



## POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY

**Project Title:** MISSION-READY: Exploring women's health, fitness and readiness in the Irish Defence Forces.

**Short Project Description:** Women currently represent only 7% of the Irish Defence Forces, and there is limited evidence on how training environments and organisational culture shape their health, performance and career progression. There is an urgent need for evidence-based, female-informed approaches to recruitment, training and injury prevention. This four-year PhD is delivered through a collaboration between TUS, the Defence Forces and international collaborators at the University of Oklahoma.

Using a mixed-methods design, the PhD will: (1) map key physiological and psychological barriers and facilitators to women's recruitment, retention and readiness through surveys and focus groups; (2) establish a longitudinal dataset of physical and psychosocial readiness among new recruits; and (3) co-design and evaluate a female-physiology-informed training intervention in a randomised controlled trial. The successful candidate will generate the first national dataset on women's health and performance in the Irish Defence Forces and produce actionable recommendations to inform policy, fitness testing and occupational health practice, supporting a more inclusive and operationally ready Defence Forces.

This PhD will suit an early-career sport and exercise scientist or exercise physiologist who enjoys applied fieldwork, is confident in exercise testing, and is motivated to lead a complex, multi-site research project from design through to analysis and dissemination.

**Type of Degree Offered:** PhD

**Duration of Project:** 48 months (4 years)

**Funding Agency:** TUS Strategic Research Fund

### **Funding Details:**

- PhD stipend: €16,000 per annum
- Materials and consumables: €1,500 per annum
- University fees waiver for 4 years

### **Minimum Qualifications/Experience Necessary/Any Other Requirements**

#### **Applicants must have:**

- A primary degree (minimum classification of 2.1 honours or equivalent) in Sport and Exercise Science, Exercise Physiology, or a closely-related sport science field with a clear focus on human physiology and performance.
- Proven experience in conducting field- or laboratory-based exercise testing (e.g., VO<sub>2</sub>max or submaximal testing, strength and power assessments, or similar performance measures).
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively within a multidisciplinary team.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Willingness and ability to travel within Ireland to Defence Forces barracks for data collection and stakeholder engagement.
- Strong project management and organisational skills, including the ability to plan, prioritise and deliver work to deadlines across multiple study phases.



**Desirable attributes include:**

- A completed Master's degree and/or applied experience in sport and exercise science, strength and conditioning, or tactical/occupational performance settings.
- Experience using sport science equipment and software for testing and monitoring (e.g., force plates, timing gates, GPS, or heart-rate monitoring systems) is desirable.
- Experience with both quantitative and qualitative research (e.g., R/SPSS for physiological and survey data, NVivo or similar for focus group data). Training will be provided to build advanced skills.
- Evidence of research dissemination (e.g., publications, conference presentations, reports, creative knowledge translation activities).

**English Language Requirement:**

IELTS [International English Testing System] Applicants must have a minimum of 6.5 with no component score less than 6.5. Please contact [pro@tus.ie](mailto:pro@tus.ie) for any specific questions on this requirement.

**Project Supervisory Team:**

Lead supervisor: Dr Emma Cowley

Co-supervisor: Dr Niamh Ní Chéilleachair

Advisors: Dr Mou Sultana (TUS) and Dr Sam Moore (University of Oklahoma)

For further information, please contact: [Emma.Cowley@tus.ie](mailto:Emma.Cowley@tus.ie)

Closing date for receipt of completed application form is **May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2026**. Interviews will take place within the subsequent two weeks.

**To apply:**

1. Download the TUS Scholarship application form here: <https://tus.ie/rdi/research/office/funded-research/>
2. Send the completed application form to [pro@tus.ie](mailto:pro@tus.ie). Please add the project title in the subject line ("MISSION-READY: Exploring women's health, fitness and readiness in the Irish Defence Forces")