



Department of Sociology
and
Centre for the Study of Politics

Maynooth University
Research Postgraduate Handbook
2023-2024



Table of Contents

Table of contents.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Welcome	4
Administrative staff – contact information.....	5
Mission statement.....	5
University policies and regulations	5
Research interests of department members	6
Supervision	9
Appointment of your supervisor	9
Supervisory meetings	9
Making contact with your supervisor	10
Your supervisors’ duties and responsibilities	10
What does being a research student involve?	11
A research student’s duties are:	11
Research students have a responsibility to:	12
Progressing through the PhD in Sociology.....	13
Initial meeting and initial meeting record (IMR)	13
Annual progress review.....	14
Completing within a four-year time frame	14
YEAR 1 - A MINIMUM OF 15 TAUGHT CREDITS MUST BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF THE FIRST YEAR.....	15
YEARS 2 -3 - A MINIMUM OF 25 TAUGHT CREDITS MUST BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF THE SECOND YEAR.....	15
YEARS 3 -4 - ALL REMAINING CREDITS SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY YEAR 3.....	16
End of year four – submission of thesis	17
Taught supports for research students.....	18
Compulsory modules	18
Subject specific modules.....	19
Subject-specific inter-university and external modules	20
Transferable modules.....	20
Other supports beyond supervision and taught modules.....	21
Funding and scholarships.....	23
Literature you may find useful early on in the PhD:.....	25
ON RESEARCH:.....	25
ON TEACHING:	25
ON ACADEMIA:.....	25

SOCIOLOGY & POLITICS @MU

OUR LEARNING COMMUNITY KEY PRINCIPLES



Our Department is a community of teachers and learners who endeavour to learn from each other

through relationships that are open respectful and engaging.



We are a diverse group of people who respect each other's varying experiences and perspectives.



We engage in active discussion and debate in an atmosphere of civility and mutual respect, in-person and online, inside and outside of the formal classroom and campus.



We respect others by avoiding disrupting their teaching and learning, we try to avoid talking during lectures, arriving late and/or leaving early from lectures, and other disruptive actions.



We respect the policies of each lecturer and tutor regarding classroom and module policies and practices, including the use of technology in the classroom.



We understand that the staff of the department are concerned for the welfare of all students, for integrity, fairness and inclusiveness in our work and overall to promote learning in the ways that are judged to be most effective.



We understand that we can bring concerns we might have to academic and administrative staff, and in particular to the Head of Department.



Maynooth University
National University
of Ireland Maynooth

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www.maynoothuniversity.ie
@MU_Sociology @MU_Politics

Welcome

Welcome to our new and returning research students! We hope you will all make great progress in 2023-24.

This handbook is for PhD students in Sociology and Politics, but also for “research Master’s” (MLitt) students who are also doing a postgraduate research degree. There are also “taught Master’s” (MA) students whose studies largely consist of taught modules, as well as postdoctoral researchers, who both have separate but overlapping research and administrative situations to yours.

A strong postgraduate research culture is crucial to any academic department. We hope to both challenge and support you to continue developing yourselves, the postgraduate community, and the department. We expect that there will be in-person and online events happening in the Department and across the wider university community throughout the academic year which you are strongly encouraged to attend.

Your comments and suggestions for improving how we go about bringing you and you peers together for support are always welcome. As in the past, we expect that the postgraduate research cohort will collectively agree a representative for 2023-24. Warm thanks to those who have previously taken up this important role.

On the Sociology department website you will find a list of the registered research postgraduate students in the department along with the title and brief description of their research. This list is continually changing as people complete their theses and new people register. It is intended to alert you to the work of others in the Department with whom you can connect. Don’t be shy!

To enter a postgraduate programme is to commit oneself to certain standards of professional behaviour. These include regular and punctual attendance at all timetabled sessions and timely presentation of all assignments. In the Sociology Department you will get a positive response from the people you approach. Remember that staff were once postgraduate students and are well equipped to empathize with your situation. The department seeks to both challenge you to develop as a sociologist and to provide you with the supports that will make this a rewarding and enjoyable experience.

