



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sociology>

Maynooth University

Research Postgraduate Handbook

2016-2017

This handbook is accurate at the time of publication. Minor amendments will be made during the year. Any substantive change will be communicated to the students in writing.

Welcome and Introduction

The staff in the Sociology Department would like to welcome you to the 2016-17 Academic Year at Maynooth University. We hope you will make excellent intellectual progress and meet all the challenges involved in moving from undergraduate or graduate education to a research programme. A strong research postgraduate cohort is crucial to any department and we hope to both challenge and support you to continue developing your sociological interests, imagination, critical and practical research skills. The next two (MLitt) or four years (PhD) ahead will no doubt be one of intensive study, research and personal career development, but it will take place in the supportive atmosphere provided by the department. We look forward to supporting you to acquire a solid, sustainable, fertile and rigorous research education

The Department you are about to join is an exemplar of public sociology and engagement. A quick overview of our staff's research and publishing profiles (<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sociology/our-research>) should assure you that you will find our Department a distinctive and stimulating place within which to learn and to practice sociological and political analysis. Staff engage directly with the transformations in contemporary Irish, European and Global society and politics. They carry out research that combines theoretical concerns and critique with sustained empirical research on - critical political thought, activism and alternative futures; globalisation, identities and cultural practices; historical and comparative sociology; political economy, work and working lives; and urban/suburban studies.

An ethos of co-operation and exchange of ideas and knowledge among students is encouraged. Professional behavior, including regular and punctual attendance at all timetabled sessions and punctual presentation of all assignments, is required. As a research student you will be invited to specialist modules led by subject experts, regular departmental seminars and symposia featuring the work of advanced students, staff and invited speakers, and faculty seminars and workshops. You are encouraged to take advantage of all of these opportunities to advance your knowledge. Please read this handbook to familiarise yourself with the department and university guidelines for research postgraduate work.

Professor G. Honor Fagan

Coordinator of Research Postgraduates

Department of Sociology

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A) Mission Statement on Postgraduate Students

Research postgraduates are a vital part of the academic and research culture of the Department. We aim:

- (i) to provide high quality training in a lively intellectual atmosphere;
- (ii) to promote students' professional involvement in academic life;
- (iii) to ensure that students will make a contribution to the advancement of knowledge in sociology;
- (iv) to ensure that students will make a contribution to the understanding and well being of contemporary societies.

As a research postgraduate student you have access to specialist modules led by subject experts, regular departmental seminars and symposia featuring the work of advanced students, staff and invited speakers.

B) Research Interests of Current Academic Staff

Dr. Mary Benson

Cityscapes; gentrification; place; community; and visual representations. Current research focuses on urban agriculture.

Dr. Delma Byrne

Research interests include social stratification in education and the labour market spanning the primary, second-level and higher education sectors as well as post-secondary education and training; transitions between education and the labour market and the evaluation of educational interventions.

Dr. Barry Cannon

Research interests are on issues of democratization, power relations, Left and Right politics, civil society, and development, particularly within the context of Latin America. Current research focuses on right wing politics in Latin America and the Left in Ireland and in Europe.

Dr. Brian Conway

Research interests include sociology of religion; collective memory; history of Irish sociology. Current research focuses on examining Catholic public discourses and institutional arrangements, trends and patterns in the Catholic workforce, and religious institutional responses to scandal, all in comparative perspective.

Professor Mary P. Corcoran

Professor Mary P. Corcoran Research interests include the Irish migratory experience, urban transformation and change and public cultures. Professor Corcoran is currently collaborating with artist Mary Burke on a set of visual and sociological studies of homescapes and townscapes.

Dr. Colin Coulter

Research interests include development studies, global politics, Marxism, ethnicity and nationalism, popular culture and in particular popular music and Northern Irish politics and society.

Dr. Laurence Cox

Research interests include social movement research (movement waves, alterglobalization and anti-austerity movements, European social movements, movement theorising, protest policing, knowledge and learning production in social movements, activist sustainability); Buddhist Studies (Buddhism and Ireland, early western Buddhists in Asia); new religious movements; sociology of knowledge and culture (history of ideas, sociology of intellectuals, counter culture); working-class studies (community organising, oral history); social theory (western Marxism, socialist feminism); and methodology (participatory action research, community research).

Dr. Pauline Cullen

Research interests include political sociology; gender inequality, social movements; civil society and state relations; nongovernmental organisations; social policy and European Integration; coalitions between diverse constituencies; activism on social rights beyond national settings.

Professor G. Honor Fagan

Research interests include Human Security; Gender and Development; Governance; and Social Sustainability.

Dr. Jane Gray

Research and teaching interests include families and households, comparative-historical sociology, life history analysis. Her current research focuses on: life histories and social change in twentieth century Ireland; family and community, gender, household economies and social change.

Dr. Aphra Kerr

Teaching and Research interests focus on the sociology of technology and media and the emergence of digital sociology. Current research explores data politics and the internet of things, professional and amateur work in the cultural industries, in particular the global

digital games industry, new forms of virtual work, and gender and inclusion in online communities. Recent projects have explored broadcasting and diversity, innovation in animation companies, the design of future telecommunications network services and applications and gendered practices in digital games culture.

