



Department of Sociology
and
Centre for the Study of Politics

Maynooth University
Research Postgraduate Handbook
2024-2025



Table of Contents

Welcome	4
Mission statement.....	5
Administrative staff – contact information.....	5
Graduate Research Academy.....	5
The new Graduate Research Academy is Maynooth’s one-stop shop for everything to do with postgraduate research. Their website is https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/graduate-research-academy.....	5
University policies and regulations	5
Research interests of department members	6
Your research postgraduate colleagues in the Department	9
Supervision	12
Appointment of your supervisor/s	12
Supervisory meetings	12
Making contact with your supervisor/s.....	13
Your supervisor’s duties and responsibilities.....	13
What does being a research student involve?	15
Please:.....	16
Progressing through the PhD in the Department of Sociology	18
Initial meeting and initial meeting record (IMR)	18
Annual progress review.....	19
Completing within a four-year time frame	19
YEAR 1 - A MINIMUM OF 15 TAUGHT CREDITS MUST BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF THE FIRST YEAR.	20
YEARS 2 -3 - A MINIMUM OF 25 TAUGHT CREDITS MUST BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF THE SECOND YEAR.	20
YEARS 3 -4 - ALL REMAINING CREDITS SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY YEAR 3.	21
End of year four – submission of thesis	22
Taught supports for research students.....	23
Compulsory modules	23
Subject specific modules.....	24
Subject-specific inter-university and external modules.....	25
Transferable modules.....	25
Other supports beyond supervision and taught modules	26
Funding and scholarships.....	28
Literature you may find useful early on in the PhD:.....	30
ON RESEARCH:.....	30
ON TEACHING:	30
ON ACADEMIA:.....	30

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
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Welcome

Welcome to our new and returning research students! We hope you will all make great progress in 2024-25.

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.

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 or political scientist, and to provide you with the supports to make this a rewarding and enjoyable experience.

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!

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 2024-25. Warm thanks to those who have previously taken up this role.

Joining a postgraduate programme also means committing yourself to certain standards of professional behaviour. Those include regular and punctual attendance at all timetabled sessions and timely presentation of all assignments – and reading your emails!

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 Seán Ó Riain (Sean.ORiain@mu.ie)

Head of Department of Sociology

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 research students' professional involvement in academic life;
- to ensure that research students make a contribution to the advancement of knowledge in sociology and/or politics;
- to ensure that research students will make a contribution to the understanding and wellbeing of contemporary societies and politics.

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 your discipline;
- have had the opportunity to develop teaching and administrative skills and experience.

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.

Graduate Research Academy

The new Graduate Research Academy is Maynooth's one-stop shop for everything to do with postgraduate research. Their website is <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/graduate-research-academy>.

University policies and regulations

There are a number of University Regulations and Policies that you should read, all available under "Postgraduate policies" 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.

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. 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

I am interested in supervising activists in social movements or communities in struggle who are carrying out participatory action research as a contribution to their own movements' practice.

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.

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).

Dr Daryl Martin

Research interests include: architecture; cultural representations of place; landscape; and urban development. Recent research has focussed on studies of healthcare architecture; the digitally mediated use of public space; photographic representations of cities; and the contested politics of religious architecture in contemporary urban environments.

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 Elena Zambelli

My research interests include women's everyday negotiations of sexuality and 'respectability'; intimate mobilities; migrations, everyday bordering and resistances; whiteness, race and racisms; women's collective agency and struggles in the Middle East and North Africa region; Palestine and decolonial solidarities.

