Laidlaw Undergraduate
Leadership and Research Programme
Application Guide 2020/21
OVERVIEW

This guide is designed to guide you on submitting a complete and accurate application to the Laidlaw Undergraduate Leadership and Research Programme at Trinity.

Before starting an application you should review our Laidlaw Programme webpage:
https://www.tcd.ie/Careers/students/awards/laidlaw/main.php

This will give you information on what the Programme is, the opportunities it offers, as well as the responsibilities for students who successfully selected as Laidlaw Scholars. You will find a detailed learning roadmap which will outline the varied components of the Laidlaw scholarship during the intensive 18-month core Programme and beyond.

This guide will explain what is expected for each section of the application and will include useful starting points for each component - particularly if this is your first time making a research proposal, personal statement, or similar. You can also find resources on preparing a professional and effective application here: https://www.tcd.ie/Careers/students/applying/

In particular we recommend completing the Trinity Guided Reflection Tool prior to starting your application. This is not required for the submission but will give you experience of reflecting on your personal development which may help you express your motivation and goals in your Laidlaw submission.

After reviewing our webpage and this application guide, if you have any questions please email the Laidlaw Programme coordinators at employability@tcd.ie.
APPLICATION PROCESS

The 2021 Laidlaw Programme will be designed to incorporate the various restrictions and circumstances associated with COVID-19. This may require components of the Programme to be delivered in a blended or online format. When considering your proposal, you should focus on projects which can adapt to be carried out remotely if necessary.

Application components

- Application form
- Personal motivation video
- Research project proposal
- Leadership Statement including ‘Leadership in Action’ experience proposal and leadership development goals
- Letter of recommendation from academic supervisor(s)

Throughout your application you should try to not repeat information which is contained elsewhere while focusing on making your application personal and reflective of you as an individual.

How to submit

Applications for the 2021 cohort will be open from 4th December 2020 – 8th February 2021. To submit an application please complete this Application Form. Please note that you will need to log into Office 365 when prompted with your usual Trinity log in details in order to submit this application form.

- You will be able to upload your required files through this form – please ensure your files are labelled correctly using the format “LL_21_Your_Name(File_Name)”
- Documents should be submitted in PDF format where possible
- When your application form is submitted you will get a confirmation screen which you can take as proof of receipt
- We will contact all applicants within a few days of the closing date to confirm receipt of application
- Documents do not need to be emailed to us directly
- All communication will be through your @tcd.ie student email address
Application form

The application form will request the following:

- Your name and student number – we will be able to obtain your other relevant personal information (undergraduate programme, year of study, email address) from your student record
- The name and email address of your proposed supervisor(s)
- Your Laidlaw Submission using this template: Laidlaw Submission Template 2021
  - This will include your leadership in action experience and leadership development proposal, and your research proposal
  - Your Laidlaw Submission must include the key elements listed in the respective sections for each below
- Your personal motivation video

Research proposal

(1000 words max.)

The research proposal should be no more than 1,000 words and should be written to be accessible to someone who is not a specialist in your field of study. You should use the Laidlaw Submission Template 2021 as a starting point. You must include the key information below somewhere in your proposal – you can personalize the presentation of this and add additional information as necessary.

The purpose of the research proposal is to demonstrate your interest in the research topic, your planning in terms of timeline, methods, resources, and the potential positive impact of the final output. Your proposal is not expected to prove your hypothesis now, nor present your project as foolproof – you should be realistic about potential challenges or uncertainty and plan for how you would deal with them.

Below are the key sections to include and questions you should answer in your research proposal. There are further detailed guidelines on how to write your proposed research methodology in Appendix 1.

In 2021 there are opportunities for pre-defined research projects available via the Laidlaw Foundation in collaboration with partner organisations in the UK. For more information on these and the differences in their application process please see here.
Introduction

- Research question – state the topic and goal of your proposed project concisely

- Why did you choose this research question?

  What do you hope the impact will be of this research? Outline the specific achievable goals you hope to accomplish with this project. These don’t have to be world-changing, or a revolutionary answer to your research question, however they should be measurable and show how your work would have a positive impact

Methodology (see Appendix 1)

- What is the methodology you plan to use in your research? Outline a project plan and timeline for how you will complete the project in 6 weeks

- What is your specific role in the project? The work must be led by you with clear responsibilities and opportunities to develop new skills and experience. If your project is connected to work being undertaken by your research supervisor, your project must be distinct and able to stand alone as a self-contained output

- Does your proposal include methodology for how you could achieve your aims in a blended/entirely online delivery if necessary due to COVID-19?

- If social distancing and travel restrictions were reduced, how would you want to develop your research project further?

- If travel is possible, funding can be applied for through the Programme for research related trips. Would there be potential for travel in your research? If so, where and how would it benefit?
Interdisciplinary and/or international focus of your research

The Laidlaw Programme strongly encourages project proposals which have a focus on interdisciplinary work and or/international collaboration. This can involve research which involves multiple departments at Trinity, or in partnership with another university or organization abroad. Please detail how your research proposal might include these priorities.

Research supervisor
Outline the role your research supervisor will have in your research project.

Collaboration
Outline any other organisations, departments, or participants who would be involved in your research.

Outcomes
What do you anticipate being the goal/key achievement of your research?

Pre-clearance requirements (ethics approval and Garda Vetting)
If your proposal potentially could require an ethics approval, Garda vetting, or other pre-clearance requirement you should discuss this with your research supervisor. Outline how this is achievable within the timeframe of the project and can be managed with your supervisor.

Leadership Statement
(‘leadership in action’ experience proposal and leadership development goals)

(800 words max.)

Your Leadership Statement is your opportunity to show your suitability for the leadership development programme and should include your own goals in this area as well as a ‘leadership in action’ experience (LIA) proposal which should detail your provisional plan for how you would spend your second summer on the Programme. In articulating your proposal for your LIA experience you should describe how you’d like to develop your skills over the course of the Programme, which will culminate in your LIA.

This statement should show that you have researched the variety of leadership activities provided in the Programme and show that you’re interested in developing as a leader. You’re not expected to show that you already have impressive leadership skills and a long list of achievements with no weaknesses.
You should identify what genuinely motivates you about leadership and what your version of a leader would be. Avoid cliched quotes from John F. Kennedy or Nelson Mandela – use this opportunity to show what you genuinely believe about leadership.

Your proposal should clearly identify which of the three options is preferred:

**Option 1)** Leadership Expedition

**Option 2)** Leadership Placement

**Option 3)** In-field application of research

You can find more detail on each of these on our [application website](#).

Your LIA will be different from your research experience and your proposal should be focused on applying your leadership skills in a challenging, unfamiliar setting beyond the university. You should identify the intended outcome of the experience – are you developing a project with an external organization? Working within a community to create a resource, an information campaign, or organizing an event?

You should identify the specific opportunities where you would take a leadership role and what skills you could develop. What leadership skills are you motivated to learn in the Programme? How will you aim to move outside your comfort zone? How would you hope to build on your experience in the Programme leading up to Summer 2 and then apply it in your LIA?

For Option 2 your proposal should identify the organization or community group you would intend to work with for your Leadership Placement. This should be linked to a disadvantaged community or marginalized group who will benefit from the activity.

For Option 2 and Option 3 your LIA proposal should have clearly defined objectives and leadership goals, as well as outline what the intended positive benefit will be to society.

This is an initial proposal and does not have every aspect fully organized prior to applying. The specifics can evolve over the duration of the Programme and each LIA proposal will be finalized following your Summer 1 project.
Personal Motivation Video

(2 minutes max.)

This is a short video which will give you the opportunity to show your motivation for the Programme and convey a personal side to your application beyond the formality of the written proposal. The prompt question for the video is: “Why should you be selected as a Laidlaw Scholar?”

Your video should include you in person – i.e. it should not be just a voiceover of a PowerPoint or text on the screen. It can be recorded on your phone, with a webcam, or another platform if convenient. It can be edited but this isn’t required. You’re not expected to produce a highly professional, performative or overly polished “public speaking” style video – this is an opportunity to talk informally about what you really want to gain from taking part.

- Your video should be saved in a common file format and a reasonable size (e.g. .MP4/.AVI and approx. 500 MB)
- Please say your name at the start of the video and ensure the quality and presentation of the video is of a standard that is accessible to the viewer i.e. avoid low resolution, poorly lit, or shaky/cropped recordings

Transcript

Your academic transcript is included as a component of your application. You do not need to provide this as it will be accessed from your student record for the purpose of this application process.

Your transcript is considered as one part of an overall impression of you as an applicant and it is not the most important determining factor. We do not expect applicants to have consistently flawless grades to date. Your transcript can help show your work ethic and capacity to participate in an intensive cocurricular programme.
Research supervisor letter of support

Each applicant is responsible for contacting an academic staff member and asking them to act as their research supervisor for their Laidlaw proposal. This can be a lecturer or academic staff member you already know, or you can reach out to someone unknown to you whose area of research overlaps with your project. You can link our Laidlaw Staff Information page to your potential supervisor to give more detail on what would be involved for them.

The proposed supervisor should write the letter of support and give it to you to include in your application. It should be on official letterhead and include their signature. We will assess whether the below considerations are addressed in the letter of support however it is at the supervisor’s discretion how they would like to present it.

Recommended letter of support components

- Approximately 1 A4 page and includes signature (or signatures if the proposal has joint supervisors)
- Shows their understanding of your project, their interest and availability to supervise the project
- Shows their endorsement that the project has merit: does it address something important or novel in the field? Does it have potential international/interdisciplinary impact?
- Shows their endorsement that the project is feasible: can it be completed in the 6-week timeframe?
- Shows that they will be able to provide/facilitate the resources required
- Shows that any pre-approval considerations (ethics approval/garda vetting, etc.) will be handled appropriately
- Details any relevant supervisory arrangements (i.e. if there are multiple supervisors, if the applicant will be included in a research group, if the supervisor will be unavailable for a period)
- Acknowledges that they will agree to the responsibilities of a Laidlaw supervisor if the proposal is accepted including regular meetings with you, support for any project developments or administrative requirements, and occasional requirements of the Programme e.g. providing feedback on your progress
**Additional Information**

If there’s anything you haven't included elsewhere in your application that you think would be relevant for us to know, please include it here e.g. are you intending to apply for Erasmus or an exchange programme which could impact your availability for in-person activities? Is there a conference or event happening in the future you’re hoping to apply to? Are there any additional accommodations needed so the application process is accessible for you?

**What happens after you submit your application?**

All applications will be reviewed in detail by the Laidlaw Selection Panel which consists of:

- **Prof. Kevin Mitchell** - Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies (Chair)
- **Ms. Orla Bannon** – Director of Careers
- **Prof. Gerard McHugh** – Dean of Development
- **Mr. Joel McKeever** – Student Employability Officer (Laidlaw Programme coordinator)

And representatives from the faculty academic staff.

We will provide an initial acknowledgement of your application within a few days of the closing date. All applicants will receive feedback on whether they’ve been shortlisted for the second stage which will take place in March 2021. The second stage will involve a short interview to discuss aspects of your application in more detail. It is expected this will take place over video call – further guidance will be provided beforehand. Final selection of the 2021 Laidlaw Scholars will take place by April 2021. Unsuccessful applicants can request feedback on their application following the process.

**Widening participation and inclusion**

The Programme recognises that a positive contribution to society requires diversity of experience, and a platform for meaningful inclusion of that diversity at all levels. The Laidlaw community is enriched by the distinct cultural, social and educational perspective of each of its members.

As such we aim to enable Scholars from all backgrounds to participate and develop - in particular those from demographics often under-represented in specialist programmes. This includes but is not limited to: students from ethnic minorities in Ireland, students with disabilities, LGBTQ students, students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and students who have participated in alternative admissions routes such as TAP (Trinity Access Programme).

If you have additional accessibility requirements and would like support in completing an application we encourage you to contact us at employability@tcd.ie.
**APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND METHODOLOGY GUIDELINES**

**What is a research proposal?**

The main purpose of a research proposal is to specify the following:

- Why the research problem warrants investigation;
- That the proposed methodology is appropriate and feasible within the timeframe;
- That the results make an original contribution to the research field and indicates reason for further research

The research proposal provides an outline of the premise of what you are proposing to research. However, it is subject to adaptation as the research proceeds. It serves as a starting point for development with the assistance of your research supervisor.

Typically, the research proposal will include:

- Aims and objectives
- Statement of hypothesis or research ‘problem’
- Literature review of previous research in the area and justification for further research
- Proposed methodology
- Expected results and contribution to body of knowledge
- Requirements for equipment, materials, field trips, and funding (if applicable)
- Approximate time by which each stage will be completed

Your research proposal should be concise. It only needs to be as long as necessary to explain the core of your proposal in sufficient detail for the application stage and should be in simple terms which can be understood by a non-expert. Show your research proposal to someone who doesn’t study your subject – if they can’t begin to understand it, you should streamline it further.
Aims and objectives

State the purpose of this piece of research. Then provide a detailed list of objectives, for example:

- Statement of hypothesis or research question (what the question is you’re trying to answer)
- Description of literature review – have you checked whether there is a lot of previous research on this specific topic already?

