



Maynooth University

Ollscoil Mhá Nuad

ICARUS/Department of Geography

Details of the Scholarship Award

The Department of Department Geography and ICARUS at Maynooth University is pleased to announce that a PhD Scholarship will be available for a suitably qualified and successful applicant intending to commence their PhD studies in September 2025.

We are seeking a PhD Researcher to work on an exciting project, “Ancient Woodlands Ireland” funded by DAFM and NPWS. The project will combine existing methodologies with novel approaches to deliver an all-island Ancient Woodlands Inventory. The multidisciplinary project will draw on expertise in GIS and remote sensing, paleoecology, contemporary ecology, and history to assess temporal changes in woodland cover in Ireland over the last 400 years. The Ancient Woodlands Ireland project will provide valuable data that can be used to enhance the protection of Ireland’s ancient woodlands and help prioritize sites for ancient woodland restoration.

The successful candidate will contribute to the palaeoecological task of the Ancient Woodlands Ireland project which aims to use palaeoecological approaches (pollen, spores and a range of other proxies) to validate the presence and species composition of ancient woodland, in woodland fragments identified in the project by mapping and historical mapping approaches. The research will use the small woodland hollow approach to ensure local stand-scale palaeoecological reconstructions of past woodland.

The wider team includes researchers at Maynooth Biology and History departments, Teagasc, Dundalk Institute of Technology, together with a number of project collaborators and advisers with woodland interests.

The palaeoecological team on this project includes the Task Lead, Dr Helen Shaw, and a Post-Doctoral Researcher with experience in palaeoecology, also funded by the project. The work will also include close working with an existing PhD student studying woodland documentary history.

Value of PhD Scholarship Award

The award is fully funded for 4 years, commencing October 2025 and running to completion in September 2029. The following funding is committed:

- Student stipend: €25,000 per annum
- Annual Tuition Fees Support
- Research supports (travel to sites, radiocarbon dates)

Duration of PhD Scholarship Award

The scholarship is awarded for 4 years of study, subject to satisfactory annual academic progression.

Please note that this project is funded by DAFM and NPWS. Due to the expected end date of the project no extensions to the PhD can be accommodated.

Role of the Student

The Ancient Woodlands Ireland project is organised around several tasks including palaeoecology, mapping, text analysis, ecological analysis. The PhD Studentship advertised here will be involved in the palaeoecological task working under the supervision of Dr Helen Shaw (with additional guidance from other project leads).

The PhD duties will include:

- Reviewing sites and site selection with guidance from the project team.
- Taking part in fieldwork, both coring trips and woodland species identification (training provided).
- Undertaking aspects of the palaeoecological analysis, taking responsibility (with training and supervision) for the data collection.
- Laboratory work, including preparation of proxies, microscopy (identification and counting of pollen, spores NPPs etc), and core scanning and analysis.
- Data analysis using R and other relevant programmes.
- Integrating palaeoecological research with other research strands in the project.
- Actively assisting and contributing to writing of academic papers for publication and wider research dissemination.
- Thesis writing, development and production.
- Presenting results at workshops, conferences, and other relevant outreach activities.
- Carrying out additional duties as may reasonably be required within the general scope and level of the post.

Eligibility Criteria for Applicants

Students who have a relevant first class or 2.1 honours in their primary degree, or have a relevant Master's degree, are eligible to apply.

Essential

- A first class or 2.1 honours degree in Biology (focussing on Ecology) or Geography (focussed on Physical/Ecological Geography).
- Field and laboratory experience.
- Willingness to learn, and to spend time identifying and counting pollen or other proxy data using a microscope.
- Willingness to undertake fieldwork that is strenuous, sometimes remote, and in all weather conditions.
- A clean driving license.

Desirable

- An MSc in a physical geography or palaeoenvironmental subject.
- Experience in palaeoecology and knowledge and experience in at least one proxy (e.g. pollen, spores, insects, macrofossils, etc.).
- Fieldwork experience specifically in palaeoecology or peat coring.
- Laboratory experience in paleoenvironmental techniques.
- Experience of analysis and interpretation of palaeoecological data.
- Experience using statistical packages such as R.
- Good organisational and time management skills.
- Good team skills.
- A clean driving license.

Application and Selection Process

Please include the following in your application:

- A personal statement, including background on your relevant skills and experience and why you would like to undertake this specific PhD.
- A Curriculum Vitae.
- Relevant academic final transcripts.
- Names and contact details of two referees.

Applicants who are non-native speakers of the English language must provide written evidence of competency in the English language that satisfy the programme-specific requirements set out by the Maynooth University International Office. All scholarship Awards are conditional on approval for registration by the University.

Informal queries can be sent to **Dr Helen Shaw** (helen.shaw@mu.ie).

All eligible candidates will be considered for open positions. Applicants may be shortlisted for interview and, if so, will be contacted directly by the Department. Late applications will not be considered.

Closing Date: Please apply by 5pm on 19th September 2025

Please submit applications directly to: **Dr Helen Shaw** (helen.shaw@mu.ie).



**An Roinn Talmhaíochta
Bia agus Mara**
Department of Agriculture
Food and the Marine



**An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht**
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage