



Two PhD Scholarship Opportunities in Farm Safety, Health & Wellbeing

“Building capacity for farm safety communication while understanding behavioural and cultural drivers for farmyard safety practices at farm level”

Supervisors: Dr Sinéad Flannery (University College Dublin) and Dr David Meredith (Teagasc)

Duration: 4 years

Funding Information: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Value of Scholarship per Annum: Stipend of €25,000p.a. plus €6000p.a. towards fees

Closing Date: Wednesday, 27th May 2026

Commencement Date: September

Location: School of Agriculture & Food Science, University College Dublin

Project Description

Safer by Design is a four-year, DAFM-funded multidisciplinary project (2025-2029) led by Teagasc in partnership with University College Dublin and Animal Health Ireland. The project moves beyond the production of safety guidelines toward farmer-centred, solution-oriented communication that supports collaborative behaviour change at farm level with a specific focus on the farm yard. This is particularly important given that 69% of all workplace injuries in Irish agriculture occur in farmyards and associated buildings. The project adapts Animal Health Ireland's Conversations for Change (C4C) framework, an evidence-based, Motivational Interviewing-informed approach, for use by farm advisors leading group discussions on farmyard safety and infrastructure. Understanding the behavioural, professional and cultural determinants for shaping both advisor communication and farmer decision making is essential to this adaptation. We are seeking two motivated PhD candidates to join the wider research team, each taking responsibility for one side of the advisor-farmer interaction.

PhD A: Understanding Advisors

While extensive research has identified farm safety risks and technical solutions, far less is known about how agricultural advisors navigate safety conversations with farmers, or about the professional and organisational factors shaping this communication. This PhD offers the opportunity to: (i) conduct a systematic scoping review of advisor-mediated behavioural change interventions in agriculture; (ii) quantitatively profile Teagasc advisors capability, opportunity, motivation, and stage of change in relation to communication, using validated COM-B and Transtheoretical Model instruments; (iii) qualitatively explore how professional norms, organisational culture, and advisor identity shape safety communication behaviours; and, (iv) contribute to the design, delivery, and evaluation of a Motivational Interviewing-based training programme for advisors.

PhD B: Understanding Farmers

Farmyard design, infrastructure, and equipment choices are a distinct and under-researched driver of farm injury risk, shaped by a mix of behavioural, economic, and cultural factors. This PhD aims to improve understanding of how farmers' capability, opportunity, and motivation influence adoption of farmyard safety practices and infrastructure investment decisions. Specifically, the PhD will: (i) systematically review the international literature to identify risk factors for farmyard-related injuries and assess whether these have changed over time (2000-2025); (ii) quantitatively profile Irish farmers' COM-B determinants and stage of change in relation to farmyard safety practices and infrastructure improvement; (iii) qualitatively explore how farming culture, identity, autonomy, and social norms shape engagement with safety-related investment and communication; and (iv) contribute to the development of behaviourally informed advisor-led group interventions and to make recommendations for health and safety policy.

Both PhD studentships will be a collaborative and interdisciplinary journey working alongside agricultural advisors, farmers, specialists, industry experts, policy stakeholders, etc. Both projects offer exciting opportunities to be involved in multi-actor participation in real life settings.



Requirements

Applicants must have a good primary degree (First or Upper Second Class Honours) or M.Sc. in a relevant discipline i.e. agricultural science, agricultural extension, behavioural science, psychology, sociology, geography, occupational therapy, or related human factor engineering qualification. The successful candidate should be highly self-motivated and prepared for field work, data analysis, reporting and publication of findings at (inter)national conferences and industry meetings. Fluent English language skills and a full EU driving license are essential. Please see [here](#) for English language requirements.

Further Information

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Application Procedure

Applicants should complete the [online application form](#) by **5.00pm on Wednesday, 27th May 2026**. Applications must include a curriculum vitae and a short statement of motivation, submitted as part of the online application.