Welcome to the *Division of Health Research*

Hi, I am Professor Carol Holland, Chair in Ageing at Lancaster University’s Division of Health Research and Director of the multidisciplinary, cross-university Centre for Ageing Research. I am really pleased you have applied for a place to study with us. You will be joining us at both a challenging and exciting time. Challenging because we have been working through the pandemic but exciting because so many of our students and staff have already been involved in research directly linked to Covid-19. For example, our researchers are interviewing people aged over 70 about their experiences of living through the pandemic, in particular about their experience of social isolation, and taking assessments over the phone of the impact of lockdown on their frailty and wellbeing.

Our current students have been adapting well to continuing their research through the pandemic with several ensuring that Covid-19 impacts are included. For example, a student examining the role of technology in alleviating loneliness has been able to adapt his work to re-assess older adults at different points in the pandemic to understand the role technology has played and had an impact on resilience for some people. Another student examining interventions for responsive behaviours in people living with later stage dementias in care homes, has been able to examine the impacts of residents not being able to receive visitors on behaviours and on the use of non-pharmacological interventions versus the use of pharmacological solutions, and the strategies of the care home staff.

**Ageing MSc or PhD**

Our PhD in Ageing looks in-depth at population ageing and explores how we can provide better health and care systems to support our older people and their families.

Current research areas include but are not limited to:

- Age-related diseases, including neurodegenerative, joint and eye diseases
- Palliative and end of life care
- Environmental/spatial epidemiology of cancer

For a full overview of the research into ageing happening within our faculty please visit our [dedicated webpage](#).

**Dementia Studies PhD**

Our PhD in Dementia Studies affords the opportunity to collaborate with the world-leading academics at our Division of Health Research on the production of a thesis that makes an original contribution to knowledge development within your area of professional practice.

This PhD develops a deep understanding of theory, research and practice in dementia and the skills you learn can be applied to careers within healthcare settings, industry, international organisations, education, research and beyond.

At the Division of Health Research, all of our Masters and PhD programmes are built with you in mind. We know that lives can’t just be put on hold, and careers can’t just be dropped and so we designed our blended-learning programmes to fit around your life, with remote teaching that can be undertaken from anywhere in the world.
Our People

Dr Qian Xiong

Dr Qian Xiong is the admissions tutor for our MSc in Ageing and PhD in Ageing. She is also a lecturer in Ageing at our Centre for Ageing Research and she teaches foundation quantitative statistical methods for the data analysis module of the blended learning programmes. Currently, Qian supervises one MSc student and two PhD students in the areas of ageing and public health. Their projects include informal caregiving for people with dementia, early life experience and loneliness, and Covid-19 transmissions among healthcare workers and patients.

Qian is interested in global ageing issues and cross-country studies, particularly looking at the demographic dynamics of population ageing and social predictors of ageing, which includes life course transitions, gender, ethnicity and race, socioeconomic status, social relationships and migration. Her research aims to understand the impact of social predictors on health and wellbeing in later life and inequalities in life course. She is a quantitative social scientist and has expertise in demographic and statistical methods. She has worked on projects that researched on residential segregation, urbanization, active ageing, dementia care and technology use among older adults. Her research areas span from eastern to western countries.

Dr Caroline Swarbrick

Dr Caroline Swarbrick is a Senior Lecturer in Ageing at Lancaster’s Division of Health Research, the Director of Studies for our taught programmes and the Admissions Officer for the blended learning PhD in Dementia Studies. Outside of her roles at the university, Caroline is a Senior Qualitative Methods Lead in the NIHR Research Design Service (Lancashire and South Cumbria) and she also sits on the editorial board for Dementia: the international journal of social research and practice.

Caroline is a qualitative social scientist by background and has many years of research experience, particularly in the field of dementia. A lot of her work utilises a participatory action research approach favouring creative and arts-based methods from a social constructionist perspective. Currently, Caroline supervises eight blended learning PhDs, topics include the use of anti-psychotics in care homes, the experiences of mental health staff in implementing the Mental Capacity Act and the adoption and acceptance of technology by self-isolated older adults during a global pandemic.
Please tell us a bit about yourself.

