

Member profile for QNI Community Nursing Research Forum



Name: Dr Heather Bain

Job title: Assistant Head of Department

Employing organisation: University of Highlands and Islands

Country of residence: Scotland

How would you describe your current role and research interests?

I am the Assistant Head of Department of Nursing and Midwifery at the University of Highlands and Islands in Scotland. The Department works out of a campus in Inverness and one in the western Isles so has the experience of delivering education in urban, remote and rural areas. In this role, I contribute to the effective management of the Department and provide strategic leadership for the student experience across all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

My personal interests in research are mainly related to nursing in the community, advanced practice, and prescribing.

How did you first get involved in doing clinical research / your own research?

Throughout my nursing career I have always been involved in quality improvement. However, it was not until I undertook my first degree and enjoyed the experience of doing a dissertation that I became more involved. I found this experience frustrating as it was a research proposal and in many ways, hypothetical, as the infrastructure was not in place to undertake the research. Thankfully universities now have closer links to practice designing their assessments within programmes to be more meaningful.

I then moved on to undertake a doctorate in education and then the learning really began around undertaking my own research.

What difference has your research training and experience made to your career / clinical practice / academic practice?

This is an interesting question as I revisited my doctoral thesis recently and found many of my recommendations have now taken place within clinical and academic practice: District nursing is now at Masters level and acknowledges advanced practice; District nurse students have an infrastructure in place to support their learning in practice; and the post registration NMC standards have been updated to reflect contemporary nursing in the community. Personally, I think the research training and experience has developed me as an individual and afforded my career opportunities and progression.

What has been your favourite research experience so far?

Linked to the above question where I speak about the impact of my doctoral studies, I have to say undertaking my doctorate was also my favourite research experience. Researching education and district nursing, two areas of great interest to me, was an honour. The interprofessional nature of the doctorate gave me new networks, pushed boundaries, developed my personal curiosity and gave me the foundation for undertaking further research. The experience challenged my assumptions and position as a nurse and educator to move beyond the nursing literature and practices and has made me see the world through different lenses.

How did you develop your research career?

Being in academia, while in many ways makes it appear more straightforward to develop your research career, in reality it is equally challenging with competing demands. For me, the important thing was to always try and make links to what you are researching with your everyday work and not choose topics that are not related. At the time of doing my doctorate I was the course leader for district nursing so exploring the unique knowing of district nurses and how this professional knowing is developed linked well to my 'day job'.

Taking time to plan your time is equally important - if you are doing research on top of your day job you need to consider what you are going to give up to maintain that healthy work life balance. For me the easiest thing to give up was housework, but seriously, you do need to consider time carefully or it will prevent you from progressing.

I would also suggest that to develop your research career you need to take the opportunity to read widely, attend seminars, move beyond your own discipline, and engage in professional debate to develop your critical thinking. Also, identify someone that can be your mentor. I was fortunate that the external examiner from my viva came to work at my institution and she has been valuable in supporting me post doctorate.

What are your top tips for anyone wanting to become a clinical academic / become more research active?

Use social media to make contacts – there are no barriers to accessing very experienced academics who are willing to support the novice researcher and engage in collaborative work.

Where can we access your recent work?

- BAIN, H., 2015. [The unique knowing of district nurses in practice](#). [Online]. EdD thesis. University of Stirling.
- GOULD, J. and BAIN, H. 2022. Principles and Practice of Nurse Prescribing. London: Learning Matters.
- HENDERSON, L., BAIN, H., ALLAN, E. and KENNEDY, C. 2020. [Integrated health and social care in the community: A critical integrative review of the experiences and wellbeing needs of service users and their families](#). Health and social care in the community. [online]

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