



**Dublin City University
School of Law and Government
Institute for Climate and Society**

**Co-Centre for Climate + Biodiversity + Water
Sunflower Charitable Foundation PhD scholarship**

Project title:

The Role(s) of Children and Young People in Environmental Decision-making

Dublin City University is a research-intensive, globally-engaged, dynamic institution. DCU has over 20,000 students spread across three academic campuses in the Glasnevin-Drumcondra area of North Dublin. Excellence in its education and research activities has led to its consistent position in the rankings of the world's top young universities. For example, DCU has been ranked 59th worldwide in the Times Higher Young University rankings for 2024.

DCU's School of Law and Government is a research active school with world-class faculty. It ranks in the top 200 departments in the world for Political Science worldwide. The School has a rigorous structured PhD programme and a vibrant, international cohort of almost 50 PhD students.

The DCU Institute for Climate and Society is Ireland's first academic research institute devoted specifically to promoting perspectives on climate change from the social sciences and humanities. The mission of the Institute is to shape and support societal responses to climate change in Ireland and around the world. The Institute's research, education, and engagement activities start from the premise that the solutions to climate change are available, and that the blocks to action are to be found in social processes and dynamics. The Institute examines how different social arenas such as politics, media, education, business and policy can influence climate action.

The Co-Centre for Climate + Biodiversity + Water brings together 14 higher education and research institutions across Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Great Britain, with the vision to be a home of research, innovation and policy development across the interlinked challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and water. The Climate + Co-Centre is funded by Research Ireland, Northern Ireland's Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, and UK Research and Innovation. Additional philanthropic funding has been provided by the Sunflower Charitable Foundation to support this PhD position.

The PhD project

This PhD project will explore the participation of children and young people (those under the age of 18 years) in environmental decision-making in Ireland, Northern Ireland and/or Great Britain. The project's overarching aim is to strengthen the voices of children and young people in decisions on climate, biodiversity and water policy, thereby contributing towards more just and sustainable solutions to environmental challenges.

The project's objectives are: (i) To investigate the nature of spaces and processes underpinning young people's participation in environmental decision-making, including but not limited to formal and informal education, children and young people's assemblies, youth councils, and protest movements; (ii) To interrogate the ways in which children and young people's citizenship and participation are conceptualised within environmental decision-making spaces; (iii) To examine the extent to which these spaces are informed by and contribute towards local, national and international policy frameworks; and (iv) To identify best practice guidelines and support policy recommendations regarding child participation processes.

It is expected that the project will employ a rights-based, youth-focused research design grounded in participatory methods, which supports children and young people's engagement within each phase of the research process. The project will take a case-study approach, with in depth analysis of selected projects which supported children's participation in environmental decision-making and policy formation. Specific geographical scope of the case studies will be determined during the early stages of the research process.

The position

The successful candidate will be co-supervised by an interdisciplinary team consisting of Dr. Diarmuid Torney (DCU School of Law and Government), Dr. Benjamin Mallon and Dr. Rowan Oberman (DCU Institute of Education), and Dr. Clodagh Harris (UCC Department of Government).

The PhD student will be enrolled in the structured PhD programme of the DCU School of Law and Government, as part of which they will take a range of graduate training modules in research design, research methods and other areas as appropriate in year 1. They will be integrated into the PhD community of the Co-Centre for Climate + Biodiversity + Water and the DCU Institute for Climate and Society. It is anticipated that the PhD project will involve a policy internship of 1–3 months with a policy partner, which will be identified in the early stages of the project.

The PhD student will be subject to periodic progress reviews. Progression will be dependent on demonstration of satisfactory performance.

The scholarship will provide a stipend of €25,000 per annum and will cover EU fees, both for four years. The scholarship also includes generous funding for travel and research costs.

Requirements

The successful candidate is required to:

- Hold a Master's degree in an area related to children/youth participation and/or environmental decision making, with first class honours or high second class honours;
- Have a demonstrated understanding of environmental issues (e.g. climate change, biodiversity, water quality); children's rights; child and youth participation;
- Have excellent written and oral communication skills;
- Pre-existing knowledge of environmental policymaking and children/youth participation in Ireland and the UK would be beneficial;
- Relevant professional experience would be beneficial.

Closing date: 23 June 2025

Informal enquiries: Dr. Diarmuid Torney, Associate Professor, School of Law and Government: diarmuid.torney@dcu.ie.

Application procedure: Applications should be submitted by email to climate@dcu.ie using the subject line "The Role(s) of Children and Young People in Environmental Decision-making" and include:

- Two-page motivation letter explaining the candidate's interest in pursuing a PhD on this topic;
- Curriculum vitae listing academic qualifications, research experience, and publications;
- Sample of written work of approx. 2,000–4,000 (e.g., an essay from Master's programme, a chapter from dissertation, etc.);
- Copy of the highest degree obtained and transcript of academic grades;
- Contact details of at least two references.

Interviews: Week commencing 7 July 2025

Start date: 8 September 2025

Dublin City University is an equal opportunities employer