# The Thesis Proposal and Protocol – Trainee Guide 2024/25

In their first year of training (2nd year on a part-time pathway), trainees prepare a 3,750 word Thesis Proposal and Protocol submitted in two stages.

1. April (July if part-time): Part 1 (2,000 words) consists of an introduction (1,000-1,500 words), statement of research question (100 words), a plan for community engagement (200 words) and overview of the proposed study design (200 words) plus a literature retrieval summary form (500 words) which details how they have scoped and searched the literature to inform the development of their thesis project. Part 1 will be formatively assessed, usually by the trainee’s research supervisor.
2. July (October if part-time): Full form consisting of Part 1 (revised following formative feedback) plus Part 2, an additional 1,750 words detailing the methods that will be used. The full document will be reviewed as a thesis protocol by a member of staff who is not the trainee’s research supervisor.
3. September-November (December-February if part-time): The trainee develops their ethics application. If the trainee’s project requires FHM Research Ethics Committee (REC) approval, the thesis protocol will be submitted as part of the ethics application. If the project requires the NHS REC/HRA approval, the protocol might need to be modified to meet the requirements of the NHS system.

# Processes

## Learning Sessions

A number of learning sessions have been allocated to support trainees in developing and writing their thesis proposal and protocol.

1. Thesis Preparation 1 - Introduction to the thesis process 1 (½ day) (19th September 2024)
2. Thesis Preparation 2 - Introduction to Literature Searching (½ day) – library led session with support from team (14th November 2024)
3. Thesis Preparation 3 – Introduction to Research Design (½ day); Community Engagement (½ day) (30th January 2025)

In addition to these sessions, trainees will attend learning sessions on specific research methods and other topics during the first year which will also support the development of the thesis proposal.

## Allocation to research supervisors

1. Trainees will be provided with a list of research staff offering research supervision, and details of the topics they are offering to supervise.
2. Trainees will complete a Research Choices Form by 29th November 2024. On this, they list five topics and at least three supervisors.
3. Research supervisors are allocated in December 2024.

## Supervision

From January 2025 onwards, trainees will meet monthly with their research supervisor whilst completing the thesis proposal. Trainees will be asked to book these meetings in when allocated. However, additional meetings may be needed at points to ensure trainees are able to make progress.

## Thesis proposal assessment and review process

1. Trainees submit the Thesis Proposal and Protocol - Part 1 on Moodle by 25 April 2025 (18 July if part-time).
2. The trainee’s supervisor (or other member of research team) provides formative feedback on the proposal as a piece of academic work. Although not given a pass/fail mark, if the supervisor assesses the work as needing substantial revisions, the trainee will be asked to revise and resubmit it to be assessed again. If the feedback consists of suggestions for minor changes, the trainee will work on these in preparing the full proposal.
3. Once Part 1 has ‘passed’ the assessment stage, the trainee goes on to develop the full thesis proposal and protocol. The supervisor will read a complete draft of the full document before the trainee submits it.
4. The trainee submits the full document by 18 July 2025 (17 October if part-time), again on Moodle. At this point, the document is reviewed by a different member of the research team to the person who assessed Part 1.
5. The trainee will receive feedback on the thesis proposal and protocol and an outcome of approved or revise and resubmit. Once approved the trainee starts work on preparing their ethics application. If asked to revise and resubmit, the trainee addresses the reviewer’s feedback with their supervisor and resubmits the form directly to the reviewer.