Dr. Rebecca King Ó Riain

Research and teaching interests include globalization, emotions and technology; racial/ethnic beauty pageants; critical race theory; qualitative methods; interracial marriage and multiracial people. Her current research explores the 'Globalization of Love' through qualitative research with transnational, mixed couples and their children looking at uses of digital technology to create and maintain global emotional networks.

Dr. Mary Murphy (on leave)

Research interests include the impact of globalisation on welfare states, the political mediation of social policy reform, local governance and institutional mechanisms to support social innovation, social inclusion and citizenship, gender and social welfare, commodification, conditionality and welfare to work policies.

Dr. Peter Murray

Research and teaching interests include political mobilisation and the growth of the modern state, industry, work and technological change, health, illness and healing.

Dr. John O'Brennan

Research interests include the process and politics of European Union enlargement; the EU's relationship with the western Balkans and prospective enlargement to South Eastern Europe; the dynamics of EU external relations; EU-Russian relations; constructivist theories of International Politics; and the identity dimension to European integration. I am also very interested in Ireland's experience of European integration, its relationship with the European Union and the Lisbon Treaty debate in Ireland.

Professor Seán Ó Riain

Research interests are in the sociology of work, economic sociology, comparative and global political economy and social inequality. Specific areas of interest include work organisation and workplace regimes; developmental states; the global knowledge economy; economic liberalism; changing European societies.

Dr. Paul Ryan

Research interests include masculinities, gay and lesbian studies, social movements and qualitative research methods specifically the use of life history

Dr. Eamonn Slater

His research is now concentrated on Marxist ecology and dialectical method of analysis in general. He is working on explicating Marx and Engel's insights on Ireland with special emphasis on colonialism. He is also researching the ecology of suburbia through the framework of the metabolic rift.

If a student wishes to study in an area other than those outlined above, the department may still consider the application.

For more information please see the individual staff pages at:
<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sociology/our-people>

C) An Outline of Progress through the PhD

At the end of your studies, you will receive a PHD in Arts from the department of Sociology, Module Code SO900.

The following outline is intended to help you in planning your progress through the PhD. Each year builds upon and continues to develop the work of earlier years. This outline should be taken as an indicative guide rather than as a definitive timeline. MLitt research students follow a similar progression, but over a shorter period (2 years in general) and in somewhat less depth. All incoming research postgraduates are required to complete certain taught courses. Details are outlined in section D2 below.

Year 1

Thesis Research

- Develop thesis proposal to a fully justified research plan
- Develop a comprehensive review of the literature on a dissertation topic
- Develop grant proposals and/or attend grant writing workshops

Sociological Breadth

- Conduct extensive review of literature in the related core areas (e.g. gender, class, development)
- Familiarize yourself with the cultures of sociological work through postgraduate modules, the departmental speaker series, conferences, other speakers and events

Research Skills

- All students are required to complete the departmental postgraduate seminar SO 802A: 'Craft and Logics of Social Research' in term 1 **and** SO 803 in the spring term of the first year.
- Develop skills in relevant research methods
- Develop an understanding of the multiple approaches to sociological research

Teaching

- Develop your teaching skills (including through reading on teaching methods, teaching tutorials, guest lectures, and attending Centre for Teaching and Learning and departmental training, where these are available)
- All students are required to complete either the departmental postgraduate seminar SO 801: 'Teaching and Learning in the Social Sciences' or CTL 1: 'Professional Certificate in Postgraduate Teaching & Learning: Tutors & Demonstrators.'

* A minimum of 15 credits must be completed by the end of the first year.

Years 2-3

Thesis Research

- Carry out fieldwork and data collection

Sociological Breadth

- Continue with extensive reading of literature in the related core areas (e.g. gender, class, development)
- Deepen your involvement in the cultures of sociological work through the postgraduate modules, the departmental speaker series, other speakers and events, and national and international conferences

Research Skills

- Continue to develop skills in relevant research methods through appropriate training and reading
- Take modules as relevant if you have not already done so. All students are required to take at least one substantive (in their field/area of expertise) and one advanced methods module in their remaining credit requirements
- Develop skills through your research and reflect upon it

Teaching

- Continue to develop teaching (as for year 1)

* A minimum of 25 credits must be completed by the end of the second year.

Years 3-4

Thesis Research

- Analysis/ Writing up
- Write papers for working papers and/or publication

Sociological Breadth

- Continue with in-depth mastery of literature in the related core areas (e.g. gender, class, development)
- Continue your involvement in the cultures of sociological work through the postgraduate modules, the departmental speaker series, other speakers and events, and national and international conferences
- Present a paper at a conference

Research Skills

- Take relevant modules if you have not already done so. All students are required to take at least one substantive (in their field/area of expertise) and one advanced methods module in their remaining credit requirements.
- Develop skills through your research and reflection upon it

Teaching

- Continue to develop teaching
- Teach own class, where possible
- Take on teaching work in other third-level and further educational contexts

* All remaining credits should be completed by year 3.

D) Programme for Postgraduate Research

The central relationship for PhD/MLitt students is with their supervisor but doctoral work is also supported by a variety of taught courses and the broader intellectual community among postgraduates and in the department as a whole.

