

# APPLYING FOR A RESEARCH DEGREE

## SCHOOL OF ENGLISH, DRAMA AND FILM

### What does a research degree entail?

A research degree is a degree based primarily on a research project, usually proposed and developed by the student, who undertakes his or her research under the supervision of a supervisor and a research studies panel. In the case of the MLitt, or the research masters, the student will complete 90-180 credits, over the course of 1-2 years. In the case of the PhD, the student will complete 270-360 credits, over the course of 3-4 years.

### How do I know if I am eligible for a research degree place?

There are no 'automatic' criteria which make students eligible for a research degree. The school takes all elements of the application into account: the application form, the proposal, the student's references and the student's academic record. It is generally recommended that a student would consistently achieve grades of B-/B or above. Applicants for PhD programmes are normally required to have completed an MA degree. Applications from students without evidence of a completed postgraduate degree (e.g. a relevant MA) can only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Such outstanding applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis. All other applications without evidence of a completed postgraduate degree will be processed only on receipt of confirmation of successful completion of such a degree.

### What are the application requirements?

The School requires all applicants to complete and submit the following documents:

1. PhD / MLitt Application Form (available from the School's postgraduate administrator, or from the School website); or If applying online: please go to <http://www.ucd.ie/apply/> and follow the instructions given there. \*Please be aware that as the online application form is less detailed than the postal application, the School may contact applicants to ask for any information listed below but not required by the online system.
2. A proposal statement (four to six pages – see guidelines below)
3. A bibliography of the major scholarly publications in the subject you wish to research
4. A proposed schedule for completing your research and thesis within two years (MLitt) or four years (PhD)
5. Two academic references in support of your application. Please note that although online forms ask you to provide contact details for your recommender, there is no automatic letter request system. Letters must be submitted by the recommender by mail or email to [graduateedf@ucd.ie](mailto:graduateedf@ucd.ie).
6. A sample of academic writing (ideally a chapter from a postgraduate dissertation, or if applying for an MLitt a lengthy chapter or research essay)

In addition, non-UCD students should submit the following documents in support of the application:

1. One copy of the official transcripts of your academic qualifications
2. One copy of certificates of any additional qualifications, or evidence of any expertise, which may be advantageous to your studies (e.g. languages, IT skills, professional skills)

Application can be made online at [www.ucd.ie/apply](http://www.ucd.ie/apply)

We ask that applications be submitted in full by July 1<sup>st</sup> (September start), December 1<sup>st</sup> (January start), or March 1<sup>st</sup> (May start). If your application is accepted, your studies can commence in September, January or May.

When making an application, bear in mind the following:

1. Your academic references should be sought from academic staff under whose direction or tutelage you have studied, and who are familiar with your work. If possible, they should also have expertise in the area of study you intend to pursue in your research.

2. Your **proposal statement** should be typed or word-processed, double-spaced, with margins of at least one inch. It should run to not less than than four pages and no more than ten in length (not including a detailed research bibliography). In this statement you should provide a provisional title for the thesis, explain the central idea, question, or problem you wish to research, and justify the choice of material (texts, writers, period, genre or theories) you intend to study. You should give an indication of how this research might be organised into a thesis, outlining how the thesis might be divided into chapters. It may be useful to consult successful PhD / MLitt theses for ideas about how to organise a thesis into chapters. You should also give an indication of how you expect your research to contribute to knowledge on your chosen topic and in wider fields of study. You should explain what methodologies will be used in the course of your research, and also what resources you may need to consult or use.
3. Your **bibliography** should provide a list of the major publications on the topic you wish to research, or in the general area of your research. This should indicate that you have conducted a preliminary survey of existing research, and understand how your research might build upon existing research and scholarship.
4. Your **proposed schedule** should outline how you intend to complete your research and thesis within two years (MLitt) or three to four years (PhD). This might be divided into years or semesters. You should therefore think about what you would like to achieve in each semester or year of study. This will show that you understand how your research will accumulate into a thesis, and will give an indication to your potential supervisor of what kind of work you anticipate will be involved in completing your studies.
5. You should allow **6-8 weeks** for the processing of your application. Please specify whether you wish to apply for a January, May or September start.

#### **Do I need to contact the School prior to making an application?**

While you can submit an application without consulting anyone in the School, it is not advisable. You should contact and discuss a possible proposal with the member of academic staff whom you would like to act as your supervisor. If you are unsure as to who to contact, you could simply speak to someone working in the general area that interests you, who may be able to recommend a potential supervisor.

Staff research interests are listed on the School webpages, which may also be helpful to you in identifying a potential supervisor. You should have a draft proposal prepared before contacting a potential supervisor. You should seek the advice of your potential supervisor about your ideas, choice of materials, methodologies, or background reading, but s/he is not expected to comment on, edit, or revise your application proposal. The key purpose of contacting your potential supervisor is to satisfy yourself, as the supervisor must also be satisfied, that you can work with each other toward the completion of your studies. However, the success of this meeting does not guarantee that you will be offered a place, as the School must consider your application in relation to a range of other factors.

**You should visit the School's website for details of postgraduate study, and to find out staff research interests and contact details.**