

# **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 PhD, the student will earn 30 credits through on campus taught credit, concurrent learning or recognition of prior learning. MLitt students may choose, or be required by their supervisor, to take taught modules.

### **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 PhD applications without evidence of a completed postgraduate degree will be processed only on receipt of confirmation of successful completion of such a degree.

If English is not your first language, you must have met the English language (if applicable) in advance of application submission. The requirement is IELTS band 8.0 (with no component less than 7.5).

### **What are the first steps in the application process?**

The first step is to decide on the focus that is most of interest to you - in what specific area will you find sustained motivation, enjoyment and academic reward for a number of years? Once you have narrowed that down, you should draft a research proposal for the research project. Any potential supervisor will need to know what you plan to do, what you know about this area already and where you have found a gap for new knowledge to be generated before they will consider supervision.

Once you have the proposal ready, you contact the academic who you have identified as having similar research interests, and enquire if, based on the proposal and your CV, they are interested in supervising the project. Faculty will also expect a potential student to show that they are already at least a little familiar with the academic's work and that the proposed doctoral project falls within their research expertise. Our staff profiles are available [here](#).

Please do not send numerous emails to numerous faculty. Contact one faculty member at a time, and wait for their response. If they reply that they are not able to supervise, you may then contact the next potential supervisor.

Please be aware that even with a robust proposal and a match of interests, not all faculty will currently have the capacity to take on new students due to current commitments. Thus, in advance of submitting an application, we strongly advise that you write and share a proposal with a potential supervisor with the aim of securing their support for your application. Applications that do have supervisor support are unlikely to be successful.

Should you reach the point of having a potential supervisor and decide to proceed with a full

application, the application can be made through [UCD applications systems](#).

### **What are the application requirements?**

To apply online, please go to <http://www.ucd.ie/apply/> and follow the instructions given there

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

1. A potential primary supervisor who supports your proposal
2. A proposal statement (four to six pages – see proposal guidelines later in this document)
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, full-time) or four years (PhD, full-time)
5. A personal statement
6. Letters from two academic referees in support of your application. Please ensure you secure these from your referees and upload them by the relevant application deadline.
7. A sample of academic writing (ideally a chapter from a postgraduate dissertation, or if applying for an MLitt a lengthy chapter or research essay)
8. A copy of the official transcripts for academic qualifications (including UCD degrees)
9. A 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)
10. A copy of a UCD accepted English Language test equivalent to IELTS band 8.0, with no component less than 7.5 (if English is not your first language). The score must be achieved in advance of application submission.

### **When are the application closing dates?**

We ask that applications be submitted in full to the relevant start date section in the application portal by the following deadlines: by June 1st (September start), by November 1st (January start), or by March 1st (May start).

**Incomplete applications at the time of the application relevant application deadline cannot be reviewed by the admissions panel.**

If your application is accepted, your studies can commence in September, January or May. This is visa dependent for non-EU candidates, and applicants are forewarned that visas are typically taking 2-3 months, thus making an earlier application a wise course of action.

## **Proposal Guidelines (research based)**

The exact structure and content of your proposal will depend on the field and topic. As a general guide, your proposal should

- be typed or word-processed, double-spaced, with margins of at least one inch. It should run to not less than four pages and no more than ten in length (not including a detailed research bibliography)
- 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
- give an indication of how this research might be organised into a thesis, outlining how the thesis might be divided into chapters.
- give an indication of how you expect your research to contribute new knowledge on your chosen topic and in wider fields of study.
- explain what methodologies will be used in the course of your research, and also what resources you may need to consult or use.
- provide an intended schedule of the research project

## **Proposal Guidelines - Creative Writing**

In order to be considered for the PhD Creative Writing programme, you should produce a proposal. The proposal should include:

1. Title of PhD.
2. The research questions (probably between three and five) the PhD will seek to answer.
3. The research context in which you are working, including a bibliography of key texts (these should include both creative and critical works).
4. The creative and critical research methods you will use, and the relationship between these.
5. A schedule for the research process. You should include main chapter headings and a timeline for their completion as well as other key stages in the research process.
6. The outcomes of the research, that is a poetry collection, novel, short stories, creative nonfiction, critical writing etc
7. A writing sample of approximately 5000 words of creative prose or 10-15 pages of poetry. If available you should also include a sample of critical writing up to 3000 words.

Responses to 1-5 above should not exceed 1000 words.

## **Tips for all proposals**

1. It may be useful to consult successful PhD / MLitt theses for ideas about how to organise a thesis into chapters.
2. 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.
3. 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.

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

You should not submit an application without consulting anyone in the School; it is extremely inadvisable to apply without securing the agreement of a potential supervisor.

You should contact and discuss your proposal with the member of academic staff whom you would like to act as your 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 proposal conceived and drafted 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 they are 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 Research Degree admissions panel must consider your application in relation to a range of other factors.

### **When will I hear the outcome of my application?**

You should allow approximately **6 weeks** for the processing of your application following the submission deadline. Please ensure you apply via the correct application links for a January, May or September start.

**For application queries, please email [graduateedf@ucd.ie](mailto:graduateedf@ucd.ie)**

**Please visit the [School website](#) for details of postgraduate study, staff research, and contact details.**

When ready, [apply here](#).

Last updated August 2024