



TUS

**Technological University of the Shannon:
Midlands Midwest**
Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne:
Lár Tíre Iarthar Láir

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY

Project Title: Navigating Innovative Growth for Hospitality, Tourism, and Astronomy in Local Landscapes – An action research project developing dark sky tourism in Co. Offaly

Short Project Description

Dark Sky Ecotourism defines a form of tourism which takes place in ecologically sensitive and remote, which have low levels of light pollution and clear night sky views. The term is an amalgamation of 'dark sky tourism', which describes tourism at night including astro photography, star gazing and viewing of celestial events such as the Aurora Borealis, and the term 'ecotourism', which describes tourism to outdoor sites with rich ecological interest, community benefit and educational value. Dark Sky Ecotourism is proposed as a tourism typology, which is beneficial to the economy, ecology and society of a region.

It benefits:

- The economy by capitalising on a free resource – a dark sky;
- Ecology by improving habitat for nocturnal species, such as insects and native species (e.g. bats); Communities, as higher levels of light pollution can harm human health;
- Local authorities by reducing night light;
- National heritage, by acknowledging the historical and cultural value of the night;
- Rural development by creating job opportunities and SME employment.

Dark Sky destination status is internationally recognised by the International Dark Sky Association (a US based organisation) and by the Starlight Foundation (an EU based organisation). Dark Sky Ecotourism potential products include night sky safaris, ecology and environment education, astrophotography and health and well-being experiences. There is significant potential for development of Dark Sky Ecotourism destination status and associated tourism products in the Midlands region, particularly in Co. Offaly. The Midlands is a region in transition, which has sought in recent years to develop a sustainable tourism offering which benefits the local environment, local communities and local economy.

Duration of Project: 48 months

Funding Agency: TUS RISE Scholarship comprises of a monthly stipend, materials budget and postgraduate fee for the duration of the award only.

Type of Degree Offered: PhD

Minimum Qualifications/Experience Necessary/Any Other Requirements:

Candidates with primary degrees in tourism, business, marketing, geography or other closely related discipline.

Minimum classification of *2.1 honours or equivalent*.

IELTS [International English Testing System] Applicants must have a minimum of 6.0 with no component score less than 6.0.

Research Supervisors: Dr Tony Johnston, Dr Noelle O'Connor, and Dr Vania Costa with industry partners Laois Offaly ETB, Offaly Local Development Company and Offaly County Council



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AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS
HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY

TU RISE is co-financed by the Government of Ireland and the European Union through the ERDF Southern, Eastern & Midland Regional Programme 2021-27 and the Northern & Western Regional Programme 2021-27



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For further information, please contact: Dr Tony Johnston; anthony.johnston@tus.ie

Closing date for receipt of completed application form is 5pm Friday 16th August 2024. Interviews will take place within subsequent weeks.

Download TUS RISE application form here:

<https://tus.ie/rdi/research/office/funded-research/>



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