



Candidate Information

Position: FORESIGHTERS MSCA COFUND Future Cities
Research Theme Early Stage Researcher (ESR)

Theme: Future Cities

Theme Leader: Prof Geraint Ellis

Closing Date: 29th June 2026

Salary:	Basic Salary without pension contribution	£37,734
	Basic Salary with pension contribution (= Basic Salary with a 21% deduction)	£31,185
	Family allowance (if eligible)	£6,600

JOB PURPOSE:

As an **Early Stage Researcher (ESR)** you will play an active role within a collaborative interdisciplinary cohort of researchers to undertake a high impact doctoral research project addressing a significant social, environmental, cultural, or economic issue. This position is part of the **FORESIGHTERS** project (Future ORiEnted Skills, Innovation for Governance for Health, Technology, Energy, Cities and Creativity), which will deliver a programme of world-class advanced training designed to develop essential skills such as futures literacy, foresight, systems thinking, citizen engagement, and other transferable capabilities. The ESR will be awarded a 42-month contract, funded through the prestigious **Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions (MSCA) COFUND programme**, with match funding provided by a **Northern Ireland Department for the Economy studentship**.

ESRs are expected to deliver high-quality, cutting-edge research, impact and engagement with a range of relevant stakeholders, within the field of Futures research. You will be supported by an interdisciplinary supervisory team, undertake advanced training and collaborate with intersectoral, non-academic partners who will help shape the direction of the research and provide opportunities for secondments relevant to the research. You will work primarily under the theme of Future Cities (see additional information below), undertaking a dedicated research project. Successful appointees will be able to demonstrate skills and enthusiasm for working in interdisciplinary environments and be expected to engage with research undertaken across all the thematic areas in the DTP.

We welcome applicants from all backgrounds and particularly encourage applications from individuals who may be under-represented in academia, including but not limited to women, disabled people, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. We are committed to supporting applicants who may require reasonable adjustments during the selection and interview process, and throughout the duration of the role. The project team is committed to supporting a healthy work-life balance for all researchers.

MAJOR DUTIES:

1. Conduct research underpinned by interdisciplinarity within the Future Cities theme and as appropriate across multiple project themes.
2. Carry out the research and training activities specified by a Personal Career Development Plan (PCDP).
3. Actively participate in skills development and undertake mandatory training programmes as required by Supervisors, Theme Leaders and Project Coordinator. Submit training reports in fulfilment of the project requirements.
4. Undertake secondment and placements with non-academic partners, as appropriate to the research project. Submit secondment reports in fulfilment of the project requirements.
5. Study and engage with contemporary research literature in appropriate disciplines including academic journals and papers, books, textbooks, and other relevant sources to ensure doctoral research projects bring new thinking and state-of-the-art approaches to the research field.
6. Record, analyse and write up results of research work and contribute to the production of outputs, in a variety of formats, as appropriate.



7. Document, prepare, analyse and complete a final thesis in formats appropriate to the field.
8. Participate in outreach and dissemination activities promoting the FORESIGHTERS DTP and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) programme including the use of social media, blogs, video-diaries, newsletters, etc.
9. Prepare regular progress reports on the research undertaken, present research outcomes at meetings, project workshops, and to external audiences to disseminate and publicise research findings.
10. Carry out supervision/demonstrating/teaching duties under supervisor direction and according to university regulations.
11. Actively engaging in FORESIGHTERS ESR Committee, acting as an ESR representative and contributing to wider FORESIGHTERS activities.
12. Carry out routine administrative duties as requested, e.g. arranging research meetings, project training workshops and other events.

Planning and Organising:

1. Contribute to the PCDP development and provide regular updates of this plan.
2. Manage own time and meet agreed deadlines within the framework of the agreed research and training programme.
3. Contribute to the planning of collaborative research outputs and training activities.
4. Actively contribute to organisation of outreach activities events such as FORESIGHTERS workshops.

Resource Management Responsibilities:

1. Ensure research resources are used in an effective and efficient manner.
2. Plan and monitor individual research support funds.

Internal and External Relationships:

1. Liaise with research colleagues and support staff on routine matters.
2. Make internal and external contacts to develop knowledge and understanding and form relationships for future collaboration.
3. Attend and contribute to relevant meetings and training events.
4. Contribute to the project outreach programmes by establishing links with other researchers and stakeholders from public, private and third sectors.

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA:

1. Hold (or be about to be awarded) a degree equivalent to a UK 1st class or 2.1 Honours degree, from a UK or Republic of Ireland Higher Education Provider, or an equivalent qualification from outside the UK and the Republic of Ireland, acceptable to the University (see below in Additional Information).
2. Not yet have been awarded a doctorate level qualification.
3. Meet MSCA mobility requirements (i.e. must not have resided or carried out main education and/or employment activity in the UK for more than 12 months in the 36 months prior to the application closing date). This requirement is fundamental to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and will be applied equally to all applicants.
4. Ability to demonstrate competence in written and spoken English, in accordance with the University's [English Language Requirements](#).
5. Be eligible and qualified for enrolment in the PhD programme at QUB.
6. Sufficient breadth or depth of specialist knowledge in available techniques for investigation of proposed research topic within a Futures framework and in an interdisciplinary context.
7. Relevant experience with research methods and techniques appropriate to the proposed project.
8. Demonstrable evidence of analytical and problem-solving abilities relevant to research.
9. Ability to communicate complex information clearly.
10. Demonstrable ability to work collaboratively and interact professionally with colleagues, supervisors, and partners in delivery of network development and outreach, knowledge exchange and demonstration activities.
11. Willing and able to undertake secondments (potentially outside Northern Ireland), travel to conferences and partner sites and participate fully in all scheduled training.



