Handbook for Research Students

(PhD and MLitt)

2024/25

PhD Politics and International Relations

Introduction

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

Most of the information you will need for your studies at UCD is in the latest version of the [Graduate Research Student Handbook and in the Academic Regulations](#)

This brief document points out additional information specific to SPIRe.

While studying at UCD, you will notice that there are PhD candidates in a large variety of different sub-disciplines within SPIRe, as well as on specialized thematic PhDs that cross disciplines. Within SPIRe, we have candidates working on comparative politics, international relations, social science methodology, British-Irish studies, European studies, Asian politics, Middle Eastern politics, political theory, human rights, development studies, gender politics, security and defence policy, et cetera.

There are also thematic PhD programs that fall under the SPIRe remit. These are: Quantitative Social Science (QSS), Complex Systems and Computational Social Science (CSCS), Quantitative and Computational Social Science (QCSS) and Global Human Development (GHD). The QSS and CSCS programmes are now being phased out, having been replaced by the QCSS programme.

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

Ben Tonra (SPIRe PhD Program Director)

Dara Gannon (SPIRe School Manager / PhD Administrator)

Program structure

SPIRe's PhD Politics and International Relations 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. Entry to the Politics and International Relations program is usually in September but there are also some very exceptional January start students.

In addition to writing the PhD thesis (either monograph or set of integrated paper format), the program includes substantial coursework in research methodology and substantive areas in politics and international relations. Furthermore, primarily through the Graduate Studies unit, additional courses and workshops are available to help you with your thesis and professional development.

The MLitt program is a 15-month program – 31 months for part-time students – serves as an exit-option for people who choose not to complete their PhD program. It 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).

Stage 1

	September start		January start	
Task	full time	part time	full time	part time
initial RSP meeting	trimester 1	trimester 1	trimester 1	trimester 1
1st RSP progress assessment	by end of trimester 2	by end of trimester 3	by end of trimester 2	by end of trimester 3
1st PhD workshop presentation	trimester 2	trimester 4	trimester 3	trimester 4
2nd RSP progress assessment	by the end of trimester 4	by the end of trimester 6	by the end of trimester 4	by the end of trimester 6
2nd PhD workshop presentation	trimester 4	trimester 7	trimester 4	trimester 7

	September start		January start	
Task	full time	part time	full time	part time
course work (at least: 40 credits with a minimum B grade on average)	by end of trimester 4	by end of trimester 6	by end of trimester 4	by end of trimester 6
research integrity training	before end of year 2	before end of year 2	before end of year 2	before end of year 2
STA	beginning of trimester 5	beginning of trimester 7	beginning of trimester 5	beginning of trimester 7
attendance in the SPIRe seminar series	continuous	Continuous	continuous	continuous

Stage 2

	September start		January start	
Task	full time	part time	full time	part time
course work (any remaining to a total of 50 credits)	by submission	by submission	by submission	by submission
regular RSP meetings (at least 2 per year)	at least 2 per year	at least 2 per year	at least 2 per year	at least 2 per year
presentation in the SPIRe seminar series	year 3	year 3	year 3	year 3
attendance in the SPIRe seminar series	continuous	continuous	continuous	continuous

RSP = Research Studies Panel

STA = Stage Transfer Assessment

Coursework

SPIRe PhD candidates in Politics and International Relations must complete **50 credits** of coursework, <u>at least 40 of which should be completed by the time of the transfer to Stage 2</u>. **Please note that in accordance with UCD regulations, this differs from the university minimum requirement of 30 taught credits.** Of these 50 credits, 30 will be devoted to methodologically oriented courses (focusing on research design, quantitative methods, and qualitative methods). The remaining 20 required credits (and any additional credits beyond 50) can be filled with modules selected in consultation with your supervisor.

There is a wide range of modules available throughout the University. The university's Graduate Studies unit also offers a range of both taught PhD modules and PhD professional training workshops: details of these can be found [here](#).

All PhD candidates on the Politics & International Relations program must complete the **three core modules**.

Core modules 2024/25

Autumn Term

[POL50070 Quantitative Methods I](#) (Dr Yoo Sun Jung) – CORE

[POL50220 Social Science Methodology](#) (Dr Thomas Daubler) - CORE

Spring Term

[POL50200 Qualitative Research Methods](#) (Dr Elifcan Celebi) – CORE

Option modules 2024/25

Autumn or Spring Term

[POL50230 PhD Professional Development](#)* (Professor Ben Tonra) – 5 Credits

*Registration to this module must be with approval of supervisor **and** RSP. It is only available to Stage 2 students.

