# Handbook for Research Students (PhD and MLitt)

## 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 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 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.

There are also thematic PhD programs that fall under the SPIRe remit. These are: Quantitative Social Science, European Law and Governance, Global Human Development Studies, and Complex Systems and Computational Social Science.

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 / 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 January start students.

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 months 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).

## 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 |
| first RSP progress assessment | by end of trimester 2 | by end of trimester 3 | by end of trimester 2 | by end of trimester 3 |
| first PhD workshop presentation | trimester 2 | trimester 4 | trimester 3 | trimester 4 |
| second 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 |
| second 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) | 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 students 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>.  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: details of these can be found [here](#)

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.
For the academic year 2020-21, 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.

## Core and optional modules 2020/21

POL50070 Quantitative Methods I (Dr Thomas Chadefaux, TCD)

POL50200 Qualitative Research Methods (Assoc Prof Eva Wegner) – this module has been postponed to Autumn 2022

CSSL50020 Social Science Methodology (Dr Thomas Daubler)

POL50050 Quantitative Methods II (Assoc Prof Jos Elkink)

There is a broad range of option modules available across the School and the College: [Click here to access these modules.](#)

## 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 Studies Handbook](#), please note the following SPIRe-specific regulations:

### Membership of RSP

The panel comprises 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 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

The purpose of this meeting 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 the relevant deadline in the above table, 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).

### 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 student's thesis before 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).

## 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 student. A copy with all signatures should also be forwarded to the PhD Administrator.

## Progress assessment

Students on the PhD program in Politics and International Relations are required to participate in assessments of their progress at two points:

### RSP progress assessment meetings

As set out above there are two RSP meetings dedicated to assessing whether the student 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 Transfer Assessment Panel (TAP) is to provide a detailed and rigorous check on the student's progress and the quality of their work. 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, 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 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. 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

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

## 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.

## 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.

**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 students with supervisors 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.

# 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 deadline for 2020 has passed (29th October, 2020) Keep an eye on the website below for details on the next funding round 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 2020/21 is closed.

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.

## Class Reps

The class reps for the SPIRe PhD cohort are Marianna Lovato (Marianna.lovato@ucd.ie) and Natalia Umansky (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 PhD 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/](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 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

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
Dr Alexa Zellentin
alexa.zellentin@ucd.ie

### Administrator, PhD Program
Ms Dara Gannon
dara.gannon@ucd.ie

### Dean of Graduate Studies and Deputy Registrar
Prof Barbara Dooley
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### Graduate Research Administrator (Graduate Studies)
Dr Jennifer Sullivan
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### Head of School
Prof. David Farrell
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