Please retain this Handbook alongside the University Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees, and ensure that you are familiar with all guidelines for postgraduate research work. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the material in this handbook, we reserve the right to make changes as needed.

Very best wishes for the year ahead!

Prof Laurence Cox (laurence.cox@mu.ie)
Postgraduate Research Coordinator

Prof Mary P. Murphy (mary.p.murphy@mu.ie)
Head of Department of Sociology

Administrative staff – contact information

You will probably get to know Trish Connerty, Áine Edmonds and Darien Gandia well in our Department office during the year. They know how everything works in the Sociology Department.

An email to sociology.department@mu.ie can help to sort out many practical questions. Their office is in room 2.11 on the second floor of the TSI Building.

Mission statement

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

- to provide high quality research training in a lively intellectual atmosphere;
- to promote students' professional involvement in academic life;
- to ensure that students will make a contribution to the advancement of knowledge in sociology;
- to ensure that students will make a contribution to the understanding and wellbeing of contemporary societies.

By the end of your time as a research postgraduate student in the department, it is our goal that you will:

- have completed a thesis which is a high quality piece of original analysis and is at least partly publishable in a peer-reviewed academic outlet;
- have developed and demonstrated a significant level of skill in at least one methodology of research and analysis;
- have a broad knowledge of a number of sub-fields within the discipline;
- have had the opportunity to develop teaching and administrative skills and experience.

University policies and regulations

There are a number of University Regulations and Policies that you should read, all available under "Graduate Studies" at <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/university-policies/academic-policies-procedures>. The most important of these are the *PhD Regulations* and *Roles and Responsibilities*, which you must ensure you read as part of your induction onto the PhD Programme in Sociology. These are also subject to change .

- [MU Code of Practice for Viva Voce Examinations \(01 November 2021\)](#)
- [Route of Progression Research Masters](#)
- [PhD Regulations \(December 2022\)](#)
- [PhD by Publication \(approved AC 2016\)](#)
- [Roles and responsibilities](#)
- [Process for proposing joint or collaborative doctoral degree programmes with other universities](#)
- [Degree of Doctor](#)
- [European Doctorate - February 2015](#)

Research interests of department members

Go to <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sociology/our-people>

There you will find the up to date biographies, research interests, publications and information on professional membership and teaching interests of the Department's committed and engaged sociologists. Please familiarize yourself with the work of those whose interests are aligned with your research subject. See below a quick guide to their research interests.

Dr Mary Benson

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

Dr John Brown

Democratization, neoliberalism, post-neoliberalism, populism, Latin American politics, left parties, popular sector organizations, anti-system parties, Southern European politics.

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 Latin American politics, with particular expertise on Peru, Venezuela and Central America, especially on issues of democratization, power relations, Left and Right politics, civil society, and development. Current research focuses on opposition politics in Venezuela; right wing politics in Latin America; and, comparisons between collective reactions to crisis in Latin America and in Ireland and 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.

Prof. Mary P. Corcoran

Research interests include the Irish migratory experience, public culture, urban transformation and change, urban agriculture and food systems.

Prof. 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.

Prof. Laurence Cox

Research interests include social movement research (movement waves, alter globalization 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.

Prof. Honor Fagan

Research interests include Human Security, Gender and Development, Governance, and Social Sustainability and Critical International Development Theory. Socially Led Sustainability Science.

Dr Eoin Flaherty

Research interests include top income inequality, labour's share of national income, time series and pooled time series cross-section analysis; financialisation, social structures of accumulation, and power resources; famine, common-pool resource systems, primitive communism, and nineteenth-century Ireland; complexity theory, human ecology, and environmental sociology.

Prof. 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.

Prof. Aphra Kerr

Teaching and Research interests focus on technology and media in society, digital sociology and emergent digital research methods. Current research explores production, circulation and governance of digital media, dataveillance and inequality, gender and sexuality online, and potential social impact of artificial intelligence. Recent projects have explored the global games industry, diversity and gender in digital media cultures, broadcasting and diversity, innovation in animation

companies, the design of future telecommunications services and visual cultures.

