**PhD Studentship in Law:**

***‘Building refugee resilience through an ethical-legal analysis of the international protection framework in Ireland’***

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| Post Title: | PhD Researcher in Law (Forced Migration) |
| Post Status: | **48 months**, Full-time |
| Starting Date: | September 2025 |
| Department/Faculty: | School of Law/Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences;  Centre for Forced Migration Studies, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures |
| Reports to: | **Dr Christiane Ahlborn**  **Dr Ghaiath Hussein** |
| Location: | Trinity College Dublin (Dublin, Ireland) |
| Stipend: | **Maintenance stipend Euro** **25,000 per annum** **plus full tuition fees (EU/non-EU).** |
| Closing Date: | **12th June 2025 (23:59 BST)** |

**Summary of post**

*Doctoral Researcher Law (PhD programme):*

The **School of Law at Trinity College Dublin** is seeking to recruit a highly motivated and outstanding doctoral researcher for a period of 4 years (48 months). The successful candidate will conduct an innovative project **developing an ethical-legal framework that transcends traditional definitions of ‘harm’ in forced displacement contexts by empowering and giving agency to refugees and protection communities**. They will be co-supervised by Dr Christiane Ahlborn (Assistant Professor of Public International Law, School of Law, primary supervisor) and Dr Ghaiath Hussein (Assistant Professor of Medical Ethics, School of Medicine, secondary supervisor).

International protection applicants and beneficiaries are typically seen as victims of persecution or ‘harm’ who do not have significant agency in determining the parameters of their forced displacement. Drawing on insights from ethics and the law, the research analyses how Ireland’s legal framework could foster resilience among international protection beneficiaries. The methodology combines desk-based analysis across legal and ethical disciplines, with semi-structured interviews with lawmakers and international protection applicants and beneficiaries. The analysis explores reframing legal provisions to recognise protection beneficiaries as resilient survivors rather than victims of harm, acknowledging their meaningful contributions to host communities. Through an **interdisciplinary lens**, the project integrates legal and ethical perspectives to develop a transformative understanding of the protection framework that honours the complexity of the forced displacement process.

Applicants are asked to submit a **research statement** that demonstrates how their research background and skills match with the project, and how they would design the project (for more information, see the ‘Application procedure’ below).

*Project Funding: Trinity Research Doctorate Award for Group-based Research Project*

The PhD will be funded through the **Trinity Research Doctorate Award for Group-based Research Projects**. The successful candidate will be part of an interdisciplinary group of researchers working on projects linked under the umbrella project ‘Refugee-thrive: Building trauma-informed refugee resilience in the face of the evolving challenges of forced displacement’. The four PhD projects are:

1. Comparing refugee children’s resilience in Irish schools: EU Temporary Protection and other refugee backgrounds.
2. Refugees as peace builders: countering populist narratives and building refugee resilience for integration.
3. Mutual adaptation of refugees and the host society: building resilient communities through informal language learning and story-telling.
4. Building refugee resilience through an ethical-legal analysis of the international protection framework in Ireland.

Moving beyond traditional views of refugees as recipients of aid, these projects recognise their capacity for resilience - their ability to navigate towards and negotiate for resources in culturally meaningful ways. By pairing disciplines in innovative combinations (sociology with psychotherapy, peace studies with nursing and midwifery, linguistics with literature and law with medical ethics), Refugee-Thrive explores how institutional practices, refugee agency, community engagement and legal frameworks can better support refugee agency, resilience and inclusion in Ireland.

This research directly advances multiple UN Sustainable Development Goals by promoting quality education (SDG4), gender equality (SDG5), reduced inequalities (SDG10), and peaceful societies (SDG16). The programme ensures social impact by actively involving refugee communities throughout the research process, from design to dissemination. Output will include academic publications, evidence-based policy recommendations across education, health, housing and justice sectors, media engagement, multilingual resources, community workshops and a major conference uniting refugee communities, policymakers and service providers.

The successful candidate is expected to contribute to the ‘Refugee-thrive’ project and to the academic activities of the Trinity Centre for Forced Migration Studies (TCFMS) (<https://www.tcd.ie/global/forced-migration-studies/>). TCFMS creates an interdisciplinary community connecting research, teaching, policy and practice. By bringing together academics, practitioners, and experts with lived experience, TCFMS develops collaborative research initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for forcibly displaced persons. The successful candidate will join this dynamic research community, benefiting from cross-disciplinary networks and opportunities to contribute to meaningful, impact-oriented scholarship.

**Applicant profile**

Applicants are expected to have a strong interest in the topic and to be intrinsically motivated to work on the PhD project as part of ‘Refugee-thrive’.

**Major research activities conducted by the candidate** will involve (1) collaborating closely with your research supervisors; (2) becoming familiar with the main theoretical debates in the field by engaging in a systematic reading of the literature and writing a state-of-the-art literature review for your project; (3) designing qualitative research instruments including semi-structured interviews; (4) summarizing and interpreting results for a social science audience and developing policy implications; (5) presenting work in front of different audiences at local, national and international level in conferences or networks; (6) publishing articles arising from the study together with the research supervisors.

We are looking for enthusiastic PhD candidates who would like to write a cutting-edge PhD dissertation at Trinity College Dublin.

*Qualifications*

* a high 2.1 or 1st class degree at the undergraduate level in law or a related discipline with substantial exposure to legal/regulatory issues is essential; a relevant Master’s degree is desirable.

*Essential research skills*

* excellent analytical skills;
* familiarity with international migration law and human rights law;
* experience analysing ethical-legal issues;
* experience in the management and analysis of qualitative data in a comparative perspective;

*Other essential knowledge and skills*

* strong interpersonal and relational skills;
* an interdisciplinary approach;
* excellent written and verbal communication skills in English;
* ability to structure and pursue an independent research project;
* strong motivation to publish in academic journals;
* very good organisational skills;
* ability to work effectively in a team.

*Desirable skills*

* interest in or basic knowledge of research in ethics;
* interest in or basic knowledge of the Irish legal and political system;
* interest in pursuing an academic or teaching career.

**The PhD Programme at TCD School of Law**

The candidate will join the PhD programme at the School of Law of Trinity College Dublin, Ireland’s leading university which is located on a historic campus in the heart of Dublin. The School of Law will provide all logistic, academic and intellectual support and integrate the successful candidate into a vibrant doctoral programme at TCD. A central dedicated shared workspace is exclusively available for full-time postgraduate research students which is adjoined by a seminar room.

The Law School offers a dedicated research module, which guides PhD students in formulating and refining their research question, fostering their legal writing and oral presentation skills, and applying for research funding. Moreover, PhD students at the School of Law may participate in a variety of other training courses and audit modules in its different Master’s programmes. The School of Law is a member of the Trinity Research in Social Sciences (TRiSS), which connects social scientists from multiple schools and research themes for the purposes of collaboration (<https://www.tcd.ie/triss/member-schools/>). PhD students at the School of Law have access to TRiSS resources and funding.

PhD students are expected to collaborate closely with their supervisors and will produce a PhD in the form of a dissertation.

*Standard expectations of the post*

* Critical, systematic and analytical review of relevant literature for the project.
* Writing academic output (working papers, chapters, journal articles) in excellent English.
* Conducting empirical research using primarily qualitative methods.
* Actively writing and submitting research papers for publication and contributing to joint projects or related submissions with the PhD supervisors.
* Attending meetings, workshops, and conferences.
* Disseminating academic work to specialised and general audiences.

**Application Procedure**

Informal enquiries are welcome and can be made directly to Dr Christiane Ahlborn, Assistant Professor of Public International Law, School of Law ([ahlbornc@tcd.ie](mailto:ahlbornc@tcd.ie)) or Dr Ghaiath Hussein, Assistant Professor of Medical Ethics, School of Medicine ([husseing@tcd.ie](mailto:husseing@tcd.ie)) .

To apply, candidates should submit:

1. a **motivation letter** clearly indicating how the applicant’s profile and skills fit the requirements of the job position (max. 1 page);
2. a **full curriculum vitae;**
3. **full transcripts;**
4. a concise **research statement** no longer than 1,500 words excluding references (see explanation below)
5. the names and contact details of **two referees** (with email addresses included);
6. at least one example of your written work (in English) that shows your analytical and writing skills in law or a related discipline.

via email to

* Dr Christiane Ahlborn ([ahlbornc@tcd.ie](mailto:ahlbornc@tcd.ie)) and Dr Ghaiath Hussein ([husseing@tcd.ie](mailto:husseing@tcd.ie))

before the **closing date of June 12th, 2025 (23:59 BST).**

Applications must indicate exactly *“PhD Application – Refugee resilience through an ethical-legal analysis”* in the subject line.

**Research statement**

Applications will be considered based on a candidate’s academic record and a **short research statement** to be submitted alongside the usual application documents (motivation, CV, transcripts, references, writing sample). The research statement demonstrates a candidate’s research experience and skills as well as a brief outline of their research interests in relation to the project. The research statement should show how the applicant’s research background and skills match with the project, and how they would design the project. The statement should be **no longer than 1500 words** (excluding references).