Your research postgraduate colleagues in the Department

NAME	TOPIC AND SUPERVISOR
Ali, Saif	Towards a Sociology of Loss: Disposals and Dead-ends in Lineages of Social Innovation and Change. Supervisor: Jane Gray
Bordoloi, Akangshya	Advocacy, Activism and Southern Feminism: An ethnographic study on regulatory sex work activism in Delhi, India First supervisor: Paul Ryan. Second supervisor: Honor Fagan
Cummins, Lana	Social Class Dynamics in Parental Experiences of Children’s Disability Services. Supervisor: Delma Byrne
Róisín Freeney	The Motherlode: A sociological examination of the construction of motherhood in Ireland across the time. Supervisor: Jane Gray/Pauline Cullen
Gaffney, Lorraine	A sociological examination of food practices in Ireland. Co-supervisors: Mary P. Corcoran and Delma Byrne; External supervisor Mary McDonell Naughton (TUS)
Gandia, Darien	A sociological investigation of undocumented Irish immigrants in New York City against the backdrop of immigration reform and the Trump presidency, the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic and the digitalisation of diasporic space Co-supervisors Mary P. Corcoran and Pauline Cullen
Ghareh Daghi, Ali Asghar	US sanctions and the revival of “resistance”: a comparative analysis of its challenges in Iran and Venezuela First supervisor: Barry Cannon
Goldrick Kelly, Paul	Breaking the lock: A comparative political economic examination of institutional lock-in Co-Supervisors: Seán Ó Riain and Eoin Flaherty
Gough, Shane	ADVANCE programme jointly with Sociology and Law Supervisor: Aphra Kerr
Killeen, John	Developing an action-based approach to sustainable practice and strategy in higher education; can small actions from staff and students’ in culinary arts promote a culture change in a hospitality department?

	Co-supervisors: Mary P. Corcoran and Delma Byrne
Kunjulakshmi, Bhavani	How do the contemporary subaltern activists and collectives understand their movements today? Supervisor: Laurence Cox
Li, Yuening	New Payment Choices: FinTech Innovations, Digitalized Money, and Social Inclusion Co- Supervisor: Aphra Kerr/ Linzi Ryan (Design Innovation)
MacNamara, Frankie	Social influencing Supervisor: Paul Ryan / Colin Coulter
Manaras, Nikolaos	Resistance in the streets against the neoliberal state: Violent clashes and capitulation in Bolivia and Greece. First supervisor: John Brown. Second supervisor: Barry Cannon
Mavrlja, Iva-Nicole	Platform governance in digital media Supervisor: Aphra Kerr / Ciara Bracken-Roche (Criminology)
O'Reilly, Eimhin	Thinking global, acting local: extractivism, hybrid citizenship and community governance in rural Honduras Co-supervisors: Barry Cannon and John Brown
Shariati, Shamsoddin	State capacity and why it matters in dealing with “wicked problems”: comparing the management of Covid-19 in four member states Supervisor: John O’Brennan
Sheil, Niall	Diversity and Community in Balbriggan Co-supervisors: Mary P. Corcoran and Rebecca King-O’Riain
Sullivan, Eamonn	“The Automation and Surveillance of Work and Workers” Co Supervisors: Aphra Kerr/Ciara Bracken-Roche (Criminology)
Wilkinson, Harriet	Period Poverty in Ireland- About Bloody time for a change? Supervisor: Pauline Cullen / Jane Gray

Students registered in other Departments/Institutions

Fatima Ayoub	<p>'Cloud Enhanced Robotics'.</p> <p>Advisory supervisor: Aphra Kerr (Sociology) with Rudi Villing (Department of Engineering)</p>
Sonya Goulding	<p>Making the invisible visible for women in their transition to motherhood</p> <p>Co-Supervisors: Sinead McGilloway (Psychology) and Pauline Cullen (Sociology)</p>
Criostóir King	<p>"Contested transitions: environmental conflicts and justice in rural Ireland"</p> <p>Supervisor: Patrick Bresnihan (Geography). Second supervisor: Laurence Cox (Sociology)</p>
Gizem Yardimci	<p>'The Regulation of Artificial Intelligence in the European Union: Assessing Whether the Proposed Legal Framework can Foster the Development of Compliant Artificial Intelligence Systems that Respect Fundamental Rights.'</p> <p>Co-supervisors: Dr. David Mangan (Law) and Aphra Kerr (Sociology)</p>

Supervision

The core of being a research student is becoming an **independent** researcher in your own right. While your early time on the structured PhD/MLitt programme will include some taught modules, the core of learning how to be a researcher is the relationship with one or more experienced researchers, your supervisors. Their job is to mentor and support you as you develop your research from start to finish. Your supervisors have all been PhD students themselves and are used to working with other PhD students as first, second or co-supervisors as well as through being internal or external PhD examiners, independent viva chairs for other departments in Maynooth, members of the departmental postgraduate committee and/or evaluators for a range of postgraduate funding programmes.