A range of university-wide policies on research postgraduates such as the examination of postgraduate degrees, ethical policies, PhD supervisory policy, university safety policy, freedom of information or the commercialization of research are available online at <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/graduate-studies>

You should familiarize yourself with these policies as they become relevant.

D1) Supervision

a) The appointment of supervisors

The Head of the Department normally appoints two supervisors, a primary and second supervisor, for each student, taking into account the wishes of the student and the expertise of the staff. The role of the secondary supervisor is to act as a back-up resource for both the primary supervisor (second opinion etc.) and for the student (expertise etc.). They can also play a part in the annual monitoring of student progress.

In what follows, the remarks about supervisors refer to the principal supervisor. Students are also referred to the Maynooth University document “Ph.D. Research Student Supervisory Policy”, available from the Office of Graduate Studies.

Supervisors are students' main point of contact with the department and help students to develop their research. Students should expect to see their supervisors on a frequent and regular basis. How often this is may depend upon the needs and stage of the research. However, you should expect to meet with your supervisor a minimum of 5 times a year, including meetings at the beginning of the academic year to plan for the year ahead (and in your first year to fill out the initial meeting record) and at the end of the academic year to conduct the annual progress review and to plan for your work over the summer.

These meetings are to be of sufficient length to deal with the matters in hand, enable students to ask any reasonable questions that they have, and leave both supervisor and student clear about what is to be done next. The student retains responsibility for the thesis. The content of supervision meetings is varied, and may include the opportunity for the student or supervisor to ask questions, to discuss the progress of the research or other relevant research and literature in the field.

Staff will often ask you to prepare written work for discussion at meetings with your supervisor. This should be given to the supervisor in enough time for them to read the document before the meeting. Please consult with your supervisor in each instance to determine when this would be. When submitting a substantial piece of written work, you should expect to receive comments from your supervisor on a chapter length piece of writing within approximately six working weeks. This may vary according to circumstances within the department (e.g. examination marking) but your supervisor will let you know if this is the case.

It is not the role of a second supervisor to provide chapter by chapter feedback; however they should be there to provide intellectual discussion on the issues raised in the work. Written responses to work are the responsibility of the first supervisor only. If the thesis is co-supervised, the two co-supervisors and the student should negotiate a plan of work, with clear guidelines as to who will provide feedback, how often, and what form it will take.

The department seeks to protect staff time in July and August to facilitate staff research, writing and preparation of courses. It is therefore very important to develop a clear plan for these months. It is your responsibility to stay in regular contact with your supervisor. There may also be periods throughout the academic year (primarily during intense examination marking) when staff cannot provide feedback on work within 6 weeks. Please keep this in mind and plan accordingly. Should there be difficulties in making the necessary appointments with your supervisor these should be taken up with the supervisor in the first instance and only if necessary with the director of graduate studies and/or the head of department.

Although supervisors are appointed on the basis of the relevance of their expertise to students' own field of research, it is common, and indeed to be expected, that research students will rapidly become more knowledgeable in their own field than their supervisor. The supervisor's role is thus one that changes, from offering guidance in the early stages

of research to offering support and critical comment as the research progresses. Both supervisors and students need to be aware of this changing role and accommodate it.

b) Duties and responsibilities of supervisors

The duties of the principal supervisor are as follows:

- (i) to help students firm up and focus the topic of the dissertation within the first few months;
- (ii) to establish a timetable of work and a schedule of appointments in co-operation with the student;
- (iii) to offer guidance regarding preliminary sources and appropriate research approaches and submission of work of professional standard;
- (iv) to read and comment on drafts and return work normally within six weeks;
- (v) to advise the Head of Department concerning additional research training needs;
- (vi) to inform the Head of Department of any circumstances (e.g. illness; lack of progress) which may involve suspension or re-assessment;
- (vii) to complete the Annual Progress Review;
- (viii) to keep the secondary supervisor informed of progress;
- (ix) to advise the Department of intention to submit and on the nomination of Examiners.

The responsibilities of the second supervisor are as follows:

- (i) to assist the principal supervisor particularly regarding (i) (iii) (vii) and (ix) above;
- (ii) to be in a position to take over supervision in the event of leave of absence of the principal supervisor and, unless another appointment is made, to take over as principal supervisor in the case of retirement or resignation.

Please remember that your supervisor cannot fulfill these responsibilities without your active communication and cooperation.

D2) Structured Programme for Research Postgraduates

MLitt and PhD programmes involve a series of taught modules designed to support your research training. So while the thesis is the principal focus, doctoral students are also

supported by some taught modules and so are required to undertake a series of taught courses. These are provided not only by the Sociology Department but also by NIRSA, the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and other universities that are part of the Irish Social Science Platform (ISSP) and the 3U (DCU, RSCI and MU) Partnership. The rationale behind providing taught courses within a research postgraduate programme is to broaden theoretical perspectives, offer methodological expertise and provide guidance on teaching at third level.

Over the first three years of the PhD programme, students are required to acquire 30 credits (60 in the case of postgraduates who do not already have an MA) through taking a combination of compulsory and optional courses.

The compulsory modules are:

SO 802A, SO 803, CTL 1, and one advanced methods module (as approved by your supervisor).