There is also a broad range of option modules available across the School and the College:

[Click here to access these modules.](#)

Professional Development Module – POL50230

The overall aim of this 5-Credit Module is to strengthen the professional development of our PhD graduates to devise and deliver a full Level 3 undergraduate or Level 4 graduate module based upon their research and field of study, under the mentorship of an academic staff colleague.

Students will be assigned a staff mentor whose role will be to discuss the module proposal, advise on and review a final draft of the syllabus, provide feedback on a 'spot-check' lecture, and assist in a final professional reflection on the module at the conclusion of its first delivery.

The Module is open to all Stage II full-time students enrolled in any of the following PhD programmes and whose supervisor is based in SPIRe:

a. PhD Politics and International Relations

b. PhD Quantitative Systems and Computational Social Science

c. PhD Complex Systems and Computational Social Sciences

d. PhD Quantitative Social Sciences

For more information on the module, [click here](#)

Collaboration with Trinity College Dublin

SPIRe collaborates with the Department of Political Science in Trinity College Dublin (TCD). For 2024-25, TCD operates a Coding camp for incoming students, as a preparatory course for Quants I. This is not compulsory.

This year's Coding Camp will take place from Monday 2nd to Friday 6th September 2024.

Additionally, SPIRe PhD students can take **one** substantive module at the Department of Political Science in TCD over the course of their degree. Available modules will be communicated by email before the start of the academic year.

Research Integrity Training

Research Integrity Training is a compulsory element of all research degree programmes for students admitted after August 2019. For more information, follow the link here.
As of 2024 intake completion of this training will now be a prerequisite for transfer to Stage II.

Research Ethics

Research ethics applies to all members of the UCD community who conduct research that involves human and/or animal subjects. Prospective researchers must read the policies and guidelines on the research ethics website
https://www.ucd.ie/researchethics/
It is the responsibility of every PhD researcher to ensure appropriate ethical approval or an exemption thereof before engaging in any relevant research activities. Please consult with your supervisor early on to determine which pathway to pursue and to formulate the relevant application to the University Ethics Board.

Research Studies Panel (RSP)

One of the first tasks on starting your PhD is to select suitable people for your RSP.

The function of your RSP is twofold: First and foremost, it is an advisory panel that will provide you with feedback on different aspects of your project. Secondly, during Stage 1 it also is an assessment panel charged with evaluating whether you make sufficient progress on your project (see below: Progress assessment).

In addition to the requirements set out in the [Graduate Research Student Handbook](), please note the following SPIRe-specific regulations:

Membership of RSP

The panel is comprised of the principal supervisor/co-supervisor and at least two (but normally no more than four) advisers, one of whom must be a UCD faculty member. The RSP will appoint a chair independent of the supervisor/co-supervisor. Research Studies Panel Advisers may include faculty, adjunct, visiting or research staff or relevant professional staff of the University or external to the University.

While the inclusion of academics from other schools might be helpful especially in the context of interdisciplinary projects, ordinarily no more than one RSP member should come from outside SPIRe, unless there are a minimum of four advisers on the panel.

Establishing your RSP

You should engage with your supervisor within the first few weeks of your first trimester to establish the full membership of your RSP. When you know the makeup of your RSP, you should email the PhD Director and PhD Administrator so that the details can be confirmed and entered on your record.

Meeting frequency

RSPs should meet at least twice per academic year throughout the entire PhD process. During stage 1 there should be at least the following three meetings:

Initial meeting

You should meet your RSP by the middle of the first trimester to become acquainted with them and to give you access to the additional expertise to support your work.

First progress assessment meeting

Your RSP will meet to assess your progress at the end of your second term (full time) / third term (part-time). The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that you have a viable proposal and viable research timetable. If a PhD candidate is to complete within three-four years, then it is essential to ensure the project is defined at an early stage. By the relevant deadline in the above table, PhD candidates must submit:

- A detailed research proposal (approximately 2500 words);

- A detailed work schedule;

- A piece of substantive work, for example a literature review, methodology section, or draft chapter (5000-8000 words).