Appointment of your supervisor/s

The Sociology Department has two main supervisory arrangements, though others are possible (e.g. joint supervision with a member of staff in another department).

One model is co-supervision where two members of staff play an equal role in supervising a student. Our policy is that the supervisors' contribution should be genuinely 50-50 in this case and both should take part in supervision meetings with you, except where e.g. sabbaticals or illness etc. prevent this, or where there is agreement that one supervisor will focus on one area of specialism (e.g. theory) and another will focus on a second area (e.g. methodology) – however even in this case both should be closely involved in your supervision.

The other model is to work with a single first supervisor, with a second supervisor acting 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. 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 supervisory 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/s 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/s 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/s in enough time for them to read the document before the meeting. Please consult with your supervisor/s 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/s 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/s will let you know if this is the case.

Meetings 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. Unlike a co-supervisor, 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 in this model, or of both co-supervisors in co-supervision.

Making contact with your supervisor/s

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/s these should be taken up with the supervisor/s 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 supervisor's duties and responsibilities

The duties of the primary supervisor or co-supervisors 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/s 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. (In co-supervision arrangements this should be agreed with both co-supervisors.)
- 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
- (In first-supervisor arrangements:) keep the second 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. This will demand a lot of you but for the vast majority of people this is also an intensely rewarding period, when you can dedicate yourself to pursuing a question of your own choosing over a period of several years.

What do you need to do?

1. Most importantly, carry out your research programme. This will often change as you go on – through the process of e.g. the Craft and Logics module, as the social or political world you are exploring changes, and as your questions and approach change.
2. Situate yourself within your field (more on this below). Your literature review or theory chapter represents your work in identifying what other research is relevant to yours, and in naming where you stand and what you contribute.
3. Learn how to carry out social or political research. This is an iterative process, which can involve taught modules, summer schools or master-classes, a lot of reading, pilot research and ultimately the main body of your research, data analysis and reflection. Your methods or methodology chapter is a record of this which develops from your initial proposal to how you frame it in your thesis, and perhaps afterwards.
4. Develop competence in written and communication skills – research only becomes research when it is communicated to your peers, in seminars and conference papers, book chapters or journal articles – and of course in your thesis which is a publication in itself. Nobody is born writing academic English or Irish – it has to be learned, through reading and through practice.
5. Consider who else your research matters to and find ways of sharing it with them: the “stakeholders” include not just staff and other postgrads in the department or the wider scholarly community in your field, but also and importantly your research participants, groups interested in the issue (e.g. NGOs, community groups, policy-makers) and the wider world of media pieces, social media, public talks and more.
6. Stay in touch with your supervisor!

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 email (or for that matter social media)!

More broadly you need to consider how to develop your professional identity, in discussion with your supervisor/s. This is likely to include elements such as:

- Working out how to position yourself within your discipline or field of study: what research networks, academic conferences, journals, mailing lists or other spaces are most relevant to your work?
- Choosing when and how to engage actively in these (presenting at conferences, submitting to journals, doing book reviews and so on)

- Considering career-related directions if this is likely to be relevant to you (not everyone plans on becoming a professional academic or researcher!) What sort of work would you like to do and where in the longer run? What steps can you be taking now to move in that direction?