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 globalized interpersonal and interactive forms of bodily culture through skin altering practices in Asia and Europe, beauty pageants (for more on beauty pageants listen here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3cswrld>), and Asian popular culture (Korean and Japanese popular music and dramas).

Prof. Mary Murphy

Research interests include the impact of globalisation on welfare states, the political mediation of social policy reform, gender and social welfare, commodification, conditionality and welfare to work policies, social security reform, eco welfare states.

Prof. 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.

Prof. 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

Research interests include the structure of modernity, the heritage industry (including tourism), the social construction of landscape and the environment, visual sociology and historical sociology. All of these sociological areas are investigated with a special emphasis on Irish society.

Supervision

For an understanding of roles and responsibilities undertaken by all involved in your doctoral programme including you as student, please familiarize yourself with two University documents, PhD Regulations and Roles and Responsibilities, available via <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/university-policies/academic-policies-procedures> under “Graduate Studies”.

Appointment of your supervisor

In the Sociology Department 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 (additional expertise etc.). They can also play a part in the annual monitoring of student progress. In some circumstances a student may be co-supervised. Second and co-supervisors need not be members of the Sociology 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.

Supervisory meetings

These meetings should be held regularly and frequently and be of sufficient length to deal with the matters in hand. They 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 relevant research and literature in the field.

Most often the supervisor/s ask you to prepare written work for discussion at these meetings. This written work should be sent 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 period) but your supervisor will let you know if this is the case.

They must take place 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. 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.

Making contact with your supervisor

It is the student's responsibility to stay in regular contact with the supervisor/s. 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 Head of Department.

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.

Your supervisors' duties and responsibilities

The duties of the primary supervisor are as follows:

- Give guidance about the nature of research and the standard expected, about the planning of the research programme and presentation of a research proposal, about literature research and appropriate courses to attend.
- Assist the student with planning. The supervisor should ensure that accurate information regarding their own research and professional/administrative leave, any retirement plans and contract duration throughout period of the student's project is given to the student.
- Maintain contact through regular supervisory meetings with the student; request regular written work or results of research to date. Return such reports in reasonable time with comments as necessary.
- Seek to ensure progress of the student is evaluated annually as outlined in the departmental handbook. Seek to ensure that the work reported in the dissertation is the student's own.
- If the supervisor feels obliged to recommend a student's studies be discontinued because of unsatisfactory progress, they must make this recommendation to the Head of Department/Departmental Supervisory Committee or equivalent who will inform the student accordingly.
- Encourage the publication of the results of the research where appropriate, provided that any relevant published work is coherently incorporated into the thesis.
- Assist and advise on career path and professional opportunities.
- Facilitate the student meeting other researchers and encourage attendance at research seminars, meetings or conferences as appropriate.
- Seek to ensure that the student is aware of all relevant funding opportunities open to them and actively encourage the student to apply
- Keep the secondary supervisor informed of progress

- Advise the Department of intention to submit and on the nomination of examiners.

The responsibilities of the second supervisor:

- Assist the primary supervisor particularly regarding the above
- 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
- As the thesis nears completion, the second supervisor reads a nearly-final draft and provides a second opinion on whether it is ready to proceed to examination.

What does being a research student involve?

We expect all students to recognize 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, University and Grant Awarding agencies (if any). These are as follows:

1. Students must adhere to the timetable of work agreed with their primary 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.

A research student's duties are:

1. Prepare an Initial Meeting Record (IMR)
2. Agree to a schedule of meetings, which will ensure regular contact and inform the supervisor promptly of any impediment to the schedule of research and writing
3. Document the progress of work as agreed with the supervisor and present written or other material as requested and on time
4. Inform the supervisor of any proposal to publish or make a presentation in connection with the work

5. Satisfactorily pass any course work required by the supervisor
6. Communicate any issues that arise that may affect your progress to your supervisor as soon as possible.