**Institutional background information**

*The School of Law*

The School of Law is part of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, which comprises 12 Schools and a total of 25 Disciplines. The Faculty is home to a major interdisciplinary research institute in the Arts and Humanities, the Trinity Long Room Hub, and to Trinity Research in Social Sciences (TRiSS), a broad-based endeavour encompassing the best of our research and thinking in the Social Sciences.

Founded in 1740, Trinity School of Law is one of the leading Law Schools in Europe, consistently ranked as one of the top 100 Law Schools in the world. The School of Law scholarly community of staff, students and alumni, dedicated to the pursuit of legal knowledge and critical engagement with the legal challenges that confront modern communities.

The undergraduate degree programmes in law are distinguished by research-based and research-led curricula, in which all subjects are taught by leading academics expert in those fields. Over four years, students become self-directed learners, mastering both the discipline of legal thought and the skills of critical analysis necessary for a reasoned appraisal of law's role in society. 175 students in each year study for degrees in law, law and business, law and French, law and German, and law and political science.

The School of Law offers various postgraduate programmes, which – with a majority of students from outside Ireland drawn from over 30 countries around the world – provide an opportunity for advanced legal study. In particular, they reflect Dublin's unique position as a centre of global trade and a technology hub. The Law School also has an active community of Irish and international doctoral students. Many doctoral students provide teaching support to undergraduate students as they commence their own academic and professional legal careers.

Further information on the School of Law is available at: https://www.tcd.ie/law/

*The Trinity Centre for Forced Migration Studies*

The Trinity Centre for Forced Migration Studies (TCFMS) is committed to addressing one of today's most pressing global challenges. With Trinity College Dublin becoming a member of the University of Sanctuary network in March 2021, the Centre embodies the network's core principles: learning about forced migration, ensuring a culture of welcome, sharing ideas and practices, and engaging in outreach and advocacy activities.

The Centre aligns with Trinity's Strategic Plan (2020/25) "Community and Connection," championing the university's values of being inquisitive, pioneering, responsible, inclusive, and collaborative. As the first forced migration research centre of its kind on the island of Ireland, TCFMS promotes interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary study of factors determining and resulting from forced displacement.

TCFMS facilitates networking and collaboration between academics, policy-makers, NGOs, and experts with lived experience to address critical research needs in this area. The Centre contributes to Trinity's Research Charter by harnessing collective expertise for the greater good. Regular activities include an annual lecture or conference and seminars with speakers from academia, civic society, and the NGO sector, all open to the public.

The Centre creates an interdisciplinary community connecting research, teaching, policy, and practice, developing collaborative initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for the over 110 million forcibly displaced persons globally (UNHCR, 2023). PhD students who become affiliated with the Centre will benefit from cross-disciplinary networks and opportunities to contribute to meaningful, impact-oriented scholarship.

Further information on the Trinity Centre for Forced Migration Studies is available at: [www.tcd.ie/global/forced-migration-studies](http://www.tcd.ie/global/forced-migration-studies)

*Trinity College Dublin*

Founded in 1592, Trinity College is at the nexus of tradition and innovation, offering undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across 24 schools and three faculties: arts, humanities, and social sciences; engineering, maths and science; and health sciences. Spread across 47 acres in Dublin’s city centre, Trinity’s more than 20,000 strong student body comes from all 32 counties of Ireland, and 16% of students come from outside the country. Of those, 40% are from outside the European Union, making Trinity’s campus cosmopolitan and bustling, with a focus on diversity.

As Ireland’s leading university, the pursuit of academic excellence through research and scholarship is at the heart of the Trinity education. Trinity is known for intellectual rigour, excellence, interdisciplinary approach, and research-led teaching. Home to Nobel prize-winners such as scientist Ernest Walton and writer Samuel Beckett, Trinity draws visitors from across the world to its historic campus each year, including to the Book of Kells and Science Gallery which capture the university’s connection to both old and new. Trinity accounts for one-fifth of all spin-out companies from Irish higher education institutions, helping to turn Ireland into an innovation-intensive, high-productivity economy. That culture of innovation and entrepreneurship is a defining characteristic of our campus as we help shape the next generation of job creators.

*Equal Opportunities Policy*

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to the employment policies, procedures and practices which do not discriminate on grounds such as gender, civil status, family status, age, disability, race, religious belief, sexual orientation or membership of the travelling community.