CTL 1 is the teaching certificate module and you can find more information about it here: <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/centre-teaching-and-learning/staff-teaching-and-learning/professional-certificate-teaching-and-learning>

You should note that the closing date for applications for this module is 30 September 2014. Instructions on how to apply are here: <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/centre-teaching-and-learning/staff-teaching-and-learning/professional-certificate-teaching-and-learning/how-apply-ctl1>

and applications must be made by emailing: ctl@nuim.ie

Note that you must be tutoring at the time you take the module.

In addition, you may also take modules (either transferable or subject specific) beyond this if you wish and if your supervisor approves.

It is also strongly suggested that if you do not have a BA or MA in Sociology that you take SO 601A Understanding Big Ideas in your first term.

Elective Modules Available to PhD Students

There are also various elective modules available to Sociology postgraduates. You should discuss with your supervisor the choices that might be most helpful to your research interests. The completion of sufficient module credits is a prerequisite of the PhD programme and will form part of the annual evaluation of progress.

Please note that your supervisor and/or the department may require credits over and above the minimum level. In addition, the department will also consider waivers for prior modules and/ or experiential learning.

There are a number of independent study modules, which are available to PhD students. To enroll in these modules, you should first seek the approval of your supervisor and then the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies and then enroll via the registrar's office. A few popular modules are:

- 805 Key Concepts in Sociology 1 (5)
- 806 Key Concepts in Sociology 2 (5)
- 811 Advanced Sociological Methods 1 (5)
- 812 Advanced Sociological Methods 2 (5)
- 815 Field Research 1 (10)
- 816 Field Research 2 (10)
- 823 Conference Attendance (2.5 credits)
- 824 Conference Poster Presentation 1 (5)
- 825 Conference Paper Presentation 2 (5)
- 826 Conference Paper Presentation 3 (5)
- 830 Summer/Winter School 1 (10)
- 831 Summer/Winter School 2 (10)
- 832 Summer/Winter School 3 (10)
- 840 Thematic Module 1 (5)
- 841 Thematic Module 2 (5)
- 850 Writing Up Seminar 1 (5)

- 851 Writing Up Seminar 2 (5)
- 852 Thesis Writing and Completion (5)
- 854 Grant Application Writing 1 (2.5)
- 855 Grant Application Writing 2 (2.5)
- 860 Major Publication 1 (5)
- 861 Major Publication 2 (5)
- 870 External or International Course 1 (5)
- 872 External or International Course 2 (5)
- 880 Prior Learning and Experience 1 (5)
- 881 Prior Learning and Experience 2 (5)
- 890 Directed Reading 1 (5)
- 891 Directed Reading 2 (5)

Research postgraduates can also take courses offered as part of the MA Societies in Transition (MAST) and the MA in Internet and Society (MAIS). Masters students have preference on these modules but most should be available to interested PhD students. If you take an MA module for PhD credit, you will typically be required to submit a more significant piece of assessment work than MA students. Often modules are also offered in subsequent years.

Finally, there are some courses on offer by the other universities that comprise the Irish Social Science Platform (ISSP). Further details are available at <http://www.issplatform.ie>

We are also constantly adding new modules in sociology so check with the Coordinator of Postgraduate Research Studies for up to date information and the current timetable.

D3) Departmental Supports

a) Departmental Provision for the Support of Research Postgraduate Students

The department seeks to provide a set of supports that will promote both your own development as a sociologist and the development of the intellectual, research and teaching community within the department as a whole. Many of these supports are already in place but others continue to be developed. If there are other supports that would be beneficial, please do not hesitate to suggest them to the Coordinator of Postgraduate Research.

People

- Your first and second supervisors are there precisely to help you with your research. As a postgraduate student, you will work far more closely with your supervisors than you have done with your lecturers as an undergraduate. The relationship with supervisors has elements of apprenticeship and of mentoring, but is unique to postgraduate research.
- All staff are encouraged to be aware of and support the research activity amongst postgraduate students. Staff can make themselves available for consultation and advice to research students, even when not formally involved in supervision. It is precisely this type of engagement by staff and students alike in interactive learning that makes postgraduate research study at our department a unique and rewarding experience. Students are encouraged to get to know as many staff as possible in order to deepen their engagement with the varieties of ways of pursuing the sociological imagination and to enrich the department as a whole.
- Other postgraduates are a key source of support and advice – get to know them socially, take part in postgrad events, and learn to help each other.
- College offices such as the Library, the Quality Promotions Office, the Graduate Studies office, the counseling service, the Writing Centre, etc. provide a broad range of different services, many of them tailor-made for researchers. Spending some time on the university website investigating these services can be very valuable.

A summary list of the support offices is available on the Sociology department webpage at: <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sociology/undergraduate-students>

Departmental resources for postgraduate students

The department provides a variety of resources for postgraduate students' use. You will need a swipe card (your student ID) to access Auxilia and many of these rooms.