Research students have a responsibility to:

1. Maintain a professional relationship at all times with the supervising academic members and other university staff.
2. Advance the progress and completion of her/his research study.
3. Develop competence in written and communication skills.
4. Take the initiative in identifying problems and seeking solutions to them.
5. Comply with all applicable University regulations and follow the requirements as set out under the “Route of Progression through the Structured PhD Programme”.

It shouldn't need to be said, but you need to read your email regularly. Your academic email will become a key part of your professional identity: it is not only how your supervisor and the university will communicate with you, but also how your colleagues far and wide will engage with you. If you don't already have a habit of reading it consistently, now is the time to start. Of course you can go too far the other way – you probably already know if your real challenge is to set boundaries around it!

Progressing through the PhD in Sociology

The central relationship for PhD/MLitt students is with their supervisor, but your work is also underpinned by a variety of supports including taught modules, progress planning, review meetings and planned activities at Departmental level.

At the end of your studies, you will receive a PhD in Arts from the Department of Sociology (this appears on your web portal as module code SO900).

Initial meeting and initial meeting record (IMR)

Your original research for your thesis, and a programme of education through taught modules and professional development activities, are agreed between you and your supervisor/supervisors as soon as possible after registration.

- If you have entered the PhD programme with a three-year undergraduate degree and a Master's degree you are required to earn at least **30 taught credits**.
- If you have entered with a three-year undergraduate degree only you must earn **60 taught credits**.

The purpose of the initial meeting is to identify modules from the Sociology Structured PhD that will make up your programme of taught credits (30 credits or 60 credit programme) and to agree a schedule for meetings. This can be reviewed on a yearly basis. This form should be completed before October 30th. After registration, each research student should arrange an introductory meeting with their primary supervisor. A customised and individualised programme of research is agreed and recorded in the IMR document, which is then approved by the Departmental Progress Committee. The Initial Meeting Record is forwarded to the Graduate Studies Office. This record informs the annual progress review, which takes place at the end of each academic year.

A candidate, who has completed their Initial Meeting Record before their registration date may register for the appropriate PhD modules. However, if the Initial Meeting Record is not completed prior to registration, a candidate must register on the day indicated by Records Office, and choose their appropriate modules by the end of October.

The purpose of the Initial Meeting Record is to:

- provide an opportunity to design a unique, individual programme
- identify modules that will enhance the candidate's research programme
- identify modules that candidates will take in year one
- agree a calendar of meetings
- record attendance at the induction programme
- ensure that the candidate is aware and agrees to the University regulations and policies as outlined on the graduate studies website

Annual progress review

Each year you are required to fill out an Annual Progress Review Form and the Department reviews your progress towards completion of the degree within a four-year framework. The form is filled out in April each year, and the decision is made at a Departmental Progress Committee, normally held on a date in May as to your progress status.

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:

- satisfactory attendance and performance on a research training programme (if required);
- appropriate production of written work as agreed with the supervisor;
- 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, in connection with the Annual Progress Review form. Specific dates for this review meeting will be communicated in the course of the year.

Supervisors report to the department on students' progress at the end-of-year departmental meeting which considers the Progress Review forms.

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.

Completing within a four-year time frame

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. Part-time students are naturally on a longer schedule.

All incoming research postgraduates are required to complete certain taught courses. Details are outlined in the section below.

YEAR 1 - A MINIMUM OF 15 TAUGHT CREDITS MUST BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF THE FIRST YEAR.

Thesis Research

- Develop thesis proposal to a fully justified research plan and gain ethical approval from the university ethics committee. The “Craft and Logics” module will help you with that.
- 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, joining mailing lists and research committee / networks

Research Skills

- All students are required to complete the departmental postgraduate seminar SO 802A: ‘Craft and Logics of Social Research’ in term 1. This will support you developing your research proposal.
- 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 (CTL) and departmental training, where these are available. Generally, all students are required to complete CTL1.

YEARS 2 -3 - A MINIMUM OF 25 TAUGHT CREDITS MUST BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF THE SECOND YEAR.

Thesis Research

- Carry out fieldwork and data collection. This might (for example) involve doing a small pilot study in year 2 and the bulk of your fieldwork in year 3.

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, active participation on mailing lists and research committee /

networks

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)
-

YEARS 3 -4 - ALL REMAINING CREDITS SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY YEAR 3.

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, active participation on mailing lists and research committee / networks
- Present a paper at a conference and submit to a journal

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

End of year four – submission of 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. Procedures for thesis submission and submission dates are available on the web at:

<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/exams/postgraduate-information>. Theses typically require multiple revisions after the production of a first complete draft, so communication with your supervisor and early provision of written drafts of research work are 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; identify and gain agreement from examiners if this has not already happened

June – August: first draft approved by primary supervisor, sent to second supervisor (who will confirm that it is ready for submission) and working on final draft;

Sept 1: final draft for primary supervisor

Sept 30: final submission date; thesis sent to the nominated External Examiner and Internal Examiner. Independent chairperson appointed and date for viva voce set.

The viva voce will then normally take place a few months after submission. Depending on the outcome you may pass without corrections, pass subject to specified revisions (with a timeframe given depending on the scale of the work needed), not pass but be allowed to resubmit or (in very rare cases) not pass and not be allowed to resubmit.

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.

NB: University regulations state that you may not use the services of any editing services (professional or otherwise) in the writing and submission of the thesis.

Taught supports for research students

While the thesis remains the principal focus, doctoral students are required to undertake a series of taught courses. These are provided not only by the Sociology Department but also by the Graduate Studies Office, MUSSI, the Faculty of Social Science, the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) It may also be possible to take a module at another institution subject to the agreement of MU and the other institution.

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. Where a student agrees with their supervisor that a credit waiver or course variation is appropriate in their circumstances, the student will complete the Credit Waivers/Course Variations Form and present it to the Departmental Progress Committee for consideration. If the request is approved, the fully signed form and the student's initial meeting record should be forwarded to the Dean of Graduate Studies for ratification.

Compulsory modules

There are THREE compulsory modules that make up part of your Sociology Structured PhD Programme:

- S0802A (10 credits) Crafts and Logic of Social Research 1
- CTL1 (5 Credits) Professional Certificate in Teaching and Learning for Tutors and Demonstrators
- An Advanced Methods Module (as approved by your supervisor)

Please note that your supervisor and/or the Department of Sociology may require credits over and above the minimum level. In addition, the department will also consider waivers for prior learning and/ or experiential learning. You should discuss module choices and requirements with your supervisor as early as possible.

S0802A (10 Credits) Crafts and Logic of Social Research 1 (Dr. Pauline Cullen)

The objective of this module is to give beginning doctoral students a basic grounding in the nature of doctoral research and support in the development of your research schedule, academic writing, scholarly publications, and your application for ethical approval. It will introduce you to tools for accessing and reviewing information sources and for recording and managing bibliographies. It will provide the opportunity to develop and practice communication of your topic to a general audience.

CTL 1 (5 Credits) Professional Certificate in Teaching and Learning for Tutors and Demonstrators *(Note that you must be tutoring at the time you take the module).*

The Professional Certificate in Teaching and Learning for Tutors and Demonstrators (CTL1) is offered to Maynooth University postgraduate students and graduates currently teaching within

their departments.

Postgraduate and graduate tutors, demonstrators or teaching assistants who are facilitating tutorials, seminars, lectures, laboratory demonstrations or practicals are most welcome to apply to take part in this programme. This course has been developed to help tutors and demonstrators:

- Learn about various strategies, approaches and methods to support student learning across a range of contexts.
- Feel more confident about their teaching.
- Begin the process of professionalising their teaching practice through an introduction to pedagogy, reflection and the scholarship of teaching and learning.
- Enhance the quality of their teaching.
- Share experiences, ideas and advice on learning and teaching with other tutors and demonstrators from different departments across the university.
- See <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 via the online form.

One **advanced methods module** (as approved by your supervisor).

Subject specific modules

There are also various research post graduate modules available. Subject specific modules are ones available in your own discipline. We are also constantly adding new modules in sociology so check regularly for up to date information. Most of these modules are not taught modules in the undergraduate sense but involve you gaining credit for a particular activity which is an integral part of your research (for example, a programme of directed reading agreed with your supervisor and assessed on the basis of a paper which can form part of your literature review, or presenting a paper or poster at a conference):

805 Key Concepts in Sociology 1 (5 credits)

806 Key Concepts in Sociology 2 (5)

811 Adv Sociological Methods 1 (5)

812 Adv Sociological Methods 2 (5)

815 Field Research 1 (10)

816 Field Research 2 (10)

823 Conf Attendance (2.5)

824 Conf Poster Presentation 1 (5)

825 Conf Paper Presentation 2 (5)

826 Conf 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 Sociology MA programmes. 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. However the Sociology Master's programmes are not running in 2023-24.

Subject-specific inter-university and external modules

There are also many sociology specific modules on offer in other universities and you can take these as Inter- University and External Modules. For example some modules are available on the Irish Social Science Platform (ISSP). We add new modules in sociology each academic year so check regularly for up to date information.

You should seek details of the specific registration process from the module/programme coordinator, where the particular module is being taught, and of course you must have the approval of your supervisor(s) before enrolling. In the case of the candidate undertaking an external module as part of a structured programme, when the module is complete the candidate should bring the transcript to their Maynooth University module/programme coordinator for processing. In the case where the module is not listed as part of the departmental structured programme, candidates should complete the Application to Gain Accreditation for Inter-Institutional Modules through the link on the page:

<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/graduate-studies/modules-research-students>

You should then forward the module result and the form to the Records Office for processing.

Transferable modules

In addition to compulsory modules and subject specific modules you can also take modules from outside your Department or discipline which complement your knowledge of your research subject or which will enhance your research career skills. If they are provided by another Department (and not named on your Sociology Structured PhD Programme, they are called transferrable modules, regardless of whether they are discipline based or skills based. You can find details via <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/graduate-studies/modules-research-students>. Students wishing to register for a module outside their department must have the support of their supervisor(s). To register, students must complete the Transferable Modules Form and forward it to the Student Records Office.

There is a full suite of skills-based modules (Graduate Skills Modules) that you may be interested in which are provided through a Research Skills Development Programme supported by the Graduate Studies Office and the Research Development Office. You can access this here: <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/rsdp>

Other supports beyond supervision and taught modules

The Research Student Liaison Committee – This committee consists of representative postgraduate students (1 research postgraduate) and staff (the typically the Postgraduate Research Coordinator and the Head of Department) and meets once each term to review issues relating to the postgraduate programme. Feel free to contact the Postgraduate Research Coordinator if you are willing to serve on this committee.

Communication by Email – Almost all official correspondence, requests and announcements from the department will come via email. **Check your email every week**. 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 ensure that the department has a current email address and phone number.

We are in the process of setting up a dedicated space on **MS TEAMS** 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. More details later.

Peer Support – You are going through a doctoral programme with other students. Supporting each other and learning from each other greatly enhances your experience. The Department provides support for at least one social peer support meeting per semester. All doctoral students come together socially for an informal meet and greet, and to engage with each other as a peer support network during what can often be experienced as a solitary research experience.

Office Space - All currently registered research postgraduate students will be offered shared office space in the TSI Building. Two rooms are available including personal lockers for storage.

Social Space – Doctoral students will have access to the kitchen, 2.36, located on the second floor of the TSI building. This is a shared facility for all staff working on this floor. There is some seating area in the kitchen and directly outside. Please always tidy 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 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 Postgraduate Research Travel Fund* <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/study-maynooth/postgraduate-studies/fees-funding-scholarships/postgraduate-travel-fund-collins> (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, remunerated at standard University rates, are available where and when the department has the need (and resources to pay for them.) Tutorial experience can make a valuable contribution to professional learning. Applications for positions close in early 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, Research Office, and Graduate Studies Office also provides regular academic development courses, many of which will be of interest.