You should identify the context of your research and which key existing academic texts and researchers you will be developing from, and your rationale for doing so. Then you should identify which sources you are going to consult in which fields / areas and why. You should demonstrate why the investigation and examination of selected research studies will contribute to your research.

Methodology

Why, Who, What, How and Where
The Methodology section can vary in length and content, depending upon the research topic and approach to investigation. This section should include a detailed explanation of the sample population, procedures, timelines, objectives, research limitations, type of data collection, ethical considerations, and method of analysis.

Why: restate research problem or hypothesis
Before describing the methodology, it is a good idea to re-state the research problem before describing how this is to be researched.

Who: sample population
Define and describe the sample population and associated demographics if applicable (who are you investigating and where are they from?), Is there likely to be any bias or difficulties from the point of view of gender, age, race, sexuality, religious beliefs, political affiliation, educational level, etc. You must demonstrate that a sufficient number of subjects have been investigated so that there is a solid basis for your findings and claims. If your research is not related to a specific population group, then you should specify who the research will benefit – will it add to a body of knowledge in your field? Who could use your work in future to inform their own?
Where: research environment
Will the research take place within a specified location, institution, range of institutions, or work-related environment.

What and How
You should include a statement of what kind of methodology you’ll be using and why. For example, is the methodology is qualitative or quantitative or a combination, and why was this approach suitable for the research? If you’re working with data, include a detailed explanation of data collection methods such as surveys, interviews, questionnaires, focus groups and case studies. If you are applying critical theory to the proposal, you should demonstrate that you have considered the advantages and limitations of these methods and their relevance to your specific goals.

Timeframe
Identify the timeframe for each stage of your research. You should break this down into week by week goals for your 6-week project. These can change however you should be thorough and realistic – the most common pitfall of a research proposal is planning to do too much in the time allowed and then encountering issues when delays come from a broken piece of lab equipment, an expanding literature review, or a global pandemic.

Resources
Outline / describe the resources you will require to complete your research in terms of materials, equipment, costs, access to facilities.
## APPENDIX 2: APPLICATION CHECKLIST

When you feel you are ready to submit your application you can use the below checklist as a reminder to ensure you’ve included everything necessary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Have you reviewed the Laidlaw Programme website to learn about the learning outcomes and goals of the scholarship?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have you reviewed the Laidlaw Scholars Network site to get an idea of the kind of projects and activities Laidlaw scholars are involved in internationally?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Have you reviewed the timeline for the Programme on the <a href="#">Components of the Laidlaw Programme</a> webpage and made sure you will be able to engage in all activities dates?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership Development</td>
<td>Have you reviewed the Laidlaw Leader Attributes available on the website?</td>
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<td>Have you clearly expressed your own personal views on leadership in the statement and areas where you want to develop your skills?</td>
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<td>Have you included your plan for the leadership in action experience in Summer 2 including your provisional plan for what leadership learning would be involved?</td>
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<td>Have you considered how you would adapt your proposal to a blended or fully online format?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Project</td>
<td>Have you reviewed previous projects by Laidlaw Scholars at Trinity and in the Laidlaw Network to consider the kind of project you’d like to undertake?</td>
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<td>Have you discussed your proposal and any logistics with your potential supervisor? Are they aware of the role requirement for supervisors detailed on the <a href="#">Laidlaw staff</a> webpage?</td>
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<td>If your proposal potentially could require an ethics approval, Garda vetting, or other pre-clearance requirement, have you discussed this with your research supervisor?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Have you received a Letter of Support from your supervisor to include with your application?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>Have you outlined your research question clearly and concisely?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Have you outlined the methodology and project plan you will use for your project?</td>
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<td>Have you outlined your role and your supervisor’s role in the project?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Have you clearly stated the achievable goals of your research?</td>
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<td>Have you clearly expressed your own personal views on leadership?</td>
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<td>Personal Motivation Video</td>
<td>Have you addressed the prompt “Why should you be selected as a Laidlaw Scholar?” in your video?</td>
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<td>Have you stated your name clearly in the beginning of the recording?</td>
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<td>Have you made sure that the quality of the video is of a reasonably good standard and meets the technical specifications outlined?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application Submission</td>
<td>Have you submitted your application and all required components, including the Laidlaw Submission Template <a href="#">Laidlaw Submission Template 2021</a> to the <a href="#">Application Form</a>?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>