12. Flexibility to occasionally adjust working hours when required, in line with university policy, as required for the duties of the post.

DESIRABLE CRITERIA:

1. Master's Qualification in a relevant subject, or professional practice equivalency.
2. Specialisation in Future Cities or related field relevant to the proposed area of research.
3. Professional working experience (including employments and placements) in sectors and work (private, public and third sectors or in academia) relevant to Health or related field.
4. Demonstratable ability to organise workload, manage time, and meet deadlines.
5. Practical experience of Futures research and techniques, including futures literacy, foresight, systems thinking, citizen engagement, and innovation management.
6. Demonstrable experience of website maintenance, use of social media tools and/or other forms of communication.

Queen's University Belfast and the Foresighters programme are committed to providing an inclusive research environment. We value diversity and strive to ensure equal opportunities for all applicants and staff, regardless of age, disability, gender identity, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or parental status, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

In the **CV** section of the Online application please upload the following **combined into a single file**:

- A 2-page (maximum) **curriculum vitae** that includes the following information with details and dates where appropriate: Academic qualifications (or equivalencies in practice experience), universities attended, degree(s) awarded, details of courses taken and grades attained, professional qualifications; employment, research & voluntary experience, publications (if any)
- A 2-page (maximum) **Supporting Statement** explaining how you meet the essential and desirable criteria for the position, and your motivation to undertake doctoral research within the FORESIGHTERS programme
- A short (maximum 1 page) **outline of a Research Proposal** describing your research interests within the FORESIGHTERS Research Theme to which you are applying. Where there are potential interdisciplinary links to other Research Themes, these should be highlighted.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

Four ESRs will be recruited directly into each the five of the **Foresighters** themes of **Health, Technology, Energy, Future Cities, and Creativity** (see descriptions below). On appointment each ESR will have an agreed research project that is predominantly located within one of these themes but may also have strong relevance to others. Indeed, **Foresighters** aims to have a strong interdisciplinary environment, and it is expected that each ESR is likely to work across one of more of these themed, collaborate with ESRs from across the whole cohort. All ESRs will have a clear focus on engaging Futures research on important societal challenges.

The Future Cities Theme seeks to ensure urban areas can adequately address future economic, environmental, health, infrastructural and political challenges. Projects will use a futures framework to explore new approaches to urban management, enhancement of decision-making, intersectoral collaboration and generating aspirational visions of urban futures. Projects engage with how foresight and futures research can help anticipate risks to urban well-being, including new approaches to climate adaptation, health and income inequalities, infrastructure development and democratic processes.

The Energy Theme will explore how futures-thinking can help support the low carbon transition, reframe society's relationship with energy and catalyse technological, social and economic transformation. Projects under this theme will aim to overcome long-term barriers to net zero and the development of a truly sustainable energy system. Projects will advance futures thinking by exploring innovation in socio-technical systems and governance to enhance the effectiveness and fairness of energy transition. Projects will enhance our capacity for anticipating future opportunities and risks in sustainable energy systems, both on land and in marine environments.



The Technology Theme will explore how societies can harness technological advances responsibly and proactively, strengthening their capacity for futures-thinking and fostering adaptive, inclusive and long-term innovation strategies. Projects under this theme will emphasise the crucial role of technology as a cross-cutting enabler that supports innovation across interconnected areas, addressing emerging risks and enhancing systemic resilience, ultimately contributing to sustainable and equitable social outcomes.

The **Health Theme** will explore how futures-thinking can be embedded in interdisciplinary approaches to anticipating and managing health challenges including ageing populations, persistent inequities, mounting pressure on services. Projects under this theme will aim to anticipate and design resilient structures and practices that prepare health systems and communities for a healthier future. Projects will advance futures thinking through interdisciplinary methods such as enhanced data modelling, forecasting and scenarios, and development and evaluation of technological and social innovations, with the goal of generating actionable insights for a healthier future.

The Creativity Theme is based on the idea that future is imagined before it can be realised. It will explore how creativity can be further embedded in interdisciplinary approaches to managing key future challenges; what potential they have for solution-finding and how they can reveal new modes of sustainable creative practice. Under this theme, projects may include a range of artforms and/or new creative technologies working across other disciplines or with non-creative sector partners. They may seek to deploy creative methods, undertake practice use arts, humanities or social sciences approaches to engage across disciplines and sectors in creative thinking.

Degree Equivalence

If you have any queries on whether your existing degree will be recognised as meeting the first Essential Criteria (above), you should contact the FORESIGHTERS Programme on the email below. For those applicants that are awaiting a degree award, it is expected that they will be able to provide evidence that it will be awarded by 1st September 2026, and any offer of employment will be conditional on this. The aim of this criterion is to ensure that only students who appear likely to successfully complete a research programme of study will be admitted.

For further information, please contact: foresighters@qub.ac.uk