

UCD School of Politics & International Relations (SPIRe)



Handbook for Research Students
(MLitt and PhD)

Introduction

Welcome to SPIRe! We are delighted to meet you, and look forward to working with you over the next years.

Most of the information you will need for your studies at UCD is in the latest College of Social Science and Law Graduate School Handbook

[CSSL_ResearchDegrees_Guidance_18_19.pdf](#)

This brief document points out differences in the SPIRe program and additional information specific to SPIRe.

While studying at UCD, you will notice that there are PhD students in a large variety of different specializations within SPIRe, as well as on specialized thematic PhDs that cross disciplines. Within SPIRe, we have students working on British-Irish studies, European studies, political theory and human rights, development studies, nationalism and ethnic conflict, et cetera. Across disciplines, our school is involved in thematic PhD programs such as Quantitative Social Science, European Law and Governance, Global Human Development Studies, and Complex Systems and Computational Social Science. The course requirements for these students differ, but overlap with those in SPIRe itself.

If after reading this handbook you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us or anyone listed under contact details below.

Stephanie Dornschneider (SPIRe PhD Program Director)

Cathrina Gaffney (SPIRe School Manager)

Program structure

SPIRe's PhD program spans four years for full-time students (it is allowed, but not typically feasible, to finish within three years). For part-time students, the course is five to seven years.

The program consists, in addition to writing the PhD thesis (approximately 80,000 words), of substantial coursework in research methodology and substantive areas in politics and international relations. Furthermore, primarily through the Graduate School of the College of Social Sciences and Law (CSSL), additional courses and workshops are available to help you with your thesis and professional development.

The MLitt program is a 15-month program – 31 for part-time students – and includes at least 20 credits from the PhD taught modules plus the remainder in the form of a thesis (approximately 20,000-40,000 words).

SPIRe Seminar Series and PhD Workshop

SPIRe organises a seminar series for all staff and graduate students in the school. Attendance of these seminars provides an excellent opportunity for you to further develop your presentation skills, learn about research that takes place across the school, and practice providing constructive feedback in academic workshop settings. For these reasons, this is a core requirement of the PhD program and all students with supervisors in SPIRe are expected to attend all seminar sessions.

In addition to the seminar, there will be a workshop session scheduled at the end of each semester where first and second year PhD students will present their work. All PhD students with supervisors in SPIRe will be required to present at these workshops at the end of their 2nd and at the end of their 3rd semester. The first of these two presentations can potentially take the form of presenting your research design; the second should take the form of a proper academic research presentation, i.e. either a paper or a chapter of your thesis. These presentations are required for transfer to Stage 2 (see below for further detail on the transfer process).¹ For each presentation, one of the academic staff

¹ Note that this is to be implemented gradually: students who started their studies in the 2014-15 academic year are required to present once prior to transfer and once in the regular seminar series; those who started in 2013-14 are only expected to participate in the regular seminar series; those who started before that should have already fulfilled the necessary requirements for the taught program.

members of the school will be assigned as discussant.

After the transfer to Stage 2 of the PhD program (during the 3rd year of the program for full-time students), all students will be required to present once at the regular weekly seminar series, which will form part of the assessment for the Thesis Workshop module (see below).

Participation in these seminars is not only an excellent preparation for professional conference attendance, it is also crucial when preparing for job talks and interviews, especially if you intend to apply for academic jobs after the PhD program.

Coursework

SPIRe PhD students in Politics and International Relations must complete 50 credits of coursework, at least 40 of which should be completed by the time of the transfer to Stage 2, which takes place after approximately 18 months on the program.² Of these 50 credits, 30 will be devoted to required methodologically oriented courses, one on research design, one on quantitative methods, and one on qualitative methods; the remaining 20 required credits (and any additional credits beyond 50) can be filled with modules/courses selected in consultation with your supervisor. There is a wide range of modules available throughout the University. The CSSL Graduate School also offers a range of both taught PhD modules and PhD professional training workshops.

<http://www.ucd.ie/socscilaw/graduateschool/informationforcurrentphdstudents>

All PhD students on the Politics & International Relations program have to complete the three core modules (details are provided at the end of this document). For students in political theory, an exemption from either quantitative or qualitative methods is negotiable, to be replaced with a more appropriate methods module in UCD.

