

PhD Scholarship in the Centre for Applied Language Studies, School of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics, University of Limerick

Closing date: 17.00 Irish local time Monday, 14th September 2026

Duration of scholarship: 4 years full-time (part-time not possible)

Starting date: 1st December 2026

Award summary

The funded PhD position is offered as part of the larger research project *Posthumanist sociolinguistics and journalistic practices: Reporting on climate change in Irish and German media*. The project is funded by Research Ireland and the Irish Environmental Protection Agency. The PhD Scholarship includes a student stipend of €25,000 per annum plus EU student fees for a duration of 4 years (for non-EU applicants additional fees may apply based on the difference between EU fees and international fees, see [UL's course fees website](#)).

Overview

In view of the increasing severity of weather events and unprecedented meteorological extremes, climate journalism aims to inform and warn audiences about climate change and promote ways of mitigating global warming. These efforts have so far, however, shown too little effect, and European traditional media outlets (i.e. newspapers and broadcasters) are frequently criticised for their human-centred coverage and representations of climate change. Despite this criticism, there is a significant lack of knowledge about the multimodal (i.e. linguistic and semiotic) reporting practices of journalists working in climate coverage.

Through a comparative study of Irish and German media based on a mixed-methods approach, the overall aim of the project is to examine how journalists reporting on climate issues try to engage with and inform about the topic of climate protection. In this context, it sheds light on issues that lead to misrepresentations of climate change in Irish and German media to foster a more meaningful engagement of journalists and the public with climate change.

As part of this larger project, the successful candidate will compile a corpus of newspaper articles related to climate change topics using one Irish and one German broadsheet paper. The compilation and analysis of the newspaper corpus will be the core area of research work of the PhD candidate, and the datasets generated will serve as the basis to develop the independent doctoral thesis. In the corpus of newspaper articles, the successful candidate will identify discursive patterns and possible trends in linguistic representations of climate change and anthropocentric news frames. They will also conduct an in-depth multimodal analysis of the evolution of human-centred discourses in both countries and compare the differences between economic and cultural contexts, and political agendas regarding climate change.

For the duration of the PhD Scholarship (2026-30), the successful candidate will be based in the Centre for Applied Language Studies at the School of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics. They will be supervised by Dr Sarah Josefine Schaefer (PI of project) and Prof. Helen Kelly-Holmes, working primarily with Dr Schaefer across all phases of the project and also benefiting from participation in different activities (e.g. career development training at UL, conference participation, joint publications, workshop organisation).

Eligibility criteria

Essential

- Level B2 (CEFR) or equivalent in written and spoken English and German
- Honours undergraduate degree (Level 8 NFQ or equivalent) at 2.1 or higher (or equivalent), with a major/minor specialization in Linguistics, German, English, Journalism or related fields

Desirable

- MA-level degree (Level 9 NFQ or equivalent) in Applied Linguistics/Sociolinguistics, Journalism, Sociology/Social Sciences or related fields
- Openness to interdisciplinary methods and some experience in qualitative and quantitative methods
- Some knowledge of/experience in discourse analysis and/or linguistic corpus analysis

Application process

Please include the following in your application which should be sent to helen.kelly.holmes@ul.ie:

- a cover letter (max. 1000 words) explaining your suitability for undertaking doctoral research, why you are interested in this project and what you think you can bring to it
- a curriculum vitae with details of relevant educational history and/or employment experience and training received
- a writing sample (e.g. a chapter from your BA or MA thesis or an academic publication)
- contact details of two academic referees
- transcripts of university-level grades (including certified translations in English if obtained in a language other than English or German).

Interviews for the position will be held online in September 2026.

Contact information

Informal enquiries about this opportunity may be addressed to Prof. Helen Kelly-Holmes helen.kelly.holmes@ul.ie.