

TU RISE PhD Scholarship

Project Title: Co-Design for Digital Public Services: Developing and evaluating participatory tools and approaches for inclusive human-centred digital public service design with and for diverse communities

Crawford College of Art and Design, Department of Media Communications

About the Project

We invite applications for a fully funded 4-year PhD project as a full-time programme of study. This PhD project, entitled “Co-Design for Digital Public Services: Developing and evaluating participatory tools and approaches for inclusive human-centred digital public service design with and for diverse communities”, is supported by MTU TU RISE funding.

The project will address the growing digital divide in public service provision, through an investigation into the use of co-design methods and tools to support the creation of inclusive, human-centred services. In 2022, the Irish government published their strategy to fully digitalise public services by 2030. The potential benefits of a digital public service infrastructure are significant, including increased customer convenience, improved cost efficiency, and better cross-service integration. However, there remain significant barriers to the successful deployment of digitalisation. Key amongst these is the risk of excluding communities who face challenges in accessing or using digital services. Crucially, a large proportion of adults in Ireland lack digital literacy skills. Similarly, financial insecurity may deprive individuals of sustained access to digital technologies (i.e. smartphones, Internet connection). Many other factors may impact an individual’s ability to access public services digitally, including disability, health, education, and trust. Clearly, public service digitalisation brings with it an increased risk of marginalisation for the public. Through this project, we will develop and empirically evaluate a series of human-centred design tools/ methods created to support the co-design of digital public services. These resources will be designed through a participatory process with stakeholders from public service staff and the communities they serve, and evaluated and iterated across a series of laboratory and in-the-wild interventions. The key research and innovation objectives are:

- (1) Prototype and test methods/ tools to facilitate engagement with the design of digital public services by the public (in particular communities at risk of digital exclusion)
- (2) Produce recommendations and guidelines for how public sector bodies can engage the public in a sustained and inclusive manner with decision-making and design considerations for digital public services

- (3) Identify barriers to including the public (in particular marginalised communities) in the co-design of public services
- (4) Produce strategies/ recommendations for public sector bodies to overcome barriers to embedding co-design and human-centred approaches in the development of digital public services

Through our close collaboration with government bodies, the outputs of this project will contribute to the direction of public service design, as well as advance knowledge across the spaces of Participatory Design, Service Design, and Public Administration.

Requirements:

Applicants must have achieved at least a second-class higher level (2H1) classification or equivalent in an appropriate discipline area relevant to the research field from a recognised degree awarding body OR possess a Master's Degree in an appropriate discipline area relevant to the research field from a recognised degree awarding body.

The successful candidate should be self-motivated with enthusiasm to develop competencies and skills across human-centred design, participatory design methods, digital service design and development, and qualitative/ quantitative research. They should have an interest in and an aptitude for creative problem-solving and service design, specifically within the context of public administration. The successful candidate will be joining a group of designers and researchers at MTU, and must be capable of working as part of a team, actively contribute to project activities, and have a keen interest in design as a tool for social change.

For applicants whose first language is not English, the English language requirements accepted by MTU for entry into postgraduate studies are:

- IELTS Academic 6.0 (No less than a 5.5 in any one band)
- PTE Academic 51 (Minimum 45 in each component)
- TOEFL IBT 80 min (score of 18 in each component)
- Duolingo score Min of 100

Please refer to: <https://www.mtu.ie/international/eu-applicants/>

General terms and conditions of this PhD scholarship award

Start date & location: This PhD starts no later than **1st Jan 2025**. The student will be based primarily at MTU Cork, Bishopstown Campus. The student will be registered at MTU, working under the supervision of Dr Sarah Hayes (MTU), in association with Dr Susan Rea (MTU), Dr Mary Galvin (MTU) and Denise Heffernan (MTU). The PhD Scholar is required to spend **at least 12**

weeks on placement with an enterprise partner within the four-year term of their doctoral programme. The project supervisor/PI (in conjunction with the PhD scholar) is responsible for arranging the student placement with a suitable enterprise partner.

Funding: The scholarship funding is tax free and includes payment of University PhD fees (EU or non-EU) and a student stipend at a flat rate of €25,000 per annum which is tenable for 4 years.

To Apply:

Please send a **single PDF file** consisting of the following to sarah.hayes@mtu.ie with 'TU RISE PhD Application' in the subject heading:

1. Resume/Curriculum Vitae (CV), including:
 - Education History
 - Relevant skills
 - Research projects/publications
2. A cover letter (2-pages max) including a description of the applicant's research interests, reasons for applying for the position. The Cover letter must clearly indicate how the applicant's profile and skills fit the requirements of this PhD position.
3. Scanned copies of relevant academic transcripts and English language certificates.
4. A minimum of two recommendation letters and/or contact information for referees.

Further information or queries please e-mail Dr Sarah Hayes at sarah.hayes@mtu.ie

Closing date for applications: 31st October 2024

Interviews (on-line) anticipated to be held early/mid November 2024

PhD commencement date latest by 1st January 2025.

Funding Acknowledgement

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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



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an Aontas Eorpach
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