

# Collaborative Doctoral Awards Student Specification



Arts and  
Humanities  
Research Council

<b>Project Title:</b>	Voices of Ulster's Poor: Charitable Requests, 1850s-1920s	
<b>Project Summary:</b>	The 'voices' of the nineteenth and early-twentieth-century poor are not often visible in historical documents, rather we hear from the officials and authority figures who penned surviving records. This original and exciting project draws on new and underused archival material housed at PRONI, letters and petitions requesting assistance submitted to charities and politicians and brings to light for the first time the voices of those experiencing hardship in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Ulster. The project will allow a unique understanding of living conditions, family relationships and issues facing many families across Ulster as they tried to access help.	
<b>Institution:</b>	Ulster University	
<b>Partner Organisation:</b>	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland	
<b>Primary AHRC Subject Area:</b>	History	
<b>Creative Practice Component:</b>	None	

<b>For further information and to submit an expression of interest, please contact:</b>			
<b>Lead Supervisor:</b>	Dr Leanne McCormick	<b>Email:</b>	lv.mccormick@ulster.ac.uk
<b>EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN:</b>			6 <sup>th</sup> January 2020

**Interviews for shortlisted candidates will take place in the week commencing: *Insert date of week if known***

*Note to supervisors drafting this role description: the doctoral researcher person specification must respect Northern Bridge values of equality, inclusivity and diversity.  
Careful consideration should be given to additional criteria that are essential to the advertised project or desirable (could be developed through project training and experience.)  
Avoid long lists of criteria – aim for no more than three per category.  
Be realistic - criteria may limit the eligible pool of candidates.  
Criteria must require applicants to demonstrate preparedness for doctoral study.  
The essential criteria for all Northern Bridge researchers is here: <http://www.northernbridge.ac.uk/competition/eligibility/>  
Directors will be available to assist with the drawing up of person specifications. Colleagues who would like to consult on this can consult as follows:  
Teesside - Newcastle  
Northumbria - Durham  
QUB - University of Ulster'*

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The ‘voices’ of the poor are often faint in historical sources, described or mediated through officials and captured on paper by clerks, politicians, philanthropists, women and men religious, institution staff, or others. Charity requests, where they survive, capture the temporarily poverty-stricken or everyday poor in their own words. Requests for assistance speak to kinship responsibilities, family survival strategies, destitution caused by local circumstances, ill-health or bereavements. They convey the patchwork of economic strategies required for a family’s survival and in doing so provide a fascinating account of lived realities for ‘ordinary’ individuals. Recent scholarship on Dublin charity letters by historians Virginia Crossman and Lindsey Earner-Byrne demonstrates the value of such records in representing the historical past and the poor. But the voices of Ulster’s poor have yet to emerge. A PhD based on rich records held in PRONI would ensure an important Ulster dimension to this emerging scholarship.

Charitable requests that convey the voices of the poor are rare but housed at PRONI are a range of records which allow these voices to be heard. This will include, for example, identified volumes of charity applications and petitions for assistance to politicians and other figures of authority that reveal the immediate concerns and poverty of people in the newly-established state.

These fascinating, sometimes heart-breaking, requests provide rich qualitative evidence that will be coupled with a quantitative assessment of the collections as a whole. Charitable requests also allow for a material dimension and represent a tangible connection to the past.

## RESEARCHER PERSON SPECIFICATION

*\*Applicants must also meet the criteria for acceptance on a doctoral programme as set out by the host institution’s Postgraduate Admissions Service.*

<b>Education and Professional Qualifications</b>	Essential Criteria	Undergraduate degree (first-class or good upper-second) in a relevant subject History or Cognate subject  Masters Degree in a relevant subject History or Cognate subject  In exceptional cases, candidates with lower qualifications will be considered if they can demonstrate that relevant professional practice or work experience has equipped them with equivalent academic and research skills, and preparedness for doctoral study, as per AHRC guidelines.
	Desirable Criteria	Experience in sharing and making public arts and humanities activity e.g. publications, presentations, performance, exhibition,
<b>Research and impact experience and training</b>	Essential Criteria	Evidence of engagement in independent research.
	Desirable Criteria	Experience in sharing and making public arts and humanities activity e.g. publications, presentations, performance, exhibition,

		online dissemination, applied design outcomes, industry reports, public talk etc.
<b>Professional practice and job-related experience</b>	Essential Criteria	
	Desirable Criteria	
<b>Interpersonal Skills</b>	Essential Criteria	Effective communication and organisational skills and ability to persuade and enthuse.  Ability to articulate a vision of the contribution that the CDA project will make to the field.
	Desirable Criteria	
<b>Other Factors</b>	Essential	Willingness to travel to meet the needs of the research project.

## RESEARCH PROJECT

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The proposed project aims to explore the realities of poverty through these letters. It will seek to answer questions about:

## **1 POVERTY**

How did petitioners narrate their poverty and explain their circumstances? What aspects of their lives did they highlight to negotiate assistance and convey immediacy? What can these records indicate about the patchwork of resources required for survival? Multiple requests from the same applicant facilitates an assessment of changes in circumstances across time.

