



Research unit: Music, Drama, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies (incl. Heritage and Museum Studies)

PhD Researcher Handbook

(Last Updated Sept 2023)

ulster.ac.uk

Welcome and Orientation

Welcome to your PhD studies in [music, drama, film or heritage/museum studies](#). We are a vibrant multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary unit of approximately 25 PhDs, covering the subject areas above, in addition to interdisciplinary topics which engage with other subject areas, including Irish, nursing, education, computing and peace and conflict studies.

We have also become a more internationally diverse community in recent years, with regions represented including Europe, the Near East, Asia, and the Americas. We regard equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) as a key part of our work and intellectual and creative community, and we are striving to embody this around providing a supportive environment for all of our PhDs, regardless of background: race, ethnicity and/or cultural/national background, gender and/or sexuality, disability, socioeconomic, etc. [PhDs can also access supportive communities via staff and student EDI networks](#), and if they encounter problems, are encouraged to reach out to relevant staff and/or support services.

We currently work primarily across two schools ([Arts and Humanities, Derry-Londonderry](#), and [Communication and Media, Belfast](#)), which are both part of the [Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences](#). PhDs will be registered and assigned office space at the campus of the chair of their supervisory team, but will have the opportunity to meet peers at other campuses through research unit seminars (primarily held at our Derry campus) and Doctoral College training and social events (all campuses). PhDs can also access our integrated library facilities across all campuses, as well as discipline-specific resources (music, drama, and film/screen facilities in Derry, and film/screen facilities and gallery spaces in Belfast).

[Derry-Londonderry \(Magee\)](#) campus profile and map

[Belfast](#) campus profile and map

Key Unit Contacts and Points of Reference

Your key contacts for subject-specific administrative matters are the subject team, Dr Brian Bridges (Research Director), a Postgraduate Tutor/Director of PhD Studies (Dr Adam Melvin), and Ms. Fiona Bradley (Administrative Support).

Administration/support: Ms. Fiona Bradley +44 28 71675885 f.bradley@ulster.ac.uk
MQ/Foyle Arts Building, Admin Hub, Derry-Londonderry (Magee) campus

Postgraduate Tutor: Dr Adam Melvin
Derry-Londonderry (Magee) campus
a.melvin@ulster.ac.uk

Research Director: Dr Brian Bridges
Derry-Londonderry (Magee) campus
bd.bridges@ulster.ac.uk

Note: Please contact Ms Bradley in the first instance, who will direct your query to the appropriate colleague. Dr Melvin is the academic member of staff who has specific responsibility for PhDs as PG Tutor/Director of PhD Studies. Dr Bridges, as Research Director, has overall responsibility for research in the unit, including PhDs.

Doctoral College contacts

If we are unable to answer queries at unit level, we may refer you to Doctoral College colleagues, including the following:

Ms. Suzanne O’Kane, Executive Assistant, Doctoral College, Coleraine/Derry

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/staff/s-okane2>

Ms. Kate McMorris, Executive Assistant, Doctoral College, Belfast <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/staff/c-mcmorris>

The Head of the Doctoral College at Derry-Londonderry and Coleraine is Prof. Alison Gallagher

The Head of the Doctoral College at Belfast is Dr Patrick Dunlop

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/contact>

See also below for information for PhD researchers, including Doctoral College forms and processes and for regulations for the PhD degree:

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/current-phd-researchers>

https://www.ulster.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/152200/Regulations-for-the-Degree-of-Doctor-of-Philosophy.pdf

Office Accommodation

Desk space for PhDs is available in Derry in Foyle Arts (MQ) building; rooms MQ215 and MQ205.

Desk space in Belfast will be assigned in BA or BC blocks, depending on availability.

Computer labs are also available on our campuses, and there are a number of specialist lab and studio facilities.

Research Community and Research Seminars

Research seminars take place on a regular basis and will be notified by research unit staff at the start of the relevant terms. Other open forum meetings will be convened by the PG tutor with PhD researchers, generally once or twice per semester.

It is expected that full-time funded PhDs will play an active role in departmental life, including regular attendance (at a minimum, *at least two days per week, or equivalent*), with the exception of periods of fieldwork or research trips excepted).

