

Practice-Based PhD in Drama

A practice-based PhD has broadly the same characteristics as any other doctorate in terms of its requirements of breadth, depth and originality. It differs from a standard PhD in terms of its composition and research methods.

A practice-based PhD in Drama will normally have two components:

1. A 'creative' element. This might comprise, for example, a play text, or another form of page-based creative output. Please note that, whilst in principle devised theatre and other performance-based practices are a valuable mode of creative research, at present we are unable to support studio-based practices at UCD due to a lack of appropriate space and resources.
2. A 'critical' element that situates the creative work in relevant research contexts, articulates its relationship to existing literature/practices, and demonstrates that the research has produced an original contribution to knowledge

These are both part of the research processes of the doctoral programme of study, and are both means through which the project's central research questions should be explored. In other words, both creative and critical work will respond to the research questions.

Important considerations:

1. Whilst UCD has a norm of 70% creative work and 30% critical work for a practice-based PhD, these proportions might vary depending on the nature of the project. Projects with a 50-60% creative work to 40-50% critical work split would be welcomed in Drama, as long as the ratio is agreed in negotiation with the supervisor and reviewed at regular intervals. As the thesis approaches completion, it is important to ensure that, whatever the final proportions, the creative and critical components taken together meet the requirements of a PhD.
2. Candidates are encouraged to think about their critical work in parallel with their creative practice. While the critical element needs to be at doctoral level, the candidate cannot reproduce the volume of critical research in a purely academic PhD in their field and will need to be selective in the avenues they explore. Clear and well-constructed research questions can be helpful in providing boundaries and limitations.
3. Creative practitioners often carry out other 'research' into particular topics in order to inform the content of their work. Examples might include gathering historical information for the plot of a play, or scientific knowledge in the area of psychology to inform work in actor training. The focus is on the ways that such work is used in its specific applications in creative practice in the areas of drama, theatre, and performance.
4. Whilst candidates would usually be expected to have professional experience in relevant areas of creative practice, the creative work must be undertaken as part of the registered research programme, and not before.

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