## **2 INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN GENDER, AGE AND CLASS**

What can the records reveal about gender or other roles within the family or community more generally? Letters were often written by widows, which renders them even more valuable considering this is the social group most silent in historical records. What can this rich evidence reveal about widowhood, motherhood, women's social networks, or kinship roles? Other women and men were deserted by or separated from spouses, offering insights into diverse relationships and different needs of the province's poor.

## **3 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE POOR AND THE PROSPEROUS**

Where records indicate whether applications for assistance were successful these allow us to determine the social groups who were most successful, and what this indicates about those who proffered assistance. What do descriptions of petitioners' appearance and behaviour reveal about attitudes of those controlling purse strings? Since most of these requests were received by men, this adds another gender facet to the study. Cashbooks, annual reports, and records of donations facilitate a consideration of how the wider community responded to local poor.

In addition to the placement at PRONI, a 6-week internship has been organized and agreed in principle, with the Tenement Museum in New York, providing experience in representing the stories of the marginalized to a public audience. The student will bring these skills to the curation of an exhibition in PRONI on the rich records held there. This will be showcased at a conference on poverty and voices of the poor. The PhD, further publications, and the PRONI resource guide on the archives will allow for a greater understanding of life in nineteenth and twentieth-century Ulster and a new understanding of political and religious tensions. Most importantly it will allow the voices of Ulster's marginalized to be heard, the lived experiences of those experiencing hardship made vivid.

## **SUPERVISION AND EXTERNAL ADVISORS**

First Supervisor:	Dr Leanne McCormick	School/Department:	Ulster University, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences of, School of Arts & Humanities
Second Supervisor:	Ms Jayne Hutchinson	School/Department:	Public Record Office Northern Ireland
Additional Advisor:	Dr Elaine Farrell	Organisation/ Institution:	History, School of History Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics, Queen's University Belfast

## RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

The student will be in the fortunate position to benefit from three research environments. The student will be part of the Ulster University Doctoral College which provides a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme and will have a bespoke training plan created which for this project will provide specialist training in terms of writing for public audiences. The student would be integrated into the History unit where a number of staff work in relevant areas of Irish history, and the student will be encouraged to engage with their active cohort of PhD researchers as well as the wider History Unit. Students are encouraged to attend and present at the History Research Seminars and are supported to organize their own events and activities. As part of the School of Arts and Humanities the student will be able to attend specialist classes on exhibition design and curation with Professor Elizabeth Crooke as part of the Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies MA and receive guidance on their exhibition design.

PRONI is actively involved in hosting and organising a range of research-based conference and events each year and hosts and supports researchers, both local and international, as they explore the archives held in Belfast. The student will be able to access these events and to engage with the researchers spending time in PRONI. This will enable the student to develop new networks and relationships. The student will be able to avail of the wide expertise of PRONI staff and will be able to gain an in depth understanding of the archival process as well as working on the archives as a researcher.

History at Queen's has an active cluster on British and Irish social history, gender history and public history. The student will be integrated into this research environment through History's weekly research seminars and regular conferences and events.

Both academic supervisors are members of the Committee of Ulster Historical Studies and Editorial Board Members of Ireland's major academic journal Irish Historical Studies. Dr Farrell is an Editorial Board Member of Ulster Historical Foundation and Dr McCormick a Stakeholder and member of the PRONI User Forum. Both are ideally placed to encourage the student to engage and become involved in a range of local organizations, networks and related activities.

## APPLICATION

Applicants wishing to apply for an approved CDA studentship must also complete the relevant University's online postgraduate application form and submit it by 16:00 on Monday 13th January 2020.

All applicants must include the code **NBC20** on their application form so that it can be identified. Applicants to:

- Durham University should select "Yes" under 'Have you applied or are going to apply for a scholarship?' This will generate a drop down menu: please select "PGR-Northern Bridge" from that menu.
- Newcastle University should quote NBC20 under 'Studentship/Partnership Reference' and 'Who is your sponsor/funding body?'
- Northumbria University should quote NBC20 under the 'Project/Studentship Reference Number' field.
- Queen's University Belfast should tick 'I will apply separately to an external body' then enter NBC20 under 'To which body do you intend to apply?'
- University of Sunderland must state the supervisor, and should state NBC20 in Section 6 'Who is expected to pay your fees.'
- Teesside University applicants should answer the question 'Who will pay your fees' by selecting 'other' and then quoting 'NBC20.'
- Ulster University Should insert NBC20 in response to the question 'If you will be self-funded or are in receipt of a private scholarship then please provide further information here' on the Funding Details section of the online application.'

(Please note: Independent of the NBCDTP Studentship Competition process, applicants must submit supporting documentation required by the partner institutions' Postgraduate Admissions Services.

This is necessary to secure an offer of a place on the doctoral programme at the applicant's chosen institution, and must be in line with the institution's own admissions policies.)

### **REFEREES**

Applicants are solely responsible for contacting their referees at the earliest opportunity using the email template supplied in the Northern Bridge CDA guidance. It is generally recommended that referees are advised to send references direct to the appropriate Postgraduate Admissions Service no later than Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020.