- **Postgraduate Computer Lab:** This room is on the ground floor in Auxilia and is equipped with 13 new computers, a printer and a projector. It is reserved for the use of Sociology postgraduate students. Photocopying, located in the basement of the south tower of Auxilia, can be done only with the permission of the head of department.
- **Offices:** All currently registered research postgraduate students will be offered shared office space in Auxilia House, when possible. All offices have computing facilities.
- **Resource Room:** The resource room is located in room 28 in the north tower of Auxilia House and contains a computer and scanner, a 'library' of methodology books, teaching binders and information on research and funding. It is intended to be a room for quiet reading and study and/or a meeting room for postgraduate students.
- **Social Space:** There is a small postgraduate tearoom located in room 36 in the north tower of Auxilia, which contains a small seating space, a fridge, dishwasher, kettle and sink facilities for use exclusively by postgraduates (please don't use the staff kitchen). If you intend to use these facilities, the students usually arrange themselves into a cleaning rota and take turns stocking the basics (tea, coffee, milk). If you are chatting in the tea room, please close the door as there are those working nearby and always clean up after you use the kitchen.
- **Funding Support:** A small amount of money from departmental funds is typically available, on application only, to support research costs, attendance at workshops etc. Please contact the Director of Graduate Studies or Head of Department to discuss any specific needs you might have in this regard. Funds may be available to support students presenting papers at conferences. There is also support from the *MU Collins Kitchen Travel Fund* (contact the Graduate Studies Office for more information).
- **Interlibrary Loans:** the department typically pays interlibrary loan costs. However, in order to manage these often heavy costs, students are required to contact the Head of the Department for the necessary permission **before** making an interlibrary loan request.

- Teaching Employment: A number of tutor positions on undergraduate courses, paid at standard University rates, are available where and when the department has need and can pay for them. Tutorial experience is a valuable contribution to professional learning. Applications for positions close in September and training is provided early in the first semester. Tutors have access to the Tutor Office, which is a dedicated room for their use in their teaching work (office hours etc.) located in room B.4 in the south tower of Auxilia House.
- The Centre for Teaching and Learning also provides regular academic development courses, many of which will be of interest. Information is available on the web at <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/centre-teaching-and-learning>

All these facilities are subject to restriction in line with the department's financial situation and pressures on work/space.

Intellectual community

The department also undertakes a variety of activities that are aimed at promoting intellectual community within the department and more widely. While some of these are aimed specifically at postgraduate students, others promote sociological discussion more broadly within the department and the university. It is recommended that you participate in as many of these activities as possible, as they form a crucial part of your development as a sociologist.

Seminars

Departmental seminars are a series of seminars with departmental, university and external invited speakers. The departmental seminar schedule will be circulated by e-mail during the semester.

Conferences

Conferences are a critical tool for postgraduate research, particularly but not only at doctoral level. Both Maynooth University and the Department of Sociology make some funding available for postgraduates presenting papers at conferences, which is something you should consider doing in your second year and beyond.

Postgraduate Research Day

Each March or April the Graduate Studies Office organises a postgraduate research day. This day provides an opportunity for postgraduate students to present their research and for the department to let interested undergraduates and others know about the ongoing research within the department.

Electronic Resources

Electronic resources are useful tools for researchers and bring together specialists in a particular area where people answer questions, post details of forthcoming conferences and newly published books, and often include details of funding or opportunities to present or publish your work. Ask your supervisor for suggestions in this area.

Other Departments

Students should be aware of the variety of seminars occurring in related departments. The Sociology department will from time to time undertake joint seminars with other departments – including in the past with Anthropology, Geography and History.

NIRSA

A crucial resource for social science at Maynooth University is the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA), located in the Iontas building. NIRSA is a valuable source of interdisciplinary intellectual engagement at MU and Sociology students are encouraged to participate in its activities as much as possible.

Sociological Association of Ireland

For further information on professional activities of sociologists in Ireland we would like to guide you to our professional organisation the Sociological Association of Ireland (SAI). We encourage you to become members and participate in the annual conference. The department can provide some subsidy for SAI memberships. Please see <http://www.sociology.ie/>

The Sociology Association of Ireland organises an annual postgraduate conference.

b) Other University Supports and Policies

Writing Centre, Math Centre, Computer Centre, Clubs/Societies, Career Centre – you can contact the Director of Graduate Studies if you have questions about the supports available.

c) Support for Funding for Research Postgraduate Students

The Department receives applications from students who have already applied for or are in the process of applying for funding. It also receives applications from students who have not yet sought funding and intend to start as self-funded students. The Head of Department will provide advice and assistance on these matters. The Graduate Studies Office (01-7086018/6233) provides information on MU scholarships and awards and may hold information on other funding. See: <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/study-maynooth/postgraduate-studies/fees-funding-scholarships>

Sociology students in the past have received funding from a variety of sources such as:

- NUIM studentships and tuition bursaries
- Irish Social Sciences Platform PhD Scholarships, via NIRSA.
- The Irish Research Council offers Government of Ireland, Enterprise and Employment Based PhD Scholarships each academic year. See <http://www.research.ie/>
- National Children’s Foundation, Royal Irish Academy, Combat Poverty, Health Research Board, and others

Academic achievement to date, proposed project, references and meeting deadlines are some of the factors that will contribute to your success in being awarded scholarships and funding. A number of scholarships have closing dates **in late June and early July**, so you need to be plan ahead to apply for these. MU provides bursaries and studentships on a competitive basis with closing dates **in May** (and possibly at other times during the year). Please plan to have the necessary materials prepared for those competitions.