The panel must report its assessment of these documents in the RPDP for this meeting.

Second progress assessment meeting

The second progress meeting should take place by the end of trimester 4 for full time students and by the end of trimester 6 for part time students. The RSP must have received and reviewed one chapter of the candidate's thesis before this meeting.

The panel must report its assessment of the student's progress in the RPDP for this meeting.

STA preparation meeting

The RSP should meet roughly two months before the STA application to provide feedback as well as prepare the RPDP that is submitted as part of the STA application. (See below for details).

The panel must state whether or not they support the student's progression into stage 2 in the RPDP for this meeting.

Meeting reports

For each RSP meeting a Research and Professional Development Plan (RPDP) should be developed and uploaded to the student record on SisWeb by the candidate. A copy with all relevant signatures (RSP members) should also be forwarded to the SPIRe PhD Administrator.

See the step-by-step guide to uploading your RPDP report to your InfoHub record under 'Supplementary Resources' on this page.

Progress assessment

PhD candidates on the PhD program in Politics and International Relations are required to participate in assessments of their progress at two points (students on other strictured programmes should consult with their programme director):

RSP progress assessment meetings

As set out above there are two RSP meetings dedicated to assessing whether the PhD candidate is on track during the crucial initial stages of the PhD. In both instances relevant materials are to be assessed by the RSP.

Stage transfer assessment (STA)

The purpose of this meeting with the School's nominated STA committee is to provide a detailed and rigorous check on the student's progress and the quality of their work. For this transfer assessment the PhD candidate must have completed **40 credits of coursework**, including all core modules, with a minimum of **B grade** on average; they also must have presented twice at the PhD workshops (see below).

According to UCD regulations the STA must be completed **within five trimesters** for full-time or **within seven trimesters** for part-time students.

The following documents must be submitted to the STA committee:

- One piece of substantive written work which will comprise either a draft chapter or a draft paper (5000-8000 words).

- 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. For those who apply to the Irish Research Council (IRC) for a grant (see below), a copy of the grant application and a short additional memo explaining thesis structure and planning will suffice for this component.

- A copy of the student's latest transcript.

- A formal written recommendation from the Supervisor based on the advice of the RSP.

- A copy of the latest RPDP. Please ensure that an RSP meeting is held at least two months prior to your transfer assessment

Please note: the student will be required to make a brief presentation (3-5 mins) to the panel.

After careful review of the documentation and a meeting with the candidate, the STA Committee will make one of the following recommendations to the UCD Graduate Research Board (GRB):

- Transfer to Stage 2 of the PhD program.

- Resubmission of revised materials at a later date, with a timeline agreed between the RSP and the STA committee (maximum 6 months).

- 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 GRB and any proposed transfer to another program will have to be agreed with that board.

SPIRe Seminar Series and PhD Workshop

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

These seminars will take place in the school boardroom (F301) on Wednesdays from 12-1pm. The Series Program can be found here.

After the transfer to Stage 2 of the PhD program (during the 3rd year of the program for full-time students), all PhD candidates will be required to present at the regular weekly seminar series.

At the beginning of your 3rd year, please contact the SPIRe Seminar Series Coordinator, to ensure that you are included in the presentation schedule.

In the first stage of the PhD program, there will be a workshop session scheduled at the end of each semester. All PhD candidates with a supervisor in SPIRe will be required to present at these workshops, according to the timeline on P.3. The first of these two presentations could 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. For each presentation, one of the academic staff members of the school will be assigned as discussant.

Early Career Researcher Forum

The SPIRe Early Career Researcher Forum is a new series of events at the School of Politics and International Relations. The PhD Forum provides guidance to early-career researchers and facilitates informal discussions between SPIRe faculty and PhD students.

Two SPIRe faculty members will provide a short overview of the topic and reflect on their experiences. The remaining time will be devoted to questions and answers.

More information can be found here.

Thesis Preparation

Different theses in SPIRe have very different forms, please work with your supervisor and RSP on determining which thesis form (monograph or thesis as a collection of papers), structure, and length etc. is best suited for your project.

You can find the general university requirements for a PhD thesis here.

Thesis as a Collection of Papers

The current Graduate Research Board guidelines on thesis formats can be accessed [here](#).

However, in the case of the multiple-paper format thesis there are some subject-specific requirements which apply to PhD candidates at SPIRe. These must be also taken into account and can be found [here](#).