On the PhD program, SPIRe collaborates with the Department of Political Science in Trinity College Dublin (TCD). We currently share modules on Quantitative Methods (I) and Qualitative Methods, which will be taught on our campus for both UCD and TCD doctoral students during the first semester.

² Please note that these requirements are for SPIRe PhDs in Politics and International Relations. If yours is a thematic PhD program hosted in SPIRe or elsewhere, please contact the relevant program director for taught requirements.

Progress assessment

Students on the PhD program in Politics and International Relations are required to participate in assessments of their progress at two points.³ The first comes in March of the first year (assuming a September start), when students are required to submit a research outline and a piece of written work to their DSP. Just before approximately 18 months on the program, PhD students will have their Transfer Assessment in order to progress from Stage 1 to Stage 2 PhD status (for part-time students it is 18-27 months), as required by UCD regulations. This involves submission of substantial pieces of written work, a full statement of research design and thesis progress, and a plan of work for the remaining period of the research degree.

It is your responsibility to liaise with your supervisor to set up mandatory DSP meetings. The following formal meetings with the DSP are required as a minimum:

Initial meeting You should meet your DSP by the middle of the first semester, to become acquainted with them, and to give you access to the additional expertise to support your work.

6 month meeting The purpose of convening this committee is to ensure that students have a viable proposal and viable research timetable. If a student is to complete within three-four years then it is essential to ensure the project is defined at an early stage. By 1 March in their first year, students must submit:

- Detailed research proposal (approximately 2500 words);
- Detailed work schedule;
- Some piece of substantive work, for example a literature review or methodology section (up to 5000 words).

³ Students on other PhD programs with SPIRe supervisors should check whether their program has a formalized process in place for transfer assessment. If not, it is recommended that you take part in the same process in SPIRe. Please do alert the PhD Program Director at least a few months before the process takes place.

12 month meeting Second DSP meeting to take place no later than 12 months from the student's enrolment date. The DSP must have received and reviewed one chapter of the student's thesis before this meeting.

Copies of DSP reports (with all signatures) should be submitted to the School Office on a timely basis.

18 month meeting **TRANSFER ASSESSMENT: STAGE 1 to STAGE 2 PhD**

The purpose of this meeting with the School's nominated Transfer Assessment Panel (TAP) is to provide a detailed and rigorous check on the student's progress and the quality of their work. The submission and TAP meeting will take place before you reach 18 months on the programme. For this transfer assessment:

- The student must have completed 40 credits of coursework, including all core modules, with a minimum of B grade on average.
- The following documents must be submitted to the TAP:
 - One piece of substantive written work which will comprise either a draft chapter or a draft paper. For those who apply to the Irish Research Council (IRC) for a grant (see below), a copy of the grant application will suffice as one of the two pieces.
 - An updated research proposal/work plan briefly stating the core research problem, relevant research questions, and research strategy, and including a detailed chapter structure and work plan (for as far as not covered by the inclusion of an IRC application). For those who apply to the Irish Research Council (IRC) for a grant (see

below), a copy of the grant application will satisfy for this component and a short additional memo explaining thesis structure and planning will suffice

- A copy of the student's latest transcript.
- A formal written recommendation from the Supervisor based on the advice of the DSP.

The School's Transfer Assessment Panel will, after careful review of the documentation and a meeting with the candidate, make one of the following recommendations to the College Graduate School Board:

- Resubmission of revised materials at a later date, with a timeline agreed between the DSP and the TAP.
- Transfer to Stage 2 of the PhD program.
- Transfer to another graduate program, utilizing, where possible and where appropriate, the credits accumulated.
- Termination of the registration with a certificate for any modules for which credit has been awarded.

The recommendation will have to be formally agreed by the GSB and any proposed transfer to another program will have to be agreed with that program.

Funding opportunities

SPIRe Fund

SPIRe has a very limited amount of money available to fund participation by its own postgraduate research students and postdoctoral researchers in Irish and international conferences and summer schools each year.