The department provides some instruction in how to write grant proposals in SO 802A and 803. You should, however, develop a ‘template proposal’ early in the year so that you are prepared for upcoming grant competitions, which increasingly have very short deadlines.

Remember that it will take time for referees to familiarise themselves with your proposal and write references so it is best to be prepared. It is advisable to keep up to date the following materials:

- CV;

- Project description and proposed future development;
- Statement of your own skills, experience and interest.

Strong grant proposals contain the following elements, at least:

- A statement of a compelling research question;
- An explanation of how the project is situated in the existing academic literature and the contribution the research will make to scholarship and social scientific understanding;
- An explanation and justification of the research strategy;
- A convincing account of the research strategy which demonstrates that it is appropriate, rigorous and feasible;
- An account of your own skills, experience and resources, which will convince assessors that you can carry out the project.

c) Further Information

References and testimonials

Staff-members regard it as a pleasure as well as a duty to act as referees when requested to do so by students with whose work they are familiar. It should be remembered that recommendations normally take account of interpersonal as well as academic skills.

- Requests for references should be made in writing, full details being given of the nature of the course or appointment for which an application is being made.
- Full documentation relating to the course or appointment should be supplied, including all forms (duly completed), scholarship or job descriptions etc., which are required for the furnishing of references.
- Referees should have details of the applicants' address and telephone number to facilitate communication.
- As much notice as possible should be given to referees, the final date for the submission of the reference or testimonial being clearly specified.
- It is desirable for the referee to have an updated copy of the applicant's curriculum vitae to provide background to the writing of a reference.

- An 'open' (non confidential) reference is of limited value. Most strong references are confidential and report to a particular course or appointment.
- Staff-members always appreciate a brief note informing them of the outcome of applications for courses or appointments.

Research Ethics

You should familiarise yourself as soon as possible with the university guidelines on research ethics. This information is available from the Office of Research at:

<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office/ethics/social-research-ethics-sub-committee-sresc>

The SAI has a booklet on Ethical Guidelines, which you may wish to consult. You will find this a most useful handbook of general principles and statements of ethical practice concerning the professional activities of sociologists in Ireland, practices that now are of direct concern to you as a research student of Sociology. They can be found at:

<http://www.sociology.ie/index.php?pagid=25&useid=reh1230660807m3>

You should also make yourself familiar with the new MU policies on plagiarism available at:

https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/NUIM%20Policy%20on%20Plagiarism%20May%202014_0.pdf

E) Procedures

The closing date for applications is August 31st but applications are welcome at any time (there is a 100 euro late fee for registering after the current semester deadlines have passed). You are advised to contact a member of staff who you feel may be suitable as a supervisor to discuss your research topic and proposal. If you are unsure which members of staff are most relevant to your interests please review the departmental webpage (with staff interests, staff web pages and more information) and then contact the Director of Graduate Studies if you need further guidance. To be considered for NUIM fellowship funding, you should apply before May 31st.

Part-Time Study: Opportunities are available for part-time registration, spreading the same requirements over a longer period of years. Please let the department know if you are interested in part-time registration when you contact us.

MLitt/PhD: Students are initially admitted to the MLitt degree. If they wish, they then apply for transfer to the PhD degree in the August at the end of their second year.

E1) Research Application and Proposal

Students applying for admission as a research postgraduate to NUIM should submit an application form through the centralised electronic submission system (PAC).

Application forms are available from the Postgraduate Applications Centre (PAC):
<http://www.pac.ie/>

You must provide:

Personal Statement: The personal statement should include any information that you consider relevant to your interest and ability in a research degree in Sociology. It should include reference to any academic or personal experiences you have had that are relevant to your interest in undertaking a research degree and your ability to benefit from it, your personal motivations for undertaking a research degree, and what you hope to gain from it. The personal statement should be between 250-750 words.

Research Proposal: The research proposal should be typed, double spaced and approximately 7-10 pages long. It should indicate:

- * the central research topic that the student proposes to investigate;
- * the central debates in the sociological and/or social science literature that the research will address;
- * the main data that will be collected and/or analysed and the methods that will be used to do so;
- * the significance of the proposed research for sociological work in the relevant field;
- * any other critical issues regarding the research topic, approach and significance;

It is not expected that the student will stick blindly to this proposal should they be admitted as a research postgraduate student but it will provide a useful guide for students and the department in assessing the application and in developing the research.

References and Transcripts: two academic references and official transcripts.

Please note you must have an active e-mail account in order to use PAC. It is your responsibility to check your account regularly and ensure it is active and in working order. All communications regarding the status of your application will be via electronic mail.

All applicants **MUST** note their Postgraduate Studies 8 digit application number, which will be given at the final stage of the application procedure. You will need your Postgraduate Application Number to log into your Account on the PAC website to obtain updates on the status of your application. **All supplementary documentation forwarded to the Postgraduate Applications Centre MUST be marked with your Postgraduate Application Number.**

Non Maynooth University students: To complete your application you must submit supporting paper documentation evidencing your qualifications to date (e.g. Transcripts of Results, English Language Competency) and any other information indicated at the end of this application process. Copies of originals must be [certified as true copies](#). Original documentation submitted cannot be returned.