My greatest passion is to find solutions to complex problems. My career of over two decades has spanned various sectors including health, finance, engineering, technology, real estate and public sectors. I set up and serve as CEO to the TriPyramid Group and TCG Medical Services, where I employ over 500 people providing innovative health care with a strong record of excellence. I am also involved in other projects, working to develop biotech instrumentation, deep learning artificial intelligence systems, and innovative care for older adults. My current research examines the impact digital communication technology can have on loneliness and social isolation in older adults with a specific focus on the lived experiences of older adults during the Covid-19 Pandemic. It aims to develop a greater understanding the barriers older adults face, as well as a holistic understanding of the predictors of loneliness.

What attracted you to the programme at Lancaster?

Almost 20 years ago I did a postgraduate degree at Lancaster University Management School. I remained in contact with my supervisor Professor Niall Hayes, and when I expressed an interest in embarking on research, he invited me for a meeting with Professor Carol Holland from the Department of Health Research. A joint PhD between the two departments bringing a diverse scope of supervision and study allowed me to develop an ideal research topic. I was attracted to the excellent reputation of both the Division of Health Research and Lancaster University Management School. I knew that if I were to do the PhD that I would be in an environment that would challenge me to excel and I would also be learning from and working with renowned experts in their fields.

What has your experience of the programme been so far?

I have gained a huge amount of understanding of areas of ontology, epistemology, research methods and methodology, ageing, and technology interventions for gerontological research. This is helping me to redesign services in the NHS for our patients, especially with a greater understanding of the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on older adults and how to factor in more access to NHS services for those who have been hardest hit by the pandemic.

Drawing on the huge pool of diverse knowledge, experience and expertise of my supervisors, the extended faculty staff and peers has been a hugely enjoyable and thoroughly rewarding experience. Learning, absorbing from others and disseminating information about my research has been bidirectional exchange that I have benefited hugely from, both as a researcher, and as a person. A greater understanding of health and challenges of older adults and an ageing population has armed me with the tools to be able to deliver change that is needed.
The Autumn Academies

The Division of Health Research begins each new academic year with the Induction Academy. This milestone of the programmes is your opportunity to really begin your time with us in the best possible way. The Induction Academy lets you meet the academics, get to grips with the technology we use, gives you guidance on literature searching and introduces you to academic writing. But perhaps the most important benefit of the Induction Academy is the way it introduces you to your new peers. Time and again, when we ask our postgraduate students studying within the Division of Health Research what they value most, they tell us that it’s their network of fellow Lancaster students.

Last year, for the first time, our Induction Academy had to move online. It is testament to the way the Division has always embraced virtual learning environments and the technology of distance learning, that we were able to deliver every aspect of a ‘normal’ Induction Academy without being able to physically meet.

This year the Induction Academy will be held from the 20th to the 24th of September, and once again we will be delivering the Academy online only.

The five days of the Induction Academy are an intensive introduction to your programme and the Division. Among other topics, we guide you through:

+ Familiarising yourself with the IT (guided through everything you need to get started by our IT specialist support team)
+ Effective literature searching and academic writing
+ Critical appraisal and evidence synthesis
+ Methods in quantitative and qualitative data analysis
+ Research Ethics
+ Skills to become an effective learner

One of the many benefits of our programmes being taught at a distance is the range of people we are able to teach. They come from all over the world, able to continue in their jobs because our part-time programmes fit around existing commitments.

Last year we had people from over 25 countries join us for the Induction Academy.

“A loved the ‘Live’ sessions and being able to go into breakout groups and have the chat going during sessions. It made it fun and interactive which I loved. I found all the academic staff to be so friendly, warm, patient and caring in every single session - thank you for this as it made the nerves disappear.”

A map of all the countries students joined us from in 2020