

PhD Postgraduate Research Opportunity

PhD Project Title:	Upland Ecosystem Services and Integrated Land Management Strategies from Policy to Practice (Upland EcoSTEP) P250049
Project Duration:	4 years
Organisation:	Co-centre for Climate plus Biodiversity and Water, Atlantic Technological University,
Location:	ATU Galway
Stipend:	€25,000 per annum
Supervisors:	Dr. James Moran (ATU); Dr. Dolores Byrne (ATU); Professor Phil Jordan (Ulster University) and Dr. Taro Takahashi (Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute)

Funding: This research is conducted with the financial support of The Sunflower Charitable Foundation, Research Ireland, Northern Ireland's Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) via the International Science Partnerships Fund (ISPF) under Grant number [22/CC/11103] at the Co-Centre for Climate + Biodiversity + Water

Description: Ireland uplands are distinctive, dynamic and diverse landscapes with a history of extensive agricultural management with the potential to provide a wide range of ecosystem services related to their diversity of land cover and use. The estimated area of uplands across the island varies depending on definition used related to elevation, relief and land cover, and the range of discrete upland areas across Ireland (ROI and NI) vary substantially in terms of their socio-economic outlook. Several common challenges are recognised across the island including contraction in upland farming, environment pressures and demographic issues. It is recognised that more integrated territorial or locally adapted approaches are required for sustainable development of rural areas internationally and a new rural paradigm is required. Governance, both in terms of policy development and implementation, needs to adapt a more integrated approach with greater policy coordination required. This can enable adaptation of national policy targets and local/regional implementation mechanisms. This project aims to take a place-based approach, recognising the distinctive character of upland areas and develop an evidence-based framework for land use transitions, cognisant of the diverse natural and socio-cultural capacity of these areas. The project has three main objectives (i) to map and assess upland ecosystem services (ES) using participatory approaches (current state and capacity); (ii) map policy and assess policy coherence, divergence/convergence for optimised delivery of ES in upland areas; and (iii) identify the enabling factors/barriers to transformational change for sustainable development using "plausible futures" scenario analysis.

The project's participatory approach will involve policy makers and the successful candidate will have the opportunity to undertake a maximum of two short policy internships (4-6 weeks) with policy partners.

Requirements/Qualifications: The successful candidate will hold a minimum of an Honours Degree, with a minimum award classification of 2:1 or equivalent in a cognate discipline (environmental science, ecology, geography, agricultural science, or a related discipline). The candidate will be expected to work on their own initiative and be willing to acquire the broader skills necessary for the successful completion

of a PhD. The candidate will be registered on a structured PhD programme and will be required to undertake modules and training worth 30 ECTS.

Project Duration: 48 months

Conditions:

- €25,000 Stipend per annum.
- Postgraduate fees will be covered by the project.
- In addition, any necessary travel and material costs incurred during the project will be covered.

If either English or Irish is not the applicant's first language, evidence of English language proficiency is required for registration. Please refer to web link [English Language Requirements - Atlantic Technological University](#) to view the minimum English language proficiency standards for entry to ATU

PhD Start Date: 1st October 2025

Application Closing Date: 12 pm, Friday 25th July 2025

Applicants should submit their:

- Curriculum Vitae (to include details of 2 referees)
- A copy of transcript of results
- A Personal Statement:

The Personal Statement should not exceed 1 page and must include details on:

- How your qualifications and experience have prepared you for this PhD research programme
- Why you would like to pursue this PhD research programme.

Applications must be submitted to ResearchOffice.galwaymayo@atu.ie e-mail address only.

Please ensure all documents are emailed as a SINGLE Word or PDF file.

For further information on the project, please contact: Dr James Moran (james.moran@atu.ie)

Data Protection Statement

ATU takes very seriously its legal obligations as set out in the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR) and the Irish Data Protection Act 2018 to safeguard and protect your personal information in our possession. The personal information which you disclose to us in this form will only be used to assess your suitability; administer and register you for this scholarship. We will not keep your personal information for any longer than is necessary for those stated purposes. **For more details, please refer to ATU's Student Privacy Statement: [Student-privacy-statement](#)**

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