It is expected that all PhD researchers will make a contribution to the research community through *regular* attendance on campus at research seminars, presenting at PhD-led seminars and other events, and also through their engagement with their peers around training events, in addition to engagement with supervision meetings. (There are some additional requirements for international students holding Tier 4 visas; please see Doctoral College website for details.)

Library

Please make the effort to engage with your campus library (Derry or Belfast) at an early stage in your PhD research. Our library colleagues are a great support to the PhD and research community, so please work with them so that you can get the best out of the resources available, including inter-campus loan (within Ulster) and Document Supply/inter-library loan (from other research libraries). Please note that you can also access other university and research libraries in the UK and Ireland through the following schemes.

SCONUL: borrowing access for PhDs/PGRs for c. 178 libraries including QUB, Irish universities (other than TCD), and a significant number of UK research or university libraries.

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/library/services/borrowing-and-access-schemes/sconul-access-scheme>

Details of SCONUL member institutions can be found here: <https://www.sconul.ac.uk/sconul-access>

ALCID: reading access for the main university and college libraries on the island, including TCD (but note, there is no external borrowing access there), but excluding QUB:

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/library/services/borrowing-and-access-schemes/alcid-scheme>

Details of ALCID member institutions can be found here: <https://conul.ie/alcid-cooperative-access-scheme/>

NB: if you are an international PhD (Tier 4/Student visa holder), you may need a visa to visit the Republic of Ireland; please ensure that you check requirements in advance of your trip.

Travel

Our travel agent is [Key Travel](#). Conference travel should be booked through them. Contact Ms. Fiona Bradley for details about registering with them. Note also that if you need us to book conference fees upon your behalf, please provide at least one week's notice.

Assessment details

Initial assessment

Expected timeline:

c.100 days after initial registration (full-time)

c. 200 days after registration (part-time)

Requirements:

- c.15 minute presentation on progress to dates
- submission of some initial writing (early-stage literature review, perhaps developed from the original proposal document); c.2000 words plus early-stage creative practice or c.4,000 words without creative practice
- revised project aims/research questions (developed from those submitted in proposal)
 - Initial project timeline
- Indication of whether ethical approval is required and why
- Issues to consider in the presentation:
- Aims and research questions
- Context: references to key research literature and/or practices
- Discuss methodological issues, including the *form of practice, and supporting practice-based materials which will be required* • Discuss progress since registration

Confirmation assessment:

Expected timeline:

9 months to 1 year after initial registration (full-time)

18 months to 2 years after initial registration (part-time)

Requirements:

- 15–20 minute presentation, including details on progress to date
- submission of *representative sample of work, to include sample chapter* (indicative maximum 8,000–10,000 words; indicative minimum 4,000 words including practice or 6,000 without practice) and, in the cases of practice, representative samples of practice (e.g. substantive creative studies of a particular technique or equivalent to 1/5 to 1/3 of the overall creative portfolio) such that the candidate can demonstrate that they address the project's stated research questions; in the case of practice, it is also permissible to submit two shorter sample chapters/sections (one lit review, one analytical discussion of practice)
- revised project timeline and progress report (c. 1500 words)
- where relevant, draft ethical approval documentation
- Issues to consider in the presentation
- Restate aims and research questions
- Context: discuss updated literature review/review of practices
- Update on methodology, including *the form of practice, and supporting practice-based materials which will be required*
- Discuss other progress since initial assessment
- Discuss how the project will proceed towards completion, with timeline

Final assessment

Expected timeline:

within third year of research (full-time) or fifth year of research (part-time)

Requirements: assessed 20-minute research seminar presentation (where relevant, incorporating elements of practice) to a group consisting of the Research Director/Postgraduate Tutor, one other member of academic staff that is not the researcher's supervisor, and members of the PhD community.

This presentation should summarise the main *contribution to knowledge and significance* of your PhD to your chosen discipline (or, in the case of interdisciplinary work, combination of disciplines). It should also provide outline details about *methodology and structure* of the project and you should also use this presentation to *reflect upon any challenges associated with this work*.