If you intend to pursue this thesis format, this should be discussed in advance with your supervisor.

Thesis Submission and Viva voce

In consultation with your supervisor, please plan well ahead for your submission as setting up the exam committee and getting it approved by the GSB can take several months.

For the formal requirements of the submitted document, please see [here](#).

For information on the process of submitting the thesis, please see [here](#).

Please also keep an eye on the SPIRe [PhD FAQ section](#) for up to date information.

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. Applications will be announced and reviewed by the UCD SPIRe Research Committee. Funding calls will be communicated via the SPIRe email ListServ, along with the application form and guidelines.

Irish Research Council

The Irish Research Council (IRC) is an important source for funding for research students.

Note that Honohan scholarship students are required to apply for IRC funding within their first two years, as part of the Terms and Conditions of the scholarship.

Important: You must choose an enrolment/registration date of 1 September on the IRC application form. Your UCD record may display an earlier date but anything earlier than 1 September will render your application ineligible for consideration.

Keep an eye on the website below for more details and the closing date on the next funding round http://research.ie/funding/goipg/)

Please talk with your supervisor, if you are applying. Please note that this is a very competitive fellowship and, depending on the current state of your proposal, it might make sense to apply at a later stage. You are allowed to apply for this grant twice.

When preparing an IRC application, your RSP serves as an excellent forum to receive feedback. You could use one of your RSP meetings to discuss a draft of your application.

The IRC also operates an Employment Based Postgraduate Programme and an Enterprise Partnership Scheme. Details can be found below.

http://research.ie/funding/ebp/

http://research.ie/funding/eps-postgrad/

Political Studies Association of Ireland (PSAI)

The Political Studies Association of Ireland set up a funding support scheme for PhD researchers to attend national and international conferences. The covers costs for conference registration and/or travel expenses of up to €1,250. Note that applicants need to be PSAI members.

https://www.psai.ie/funding-calls/

General information

Important dates

For UCD term dates, see https://www.ucd.ie/students/keydates/

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

Class Rep

The class reps for the SPIRe PhD cohort are Paula Montano (gina.montanoparrales@ucdconnect.ie) and Sarah King (sarah.king4@ucdconnect.ie). Class Reps are invited to attend the SPIRe school board meetings, which typically take place twice per trimester. Please contact your class reps at any stage if you have issues/queries and, if needed, these can be brought to that forum. That does not preclude you from contacting the PhD Director or PhD Administrator personally.

Welfare Resources

UCD Dignity & Respect Support Service

UCD Student Counselling Service

UCD Student Health Service

UCD Student Advisers

UCD Careers Network

The main webpage of the UCD Careers Network can be found here.

You can also book a 60-minute 1-2-1 consultation with one of the Belfield-based Career and Skills Consultants. Click here for more info.

Research Space

F302 is the school's PhD room and is available to any PhD student **whose supervisor is based in SPIRe.** It has wireless connectivity and space for working on laptops. Space in the room is limited and the PhD class reps have taken on the task of access allocation.

Research students may apply, with the support of their supervisor, 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.

Subject to the opening hours of the building you will have access to F302 at all times via the key code (which will be provided to you at induction). Do not divulge this code to anyone outside of the School. 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.

It is also possible to get 'out of hours' access to the Newman Building. Please ask the PhD Administrator for more information.

School office

The School's PhD Administrator and School Manager is Ms Dara Gannon, 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 Dara Gannon 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 introduced, which provides an electronic purse for making purchases within the University.

UCD Library (http://www.ucd.ie/library/) 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. More information can be found via the link below

https://libguides.ucd.ie/collection_services/interlibrary_loans

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, Dara Gannon.

Contact details

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

PhD Director

Professor Ben Tonra

ben.tonra@ucd.ie

Administrator, PhD Program

Ms Dara Gannon

dara.gannon@ucd.ie

Dean of Graduate Studies and Deputy Registrar

Prof Barbara Dooley

barbara.dooley@ucd.ie

Graduate Research Administrator (Graduate Studies)

Dr Jennifer Sullivan

jennifer.sullivan@ucd.ie

Please do not contact Jennifer directly – come through the school office

Head of School

Assoc Prof Jos Dornschneider-Elkink

jos.elkink@ucd.ie