The amount of the grant is up to €250 for any single request and includes travel, accommodation, registration fees and subsistence. Applications will be reviewed tri-annually by the UCD SPIRe Research Committee and

funding calls will be communicated via the SPIRe email ListServ. Guidelines and the application form are available on the 'PhD Policies and Forms' section of the SPIRe website:

<http://www.ucd.ie/spire/study/currentphdstudents/phdhandbookandfaq/s/>

General information

Term dates

Please note teaching dates for TCD modules may differ from those in UCD. You should consult the TCD website for further information.

For term dates, see <http://www.ucd.ie/students/keydates.htm> –

Of key importance to keep an eye on are the deadlines for the different submissions in the PhD program. These vary depending on when you start and what type of program you are on, resulting in the following overview.

	September 2018 start	
	Full-time	Part-time
1 st workshop presentation	May 2019	December 2019
2 nd workshop presentation	December 2019	May 2020
Stage 2 transfer submission deadline	15 January 2020	15 June 2020

Research Space

G315 is the school's PhD and Visiting Researcher's room. It has wireless connectivity, some desktop computers, and space for working on laptops. Space in the room is limited so students will have to "hot desk", i.e., use available spaces, rather than have an allocated space. Graduates are responsible for the upkeep of this room and 'House Rules' will be circulated to occupants. The School Board Room at G316 is also available to graduate research students – please contact Cathrina Gaffney for information and availability.

Research students may apply, with the School's support, for a workspace in the College of Social Sciences and Law research student rooms or in

UCD Geary Institute. Space in these locations is limited and most spaces are allocated to full-time students, but the School will endeavour to ensure that all research students who need workspace on campus will be accommodated. You will receive notification regarding room availability from the Graduate School Manager, Margaret Brindley, just after the beginning of the teaching term.

Subject to the opening hours of the building you will have access to these rooms at all times via the key code lock. Do not divulge this code to anyone outside of the School. The rooms have a valuable collection of equipment. Please ensure that the door is kept locked when unoccupied. In addition, the last person to leave in the evening should ensure that the equipment is switched off and the wall sockets are also switched off.

School office

The School's PhD Administrator and School Manager is Ms Cathrina Gaffney, who is available to provide administrative advice and information to all research graduate students (contact details at the end of this document).

Computer, photocopying, fax and other facilities

Please consult with Cathrina Gaffney about access to photocopying and printing facilities.

Library

When you register with the University, you will be given a UCD student card. This also acts as your Library card. You will need your card to enter and exit the James Joyce Library. A UCARD system has been recently introduced, which provides an electronic purse for making purchases within the University.

UCD Library (<http://www.ucd.ie/library/>) now has access to a vast range of online journals and electronic databases, many of them accessible from remote locations as well as on-campus. A dedicated information session will be arranged for SPIRe research students during the first semester.

ALCID

This is a co-operative scheme between a group of participating Irish university libraries, which enables postgraduate students (Doctoral, Masters by research and by exam) to have access and reference rights to

the stock of participating libraries. The library of Trinity College Dublin is particularly useful as it is a Copyright Library and contains a wide range of books, journals and other publications.

You can apply for an ALCID card at the Information Desk in any UCD Library or download the application form:

<https://www.ucd.ie/library/use/visitlibs/>

ILL – Inter Library Loans

Many publications not available directly from the Library are obtainable via the Inter-Library Loan Service. This service is available to all staff and registered students of the College and to registered external borrowers. Staff and students are charged €6.00 per application. Journal articles from branch libraries can be obtained for readers on payment of €2.50. The online request form can be accessed via <https://librarysso.ucd.ie/illb> SPIRe has a limited amount of funding available to assist PhD students with inter-library loans. This can be accessed on a case-by-case basis by contacting the PhD administrator, Cathrina Gaffney.

Irish Research Council

The Irish Research Council (IRC) is usually an important source for funding for research students. A maximum duration of a grant is usually three years. Since we have a three to four year program, your development of the research proposal in the first year is an excellent chance to also develop a proposal to submit to the IRC for funding during the remaining three years.

Contact details

For matters related to your PhD, the following contacts are most important:

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