



**Provost's Project Award
PhD Scholarship Opportunity in Infant Development
School of Psychology, Trinity College Dublin**

Project: PETIT: Preterm Infant Interaction and Development

The Infant & Child Research Laboratory at School of Psychology, Trinity College Dublin, is looking for a self-motivated student to contribute to a longitudinal project examining Parent-Infant Interaction in the context of preterm infant development.

The position will provide funding for a four year fulltime PhD (tuition plus annual stipend of 16K euro). The PETIT project is a joint venture between the School of Psychology TCD and Dept. of Paediatrics & Child Health, School of Medicine TCD.

Collaborative Research Team: Prof. Elizabeth Nixon, Prof. Jean Quigley, Prof. Eleanor Molloy.

Start date: September 2019

The problem

Preterm birth (≤ 36 weeks gestation) represents a growing public health concern, accounting for more than 11% of live births worldwide. With medical advances, more infants born earlier than ever before are surviving extensive stays in Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICUs). As they grow, infants born preterm experience a higher risk of developmental difficulties but we are only beginning to understand the pathways that lead to these difficulties, especially when infants often appear healthy upon discharge from the NICU.

Brief Description of PhD project

The first goal is to track the development of a sample of preterm infants beyond the early months of life into the third and fourth years. The second aim is to characterise preterm infant-parent interactions as quality of interaction is an important predictor of developmental outcomes. The influence of neurobiological risk, such as that which may arise from preterm birth, may disrupt parent-infant interaction and influence the course of development. To date, there is limited research on interactional patterns in this context and we have yet to specifically characterise the nature of the input for these infants in interaction.

The study will be conducted as part of ongoing work within the Infant and Child Research Laboratory <http://www.infantandchildresearchlab.com/> within the School of Psychology, TCD. This is a custom-built observation suite for the collection of audio and video-linked data on real-time interaction between mothers, fathers and their infants to understand in detail the processes that underpin children's development. In addition to AV equipment, the lab has facilities to administer a battery of gold standard developmental assessments and to gather independent sensor data (e.g.,

Scoil na Siceolaíochta

Dámh na nEolaíochtaí Sóisialta agus Daonna,
Áras an Phiarsaigh,
Coláiste na Tríonóide,
Baile Átha Cliath,
Ollscoil Átha Cliath,
Baile Átha Cliath 2, Éire.

School of Psychology

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences,
Trinity College Dublin,
The University of Dublin,
Dublin 2, Ireland.

+353 1 896 1886

psychology@tcd.ie
www.tcd.ie/psychology



cardiovascular, and eye tracking data) to support relational psychophysiological research from a biopsychosocial perspective on parenting and child development.

The successful applicant will join a team of PhD students working on similar questions with various clinical and community groups and will work closely with the lab directors to collect new data with this clinical cohort. Preterm infants will be recruited through the maternity hospitals in Dublin where links have been established. There are significant opportunities for novel analyses of existing datasets in conjunction with the data to be collected with the new clinical group for development of a thesis.

The applicant

The applicant will be a psychology graduate with experience of working with young children and parents. Theoretically the project will be located within a developmental science framework, so a conceptual grounding in theories of development (in particular bioecological models) will be necessary. Developmentally, the study is focused on the period of infancy and so knowledge of the neonatal and infant stages of development is important. The study will utilise observational methods and developmental assessments, for which training will be provided. In addition to the research expertise, this collaboration will allow the development of advanced standardisation of reporting and discussing neurodevelopmental findings with families.

Essential Qualities

- BA/BSc honours level degree in psychology from an accredited course (minimum 2.1 award)
- Research assistant experience
- Experience in data analysis
- Experience with child research participants
- Excellent English writing skills
- Strong interpersonal qualities

Non-Essential, Desirable qualities

- MA/MSc in Psychology
- Experience with standardised test administration (e.g., BSID, WAIS, WPPSI)
- Experience of observational methodology and coding
- Experience using TALKBANK, INTERACT, Praat

The successful applicant will have to apply to Trinity College Dublin before being finally accepted to undertake a PhD. The awarding of the funding is dependent on the successful applicant being accepted for a PhD by the School of Psychology

Scoil na Siceolaíochta

Dámh na nEolaíochtaí Sóisialta agus Daonna,
Áras an Phiarsaigh,
Coláiste na Tríonóide,
Baile Átha Cliath,
Ollscoil Átha Cliath,
Baile Átha Cliath 2, Éire.

School of Psychology

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences,
Trinity College Dublin,
The University of Dublin,
Dublin 2, Ireland.

+353 1 896 1886

psychology@tcd.ie
www.tcd.ie/psychology



Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
Trinity College Dublin

Ollscoil Átha Cliath | The University of Dublin

TCD. Funding will be awarded initially for a period of one year. If progress is deemed satisfactory, funding will be awarded for a further three years.

Please send a Curriculum Vitae, academic transcripts, two academic references, a sample of academic writing and a statement of interest outlining what you can bring to the project to quigleyj@tcd.ie and enixon@tcd.ie by 5pm March 15 2019.

Scoil na Siceolaíochta

Dámh na nEolaíochtaí Sóisialta agus Daonna,
Áras an Phiarsaigh,
Coláiste na Tríonóide,
Baile Átha Cliath,
Ollscoil Átha Cliath,
Baile Átha Cliath 2, Éire.

School of Psychology

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences,
Trinity College Dublin,
The University of Dublin,
Dublin 2, Ireland.

+353 1 896 1886
psychology@tcd.ie
www.tcd.ie/psychology