

**Dundalk Institute of Technology invite applications for the following position:
PhD postgraduate Scholarship (Full-time: 36 months)**

Project overview

Title: Nurturing North-Eastern Neighbourhood Nests: Community-Defined Parent-Toddler Groups and the Role of the Early Years Graduate in Supporting Families of Children Aged Under 3 years

Supervisor: Dr Catherine O'Connor

Position Reference: 08AHSS2021

Keywords: Early Childhood Education; Early Learning and Care (ELC); Parent-Toddler Groups

This exciting research opportunity will be attractive to candidates interested in quality early play opportunities provided to our youngest citizens (0-3) and working in partnership with parents/guardians. The project aims to understand how parent-infant/toddler (PT) groups in Ireland's northeast region can deliver parent-defined outcomes, and exploit the early years graduate professional to enhance them.

Parent-Toddler (PT) groups are community-based sessional playgroups which provide peer networks for parents and opportunities for children to play alongside and with other children (Jackson 2013). Playgroups facilitated by trained personnel result in less parent drop-out, parents feeling valued, and enhanced child-led play experiences (Armstrong et al. 2019; Jackson 2013). Capable adults create the space for young children to thrive. Communities know best what works for them, and Ireland's First5 Whole-of-Government strategy aims to use early years centres as hubs for families over the next decade.

The successful candidate will work with the supervision team on the following project objectives:

- describe the current landscape of PT groups in the North-East.
- Explore parent/caregiver experiences of PT groups.
- Build on the learning from the DkIT 'Fledgling Project' to improve understanding of early years' graduate professional skills required to facilitate community PT groups.
- Develop parent-professional partnerships in the co-construction of locally responsive PT groups.

This will be achieved through engagement with community organisations and through a mixed-methods research design employing descriptive survey, qualitative and action research approaches

Dundalk Institute of Technology

Dundalk Institute of Technology is a dynamic, world class Institute that has developed an international reputation in both basic and applied research through its Research Centres. This PhD Scholarship is offered through the Nursing, Midwifery and Early Years Research Group within the School of Health and Science at DkIT. The successful applicant will be registered as a full time postgraduate research student in the DCU-DkIT Graduate School. The PhD position will be located on the DkIT campus and the Degree will be awarded by Dublin City University.

Funding

This project is co-funded by the HEA Technological Universities Transformation Fund and DkIT.

The successful candidate shall receive a postgraduate stipend of €18,500 per annum, plus fees and a contribution to their direct research project costs. The duration of this PhD studentship is 36 months, Full Time. Terms and conditions will apply.

Eligibility

Eligibility Criteria:	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications	Candidates must hold an honours degree in Early Childhood Studies (or equivalent), to at least an upper second-class award level.	
Experience/knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Professional work experience with children under 3 years. This experience may include undergraduate professional practice placements with this cohort.- possess excellent written and verbal communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Have achieved a high academic standard in the research elements of their degree programme.- Have knowledge and professional experience of working with infants, toddlers and parents/guardians, especially in group contexts

It is also a requirement that any applicant whose first language is other than English must have a certified English language proficiency of at least IELTS 6.5 or equivalent.

Application process

Please send a **copy of your CV and a 1-page cover letter** to orla.lynch@dkit.ie no later than **4.00 pm on Monday January 17th 2022**. Applications received after this time will not be considered.

Please use the position reference **“08AHSS2021”** in the subject title. Short listed candidates will be invited to interview.

Please note, canvassing will render an applicant ineligible.