After you have entered your application details, you will be expected to pay an application fee payment of €50. This payment may be made by credit card (MasterCard/Visa) or debit card (Laser).

If you have a disability that prevents you from completing the online application please advise the Graduate Studies Office at NUI Maynooth who will arrange an application in an agreed accessible format.

Please note that **applicants from outside of the EU** may be expected to obtain a study visa for entry into Ireland to pursue their studies. Under current immigration regulations available from the Department of Justice and Law Reform, **it is not possible to obtain a study visa where you are pursuing a part-time programme**. If you are an applicant from outside the EU and are applying for a part time course it is your responsibility to determine whether under Irish regulations nationals from your home country are required to obtain a study visa.

The department as a whole makes final decisions on acceptance as a research postgraduate. If appropriate, an interview may be arranged between the applicant and potential supervisors.

The criteria for acceptance are as follows:

- a. the qualifications of the candidate, including their preparedness for postgraduate research. Qualifications for an M. Litt. are a grade of at least Second Class Honours, Grade 1 in the Sociology component of their degree, or equivalent. Ph.D. candidates will typically have a very strong academic record. Both M.Litt. and Ph.D. candidates must present a solid research proposal. The guidelines for a successful grant proposal given above also apply broadly to the PhD proposal;
- b. the submission of a research proposal which indicates a clear and significant potential for development into an original and intellectually coherent piece of work;
- c. the Department, Faculty and University can provide the additional research training including research methodology training or language training, appropriate to the student;
- d. adequate provision for supervision.

E2) Communications

The department strives to maintain good communications between staff and postgraduate students. In addition to open informal relationships, communications are also maintained through:

- a. The Postgraduate Liaison Committee: This committee consists of representative postgraduate students (1 research postgraduate) and staff (the typically the Director of Graduate Studies and the Head of Department) and meets once each term to review issues relating to the postgraduate programme. Feel free to contact the Director of Graduate Studies if you are willing to serve on this committee.
- b. Email List: For environmental reasons, we are moving away from paper and almost all official correspondence, requests and announcements from the department will come via email. All students are expected to use their Maynooth University email address, unless on suspended registration. (If suspended, they must provide an up to date alternative email address). It is the student's responsibility to insure that the department has a current email address and phone number.
- c. Department of Sociology PhD Moodle page: The Director of Graduate Studies maintains the PhD Moodle page as a clearinghouse for all information regarding the PhD programme. On this page you will find: the

handbook, supervisor list, email contact lists, PhD progression information, all forms (initial meeting form, suspension of registration form, annual review form, ethical approval form, etc.), Student/Staff Liaison committee minutes, advising documents (PhD progress, student check list, etc.) and any other course information that arises during the year. To access this page, you must be registered and use your Maynooth University email address. To be added to the page, send your email address to: Rebecca.king-oriain@nuim.ie.

It is assumed that students will check their email every two days.

E3) The Responsibilities of Students

We expect all students to recognise that they are undertaking education and training for a professional qualification in an intellectual discipline. To this end, students must meet the requirements of the Department, the Faculty, the University and Grant Awarding agencies (if any). These are as follows:

- (i) Students must adhere to the timetable of work agreed with their principal supervisors and keep their supervisors informed of any problems (e.g. ill health), which interfere with that timetable. Written correspondence should be used when appropriate.
- (ii) Students must complete the requirements for progress from one year to the next, which may include:
 - a. an annual presentation of research
 - b. an annual report on progress (in year 1 both an initial meeting report and an end-of-year progress report).
 - c. completion of required modules
 - d. completion of the thesis within the allotted time.
- (iii) Students must ensure that their files are kept up to date with change of address, telephone number and email address. If your contact details change, you must let us know as soon as possible.

E4) Problems

Problems occasionally do arise between students and supervisors. Although these are few and far between, they are best dealt with in a courteous and accommodating manner. Your second supervisor is often a useful person to talk to in the case of apparent problems, to solicit a second opinion on the issue at hand. If the student and supervisor cannot resolve a particular problem that arises then the matter should be raised with the Head of Department.

Sometimes it becomes apparent that a particular supervisor is not the most appropriate person to be responsible for a student's supervision, and in such cases the Department will do what it can to find an appropriate alternative supervisor. Students are entitled to request a change of supervisor, although students would normally be expected to discuss the reasons with their supervisor first, before approaching the Head of Department with such a request.

Any other issues that arise that may affect your progress should be communicated to your supervisor as soon as possible. Supervisors may also raise problems with students with the Head of Department where it is appropriate.

F) Student Progress

While supervisors will make every effort to provide intellectual advice, ultimately the student is responsible for progress towards the degree. The Department requires a formal monitoring of and recommendation on progress for all students at the end of each academic year. Progress, that is, permission to proceed from one year to the next, is measured by the following criteria:

- (i) satisfactory attendance and performance on a research training programme (if required);
- (ii) appropriate production of written work as agreed with the supervisor;
- (iii) a satisfactory report of progress from the supervisor.

