



Robyn Johnston.  
PhD in Health Sciences.

# PhD candidate, budding entrepreneur

## Getting to know Robyn

### What are you up to at UC?

I'm doing a PhD in Health Sciences, looking at the well-being of older people who live in retirement villages. I initially enrolled in one paper and ended up doing my whole Masters, which has led into my PhD. The stars aligned for me!

### Can you describe your study process?

I treat it like a job. I have an office and I come in as if I was going to work. There are twelve of us sharing the office. We're a diverse group — eight are international students and our ages range from 20's to well past retirement. We have the most interesting conversations about different cultures and behaviours. It's incredibly enriching.

### It sounds like you've done some travel too?

In 2015 I was invited to summer school in Belgium. It was great. There were people from all over the world. Eight months later we all met up at a conference in Canada. Travel is a great opportunity for new learning, new ideas, and new connections. We have fun too, like going to a baseball game in Toronto.

### Any other highlights for you?

I'm just about to launch a business called "Transition Navigators", which is a way of helping older people find accommodation to fit their needs. It came about through my involvement in the UC Centre for Entrepreneurship. There are lots of extracurricular opportunities at UC. As a mature student you need to go for the things that fit with you.

### How do you find being a mature student?

The vast majority of students treat you as any other student. When they see you're there to learn they forget how old you are. In fact someone older than me just got their PhD — you're never too old! I'm role modeling to my grandchildren that learning is a lifelong process.

### Any advice for mature students thinking about postgraduate study?

First and foremost you have to be passionate about your research area. Aside from that, it's important to listen to others and allow yourself to be challenged. Age truly isn't a barrier, so go ahead and make the most of all the opportunities here. There are lots of them!

## Considering your next move?

The University of Canterbury offers a wide range of full and part-time study options for students of all ages, from preparatory courses through to master's study and beyond. Our world-class facilities and supportive learning environment give students the best possible chance to succeed.

- Over 130 clubs
- Free Recreation Centre
- Childcare Facilities
- Mentoring programmes
- Academic Skills Centre
- Library Services

0800 VARSITY (827 748)  
[www.canterbury.ac.nz](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz)