



# Handbook for Research Students (PhD and MLitt)

School of Politics and International Relations  
(SPIRe)

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## 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 version of the [Graduate Research Student Handbook](#)

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, human rights, development studies, nationalism and ethnic conflict, et cetera. The thematic PhD programs that fall under the SPIRe remit are: 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 there is overlap with those in the PhD Politics and International Relations.

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

*Alexa Zellentin (SPIRe PhD Program Director)*

*Dara Gannon (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.

In addition to writing the PhD thesis (approximately 80,000 words), 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 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).

Research Integrity Training is a compulsory element of all research degree programmes for students admitted after August 2019. For more information, follow the link below

<https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/researchstudenthub/trainingdevelopment/researchintegritytraining/>

## **SPIRe Seminar Series and PhD Workshop**

SPIRe organises 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 PhD program and all students with supervisors in SPIRe are expected to attend all seminar sessions.

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 at the regular weekly seminar series.

In the first stage of the PhD program, there will be a workshop session scheduled at the end of each semester. All PhD students with supervisors in SPIRe will be required to present at these workshops at the end of their 2nd (usually May) and 4th trimester (usually December). 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 (see below for further detail on the transfer process). For each presentation, one of the academic staff members of the school will be assigned as discussant.

## **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. Of these 50 credits, 30 will be devoted to required 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:

<https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/researchstudenthub/trainingdevelopment/taughtmodulesforresearchstudents/>

All PhD students on the Politics & International Relations program must complete the three core modules (details are provided at the end of this document).

SPIRe collaborates with the Department of Political Science in Trinity College Dublin (TCD). We currently share modules on quantitative methods. This year, Quants I will be in TCD in the first trimester for both UCD and TCD doctoral students and Quants II will be held on campus at UCD in the second trimester.

## **Progress assessment**

Students on the PhD program in Politics and International Relations are required to participate in assessments of their progress at two points. 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 Research Studies Panel (RSP).

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.

## **Research Studies Panel (RSP)**

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

### **Initial meeting**

You should meet your RSP 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:

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

### 12-month meeting

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

**Copies of RSP reports (with all signatures included) should be submitted to the PhD Administrator on a timely basis. Further information as well as the template for the RSP report can be found here:**

**<https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/t4media/Research%20and%20Professional%20Development%20Planning.pdf>**

### 18-month meeting

Transfer assessment.

### Transfer assessment

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 program. 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.
- 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 RSP.

After careful review of the documentation and a meeting with the candidate, the TAP will make one of the following recommendations to the College Graduate School Board:

- 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 TAP.
- 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. Applications will be announced and reviewed by the UCD SPIRe Research Committee. funding calls will be communicated via the SPIRe email ListServ. Guidelines and the application form are available on the 'Current PhD Students' section of the SPIRe website:

<https://www.ucd.ie/spire/study/currentphdstudents/>

### **Irish Research Council**

The Irish Research Council (IRC) is 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.

The next application deadline is 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 (further information is provided on this website: <http://research.ie/funding/goipg/>)

Please talk with your supervisor, if you wish to apply. 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 operate an Employment Based Postgraduate Programme and an Enterprise Partnership Scheme. Details can be found below. The call for both is closed with the call for 2020/21 due to open in Q4 2020.

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

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

### **Graduate Research and Innovations Fund (GRIF)**

Grants of between €100 and €1000 may be made available by the College of Social Sciences & Law to support the educational, training and research endeavours of graduate research students within the Graduate School. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, the 2020 funding round has been postponed. More information is provided on this website:

<https://www.ucd.ie/socscilaw/graduateschool/graduateresearchinnovationfund/>

## **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.

Of key importance are the submission deadlines 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 2020 start

	Full-time	Part-time
1st workshop presentation	May 2021	December 2021
2nd workshop presentation	December 2021	May 2021
Stage 2 transfer submission deadline	15 January 2022	15 September 2022

### **Class Reps**

The class reps for the SPIRe PhD cohort are Marianna Lovato ([Marianna.lovato@ucd.ie](mailto:Marianna.lovato@ucd.ie)) and Natalia Umansky ([natalia.umansky@ucd.ie](mailto:natalia.umansky@ucd.ie)). Each trimester, there is a meeting between the PhD Director, PhD Administrator and the Class Reps and any issues/queries are brought to that forum. So, feel free to contact them at any stage. That does not preclude you from contacting the PhD Director or Administrator personally.

### **Research Space**

F302 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 and, in with the current Covid situation, social distancing is being applied. As a result, students will be organized into 'pods' with rotating days of access. With the agreement of students, the two PhD class reps have taken on the task of access allocation.

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.

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 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/>

*Due to Covid-19, access to other libraries is currently restricted.*

### **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](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.

### **Core and optional modules 2020/21**

POL50070 Quantitative Methods I (Dr Thomas Chadeaux, TCD)

POL50200 Qualitative Research Methods (Assoc Prof Eva Wegner)

CSSL50020 Social Science Methodology (Dr Thomas Daubler)

POL50050 Quantitative Methods II (Assoc Prof Jos Elkind)

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

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

## Contact details

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

### PhD Director

Dr Alexa Zellentin

[alexa.zellentin@ucd.ie](mailto:alexa.zellentin@ucd.ie)

### Administrator, PhD Program

Ms Dara Gannon

[dara.gannon@ucd.ie](mailto:dara.gannon@ucd.ie)

### Dean of Graduate Studies and Deputy Registrar

Prof Barbara Dooley

[barbara.dooley@ucd.ie](mailto:barbara.dooley@ucd.ie)

### Graduate Research Administrator (Graduate Studies)

Dr Jennifer Sullivan

[jennifer.sullivan@ucd.ie](mailto:jennifer.sullivan@ucd.ie)

### Head of School

Prof. David Farrell

[david.farrell@ucd.ie](mailto:david.farrell@ucd.ie)