Final Submission and Viva

Details on processes, including Notification of Intention to Submit, and Approval of Examination Arrangements (including internal and external examiners), can be found on the Doctoral College website: <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/current-phd-researchers/forms>

Thesis requirements

A PhD must make a *substantive, original contribution to knowledge*, which is embodied within a research study which has both *breadth* of coverage (e.g. within the context of a literature review or a similar survey of practice) and *depth* of engagement with a particular problem/issue.

https://www.ulster.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/152200/Regulations-for-the-Degree-of-Doctor-of-Philosophy.pdf

Especially in cases for which practice is involved, the length and format may vary. The following are *indicative* guidelines:

- **Dissertation-only PhD** ('traditional' form): university guidelines state the *maximum word count* to be *100,000 words*
- **Practice-led PhD** (PhD in which practice forms a part of the investigatory process, which is examined *for the most part* through the dissertation): *indicative word count 55,000–80,000 words, plus documentation of practice*
- **Practice-based PhD** (PhD in which the major contribution is to be found in the portfolio of works, thematically related, illustrated by a *supporting thesis*): *indicative word count 30,000–45,000 words, plus portfolio*; see further discussion here: <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/pdf/handbooks/The-PhD-with-practice-at-Ulster-University.pdf>

For practice-based PhDs, discussions about the nature and scale of the practice, and the form which its documentation might take, should be discussed with your supervisory team at the earliest possible opportunity, in advance of the initial assessment.

Issues and points of contact

- Ethical approval: Dr Lisa Fitzpatrick
- Expenditure, materials and travel expenses (if scholarship-funded): Fiona Bradley (routine queries), Dr Adam Melvin (specific queries), Dr Brian Bridges (approval)
- Research seminars and events: Dr Adam Melvin and Fiona Bradley
- Conference hosting queries: Dr Adam Melvin (PG Tutor) and Dr Brian Bridges (RD)
- Concerns about progress: Dr Adam Melvin
- Sourcing research literature: Janice McQuilkin, Subject Librarian, Derry, and Lorna Blair and Patricia Doyle, Subject Librarians, Belfast
- Requests to access to specialist facilities (Derry/Magee): Fiona Bradley (who will direct you to the appropriate staff)

Research unit website

The research unit website contains details of staff research, alongside PhD research topics and projects, conferences hosted, facilities, etc.

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/research/topic/music-drama-dance-performing-arts-film-and-screen-studies>

Facilities

Note: the facilities below describes resources available at our Derry campus. If you are based at our Belfast campus, please contact your supervisors.

The creative/performing arts within the School of Arts and Humanities are housed in the Foyle Arts (MQ) Building. This houses the following specialists facilities which *may* be accessed by PhDs by prior arrangement if appropriate to their project, and with consideration for other users of these facilities.

Agreement on access to the following facilities will need to be provided by appropriate staff in advance of using facilities. Please contact Fiona Bradley in the first instance, for approval via the Research Director or Postgraduate Tutor

(Please note that many of these facilities require specialist knowledge or training to utilise properly: we may not be able to grant access to facilities unless you are able to demonstrate appropriate experience and knowledge of how to operate them safely and with appropriate consideration for equipment and other users.)

A/V Mac labs: MQ209 and MQ219 (Foyle Arts): audio and video software

Music: Recital Room, ground floor of Foyle Arts (small concert room with grand piano and PA)

Music practice rooms: basement of Foyle Arts

Cinematic Arts: 'green screen' studio

Drama: Studio A ('black box' studio), ground floor of Foyle Arts

Drama: Studio B ('white box' studio), ground floor of Foyle Arts

Drama: Dance studio (with sprung floor)

Music: Recording Studio 1 (stereo): basement of Foyle Arts

Music: Recording Studio 2 (surround/spatial audio): basement of Foyle Arts

Specialist portable media equipment (e.g. portable audio recorders, cameras, etc.) is available from Billy Scampton in MQ122, ground floor of Foyle Arts (please note that certain specialist or delicate equipment may not be available for borrowing unless staff are clear that you have the relevant skills, experience and/or training.)