uncertainties, and the constant push for self-improvement. But what if you had a framework to not just survive, but truly thrive? This workshop introduces the 4Cs as tools to manage stress, sharpen your focus, and build the willpower to commit to your intentions and make change a reality.



## The Importance of Emotional Resilience in Postgraduate Study

Almost all postgraduate students will experience tough situations during their studies. Resilience is what helps you overcome these and develop in the future. People are not born with resilience; it is a skill. In this session, Neil Whiteside will provide insight into resilience and learn useful strategies to help you cope with the pressures of being a postgraduate student.



## Student Support at Queen's

Megan O'Brien will promote the wellbeing support and services available to Queen's students. These include the drop-in service, the counselling service, wellbeing events, individual wellbeing appointments, and the support of student ambassadors

# Speakers



## Hugh Roarty

Hugh Roarty has over 13 years of experience delivering various training programs around mental health awareness, personal wellbeing and resilience and suicide prevention. His responsibilities include updating and delivering training to young people, adults and key contacts regarding mental health promotion and personal wellbeing and resilience training, with the aim of developing their awareness, knowledge and understanding.



## Dr Alysha Thompson

Dr Alysha Thompson is a Research Fellow at the Co-Centre for Sustainable Food Systems within the Institute for Global Food Security at Queen's University Belfast. She is a qualified nutritionist and holds an MSci degree in Food Science and Nutrition from Queen's University Belfast. She recently completed her PhD in Nutritional Epidemiology, where her research focused on plant-based diets and their role in chronic disease risk.



## Dr Carolyn Blair

Dr Carolyn Blair is a Research Fellow in the School of Nursing and Midwifery, QUB. As a PhD student in 2015, Carolyn was one of the first interns for Mind your Mood in QUB and formerly worked as a mindfulness teacher trainer and facilitator. Carolyn's PhD was focused on the psychosocial impact of eating disorders which led to a variety of postdoctoral projects based on designing and evaluating psychosocial interventions.



## Neil Whiteside

Neil Whiteside is a training and development consultant with over seven years of experience in the education sector. He has delivered business and management courses at all levels, and has experience delivering in secondary, further, and higher education. Neil studied business and management at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.



## Megan O'Brien

Megan O'Brien has over thirty year's experience in support, information, advice and guidance through youth work and community groups, probation project work and with disability organisations. Megan has been working with postgraduate students as a wellbeing adviser since April 2021, including Masters and PhD students, individual schools, faculties and the Graduate School.

Discover more and book your place on the [Graduate School website](#). Please email [pg.skills@qub.ac.uk](mailto:pg.skills@qub.ac.uk) should you require additional support during the conference.