The administrative requirements of the Department, Faculty, University and any grant awarding agencies are as follows:

1. Prepare an Initial Meeting Record (IMR) for your first meeting with your supervisor/s, mapping out your plan of research for the first year.
2. Agree a schedule of meetings which will ensure regular contact with your supervisor/s.
3. Document the progress of work as agreed with the supervisor/s and present written or other material as requested and on time. Keep your supervisors informed of any problems (e.g. ill health), which interfere with these plans. Written correspondence should be used when appropriate.
4. Inform the supervisor/s of any proposal to publish or make a presentation in connection with your research.
5. Satisfactorily pass any course work (taught modules) agreed with the supervisor/s for the structured PhD / MLitt credits.
6. The formal requirements for progress from one year to the next may include:
 - a. an annual presentation of your research in
 - b. a seminar or otherwise;
 - c. an annual report on progress (in year 1 both an initial meeting report and an end-of-year progress report);
 - d. completion of taught modules;
 - e. completion of the thesis within the allotted time.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that your 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.
8. Comply with all applicable University regulations and follow the requirements as set out under the "Route of Progression through the Structured PhD Programme".

Please:

1. Communicate any issues that arise that may affect your progress to your supervisor/s as soon as possible.
2. Take the initiative in identifying problems and seeking solutions to them.
3. Develop and maintain a professional relationship at all times with your supervisor/s and other university staff. We will always do our best to support you no matter what – but postgraduate issues can often be quite complicated and specific to an individual case. The better your communication with the people who are trying to help you out, the easier this

will be and the more likely a good outcome is.

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 “Postgraduate Policies”.

Progressing through the PhD in the Department of 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.

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/s 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 university asks that half of your credits be from your home department (ie modules offered by Sociology) and half be "transferrable" (ie offered by other departments or by university bodies such as the Centre for Teaching and Learning, the Graduate Research Academy etc.) NB that modules offered by Sociology are not only taught modules but include the possibility of gaining credit for specific activities such as a directed programme of reading, attending a summer school, conference presentation etc. In theory too you can gain credit for modules from other institutions.

A key purpose of the initial meeting is to identify modules from the 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/s;
- a satisfactory report of progress from the supervisor/s.

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 supervisor/s 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/s 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 this.
- 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 should take at least one substantive module (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 module (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 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.

All PhDs require both an internal and external examiner. The internal examiner is usually, but need not be, from the Sociology department; however they must be an academic based in Maynooth University. The external examiner must be from another institution, which in theory can be anywhere in the world (subject to their agreement, university approval and funding for travel where the viva is taking place in person). Typically the external examiner is a specialist in at least one of the areas your thesis focusses on, while this is not always possible for the internal examiner, who represents the standards of the discipline as a whole. The choice of examiners is a complex one to be made with your supervisor/s and is best made at an early point for a range of reasons.

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/s. 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 intended examiners if this has not already happened.

June – August: EITHER first draft approved by primary supervisor and sent to second supervisor (who will confirm that it is ready for submission) OR first draft approved by both co-supervisors. Work on final draft.

Sept 1: final draft for primary supervisor or co-supervisors.

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 Research Academy, MUSSI, the Faculty of Social Science, the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and other Maynooth departments. 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/accredited-programmes/professional-certificate-teaching-and-learning>
- **Applications must be made via their online form and are only open for a short period.**
- This module often runs twice, once in each semester, as places are limited and it is available to postgrads from across the University.

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

Subject specific modules

There are also various research postgraduate 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 2024-25.

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. More details are available at

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

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/graduate-research-academy/research-students>

Other supports beyond supervision and taught modules

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.

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.

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.

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/filefield_paths/MU%20Policy%20on%20Plagiarism%20and%20Academic%20Integrity%20Sept%202022.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 2024 submission (for funding beginning Oct 2025) is **10 October, 2024**. 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:

- The Irish Research Council offers Government of Ireland, Enterprise and Employment Based PhD Scholarships each academic year. See <http://www.research.ie/>
- MU John and Pat Hume studentships, scholarships and tuition bursaries
- 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:

- Your 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!