In the case of failure to complete any or all of these requirements, the Head of Department will convene a meeting with the student and supervisors to establish what the problems are and how the student and supervisors may be further assisted.

Students will be required to have a formal review of progress meeting with their supervisor in the second half of the second semester. Specific dates for this review meeting will be communicated in the course of the year. Supervisors report to the department on students' progress at an end-of-year departmental meeting.

Students will receive a letter from the Head of Department following this meeting, communicating the central points of the review and any further actions required.

Submitting the Thesis

The Ph.D. thesis must be a substantial and high quality piece of original sociological analysis and be at least partly publishable in a peer-reviewed academic outlet.

Students should familiarise themselves with the procedures for thesis submission and submission dates, available on the web at:

<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/exams>

Deadlines and procedures can change during the year so students should continue to review this information.

Students should be warned that theses typically require multiple revisions after the production of a first complete draft and should allow for this in making thesis submission plans. Close communication with your supervisor and early provision of written drafts of research work is essential in this respect.

If you intend to submit by September 30th, for example, the following might be a plausible timeline:

- 30th March: first draft to be submitted to supervisor, approximately 6-8 weeks would be required to review;
- April – May: first draft being reviewed by supervisor, students should continue to work on thesis;
- June – August: first draft approved by first supervisor, sent to second supervisor and working on final draft;
- Sept 1: final draft for internal examiner;
- Sept 30: final submission date; thesis sent to the external examiner and date for viva voce set.

You also must check that you have completed the required number of credits (30 if you came in with an MA, 60 if you did not) and that you can give proof of ethical approval for your project (if needed) BEFORE you will be allowed to submit your thesis.

Note: You may not use the services of any editing services (professional or otherwise) in the writing and submission of the thesis.

Finally

At postgraduate level, it is ultimately your responsibility to identify your own needs, and take appropriate action to meet them through networking, reading, asking for assistance or whatever else seems appropriate.

There are many resources available for postgraduate researchers, but they are typically underused. This also means that you will tend to get a positive response from the people you approach – don't let yourself get isolated or intimidated! Remember that almost everyone you talk to in this area started off doing postgraduate research and has experienced your situation. The department seeks to both challenge you to develop as a sociologist and to provide you with the supports to make this a rewarding and enjoyable experience.

G) Bibliography

There is a large literature in these areas but you may find the following useful:

On research:

Diana Leonard, *A woman's guide to doctoral studies* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 2001) is probably the best single book on the practicalities of postgrad research – for men as well as women and M.Litt candidates as well as PhD researchers.

Adrian Holliday, *Doing and writing qualitative research* (London: Sage, 2002) is a very interesting overview of what people actually do when they write good postgraduate dissertations, based on a close study of real-life examples.

Kathleen Lynch, “Emancipatory research in the academy”, in Anne Byrne and Ronit Lentin (eds.) *(Re)searching women* (Dublin: Institute for Public Administration, 2000), is a powerful statement about the possibilities and limits of research connecting with the outside world.

C. Wright Mills, *The sociological imagination* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963) is the classic on the nature of sociology and how to practice it, still well worth a read even after forty years.

Liz Stanley, “Feminist praxis and the academic mode of production”, in Liz Stanley (ed.), *Feminist praxis: research, theory and epistemology in feminist sociology* (London: Routledge, 1990) is a key reading on gender relations in research and academia.

Rob Kitchin and Duncan Fuller, *The academic's guide to publishing* (London: Sage, 2005) does exactly what it says on the tin.

On teaching:

Inge Bell & Bernard McGrane, *This book is not required: an emotional survival manual for students* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge, 1999) is written primarily for undergraduate sociology students, but contains a lot of insights into the practical workings of academia and is a basic resource if you start working as a tutor.

bell hooks, *Teaching to transgress: education as the practice of freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994) is an absolutely fundamental book for anyone who wants to work as a tutor or plans to go on to lecturing.

Bill Readings, *University in ruins* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997) is a good read about how the university has come to be where it is today, and why there are so many tensions and contradictions within the institution.

Teaching Sociology is a useful journal of research and experiences in sociological teaching

On academia:

Ted Fleming, *College knowledge: power, policy and the mature student experience at university* (Maynooth: Centre for Adult and Community Education, 1998) is an excellent look at the problems of relating to academia, and equally relevant to researchers who entered college as school-leavers.

Pat Mahony and Christine Zmroczek (eds.), *Class matters: "working-class" women's perspectives on social class* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1997) is an excellent collection, largely drawn from the working-class experience of postgraduate research and academia.

Situationist International, "On the misery of student life" is a classic statement from 1966 of the problems facing students and academics, largely written by sociology postgrads!

Students for a Democratic Society, "Port Huron Statement" (available on library reserve or online at:

http://lists.village.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/SDS_Port_Huron.html

is a powerful statement of the same issue from an American point of view, also largely written by sociology postgrads (1962).

Evans, Elrena and Grant, Caroline. (2009) *Mama PhD: Women Write about Motherhood and Academic Life*. Interesting first person (for the most part) narratives, written by women in and out of academia, on the challenges of being a mother and an academic (or not!).

And for much needed comic relief:

PhD (Piled Higher and Deeper)

<http://www.phdcomics.com/comics.php>