Departmental Research Cluster Seminars, Faculty Research Clusters, and the Social Science Institute (MUSSI), and the Research Office and Graduate Studies Office all provide a variety of activities that are aimed at promoting intellectual community within the department and the Faculty more widely. While some of these are aimed specifically at research students, others promote sociological discussion within the Department and in multidisciplinary contexts. 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.

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

The **Sociological Association of Ireland (SAI)** organizes an annual postgraduate conference. For further information on professional activities of sociologists in Ireland check out <http://www.sociology.ie/>. We encourage you to become members and participate in the annual conference. The department can provide some subsidy for SAI memberships.

Scholarly mailing lists, research committees etc.: Over time you will develop a scholarly identity which is shaped by the specific intellectual communities you are connected to. These may be disciplinary (e.g. the SAI and other sociological bodies including the European and International Sociological Associations), or they might be focused on a particular empirical topic, theoretical approach or research methodology (these are often interdisciplinary).

Along with attending relevant conferences and seminars, signing up to suitable academic mailing lists such as the H-NET lists (international), the HEANET lists (Irish-based) or research committees/networks within specific scholarly bodies (e.g. the European and International

Sociological Associations each have many different research networks dedicated to particular topics. Most mailing lists and some research committees / networks are free, particularly for postgraduates.

University-wide Supports: Writing Centre, Maths Centre, Computer Centre, Clubs/Societies, Career Centre and all their events and supports are available to you on request.

Research Ethics Supports and Resources: Ethical research practices are essential to your doctoral programme and your doctoral research must receive University level ethical approval. While ethics are integrated into your sociological education there are a number of supports, modules and documents available to you as a doctoral student. You should familiarize 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/>

You should also make yourself familiar with the MU policies on plagiarism available at: <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document//Maynooth%20University%20Policy%20on%20Academic%20Misconduct%20and%20Academic%20Integrity%20%281%29.pdf>

Generative AI

Please note the Department's policy on this:

"The use of generative Artificial Intelligence (e.g. ChatGPT etc.) is strictly forbidden on all assignments, assessments, and academic work that you do within the department unless otherwise specified by your professor. To take credit for another person's or machine-generated words, writing and thoughts, and to present that as your own work, is plagiarism and will be subject to the policies of the university on plagiarism. The department reserves the right to ask students for an in-person meeting to account further for the assessment. Use of Artificial Intelligence in one module **does not give permission for its use in any other assessment or modules.**"

Funding and scholarships

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 Postgraduate Research Coordinator 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>.

Of key interest to first year PhD students are the IRC Government of Ireland Awards. The deadline for 2023 submission (for funding beginning Oct 2024) is **12 October, 2023**. Call information is available here: <https://research.ie/funding/goipg/>

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

- MU John and Pat Hume studentships, scholarships and tuition bursaries
- 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 familiarize themselves with your proposal and write references so it is best to be prepared. It is advisable to keep the following materials up to date:

- 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;
- A strategy for dissemination which may include publications (articles / chapters / books), conference presentations, or communicating to a wider public (e.g. podcasts, social media, writing for the mainstream media, broadcasting possibilities etc.)

Literature you may find useful early on in the PhD:

ON RESEARCH:

Diana Leonard, *A woman's guide to doctoral studies* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 2001) is still 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:

Kathleen Odell Korgen et al., *Sociologists in Action: Sociology, Social Change and Social Justice* (Sage, 2013) and Michelle K White et al., *Sociologists in Action: Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality* (Sage, 2014). Two inspiring collections of different experiences of using sociology in the classroom and beyond to change the world.

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, 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:

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!).

Peter Fleming, *Dark Academia: How Universities Die*. London: Pluto, 2021. Grim but worth a read before you commit yourself to the institution for life.

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 poverty of student life" is a classic statement from 1966 of the problems facing students and academics, largely written by sociology postgrads...

<http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/4>

John Smyth, *The toxic university: zombie leadership, academic rock stars and neoliberal ideology* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017) does what it says on the tin.

Students for a Democratic Society, "Port Huron Statement"

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).

And for much needed comic relief: PhD (Piled Higher and Deeper)

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

GOOD LUCK!