

## Irish Research Council

### Call for Nominations for the Irish Research Council-European Space Agency Traineeship Scheme 2018

#### Introduction

The mission of the Council is to enable and sustain a vibrant and creative research community in Ireland. The Council is an associated agency of the Department of Education and Skills and operates under the aegis of the Higher Education Authority. The core function of the Council is to support excellent research and opportunities across all disciplines and career stages. It places a focus on early-stage career researchers and promotes diverse career opportunities by partnering with enterprise. The Council also has a role in supporting research with a societal focus and has established partnerships across government and civic society.

The Irish Government has agreed to actively participate in the international research programmes of the European Space Agency (ESA), as set out in *Innovation2020*, Ireland's strategy for research and development, science, and technology. The Council is committed to cultivating skills and expertise in space exploration and technologies, as well as developing the training of master's graduates<sup>1</sup> in Ireland. The Irish Research Council engaged with Enterprise Ireland, the national delegate for the Irish space industry, to establish training needs and strategic priorities for the country. These needs are reflected in the traineeship opportunities provided by the ESA.

In 2016, the Council officially agreed to fund trainees in ESA centres across Europe. The Council is promoting an opportunity for master's graduates to complete a traineeship at the ESA beginning October 2018.

#### The Traineeship

The Irish Research Council-European Space Agency Traineeship provides practical training in ESA projects. Individual opportunities are outlined in the accompanying documents. The traineeship integrates participants with career professionals emphasising tutor-directed, degree-related, real-world task completion.

The successful candidates for the traineeship will spend one year at the ESA with a possible extension of a further year. During this time, the trainee will be assigned to specific projects and will contribute to the development of leading-edge research and knowledge in the areas of science operations, data analytics, artificial intelligence, telecommunications, navigation, mission operations and human

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<sup>1</sup> Master's graduates of Republic of Ireland Higher Education Institutions. Graduates must be of Irish or ESA member state nationality. A master's graduate should hold a master's degree or equivalent as specified in the Irish National Framework of Qualifications Level 9 award. See <http://www.nfq-gqi.com/> for more details.

spaceflight. The traineeship is particularly relevant to master's graduates who are interested in developing a career in the space industry or applied technologies.

### **Stipend and conditions**

The duration of the traineeship is one year with the possibility to extend for a second year if agreed by all parties. Successful trainees must be available to commence on the indicative date in October 2018 as provided by the ESA. Deferral of the commencement of the traineeship is not permitted. The training period cannot be interrupted unless special circumstances occur, such as medical leave. In such special cases, the interruption period will be duly justified and authorised by the Council and the ESA.

The Irish Research Council-European Space Agency Traineeship will consist of the following:

- i. a monthly stipend of €2,160;
- ii. a one-off relocation reimbursement of €2,160, payable after the first month;
- iii. annual health, accident, risk and travel insurance that covers the trainee for the duration of their traineeship;
- iv. trainees may take annual leave up to a total of 30 working days, in addition to the official holidays of the host country;

### **Eligibility criteria**

This call invites research offices from higher education institutions (HEIs) to nominate talented master's graduates who would be interested in and would benefit from completing a traineeship in ESA. Nominations must be via institutional nomination only. Nominating HEIs include universities and institutes of technology.

The call is competitive and final decisions on granting the traineeship rests entirely with ESA. Nominees must pass a staged selection procedure consisting of a national process, followed by ESA's own assessment. The Irish Research Council runs the Irish national process.

Nominees must:

- i. have Irish or ESA member State nationality<sup>2</sup>;
- ii. be resident in the Republic of Ireland for three of the past five years;
- iii. have completed a master's degree no later than September 30, 2018 in an eligible Irish HEI;
- iv. meet the master's degree specifications in the individual opportunities;
- v. have a minimum of 2.1 or above in their undergraduate studies.

The selection is competitive and the final decision on granting the traineeship is made by the ESA.

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<sup>2</sup> This is a condition set down by the ESA under the partnership agreement.

## How to submit nominations

Research Offices wishing to nominate should collate the prescribed documentation, listed below and send the documents to [esa@research.ie](mailto:esa@research.ie) in one PDF document per nominee. Nominees may apply for up to two positions and indicate their preference in their cover letter.

In order for a nomination to be evaluated, the following documents are required to be emailed in PDF format to [esa@research.ie](mailto:esa@research.ie):

1. Cover letter (one-page limit).
2. CV (two-page limit).
3. A scanned copy of the nominee's undergraduate and master's degree transcripts to date.
4. One written reference from a person who has sufficient knowledge of the applicant's academic and professional capabilities. Preferably: a staff member/teacher/academic from the nominee's higher education institution (one-page limit on institution letterhead).
5. One letter of recommendation from the HEI endorsed by the research office (written by the course coordinator, head of school or higher).

The closing date for receipt of completed nominations is **noon (Irish time) 30 May 2018**. Nominations received after this time will not be considered.

All nominees must meet the eligibility requirements and the relevant disciplinary criteria outlined in the ESA traineeship opportunity. Institutions should ensure to nominate only those individuals that have confirmed a genuine willingness to take up a traineeship should it be offered by ESA. The Council reserves the right to decline any nomination that does not meet the eligibility criteria or requirements for the scheme. Unsolicited information, ineligible, incomplete, misleading, or nominations in excess of the page limit will not be considered. This call is restricted to Irish HEI master's graduates described in the individual opportunities.

## Selection of nominees

Nominees must pass a staged selection procedure. Following HEI nomination, an independent panel will shortlist individuals for an interview. Nominees must be available for face-to-face interviews on **June 26, 2018**. It is not possible to be reimbursed for any travel in relation to the interviews. Shortlisted nominees will be sent forward by the Council for review by ESA nominated tutors, who make the final decision.

## Commencement of the traineeship

Offers will be conditional upon receipt of all required documentation, including evidence of nationality, completion of degree and residency. Trainees must also comply with the ESA agreement sent to them upon offer. Trainees are also expected to have; or have applied for a European Health Insurance Card and international health insurance cover by the commencement of the traineeship.

## **Queries**

For reasons of fairness to all nominees, queries must be submitted to the research office at the nominee's HEI. Frequently asked questions will be regularly updated on the Irish Research Council website. Nominees are asked not to contact the Irish Research Council directly unless there is a technical issue with the nomination form.

## **ESA Stations Acronyms**

ESA HQ - Paris, France

ESTEC - Noordwijk, The Netherlands

ESOC - Darmstadt, Germany

ESRIN - Frascati, Italy

ESAC - Villanueva de la Cañada, Spain

ECSAT - Harwell, United Kingdom

EAC - Cologne, Germany

## **ESA Member States**

ESA's 22 Member States: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

## **APPENDIX I ADVICE IN PREPARING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Cover letter**

Nominees should provide a statement of motivation outlining why they wish to go forward for this opportunity and how it fits into their developmental plans. They might wish to outline any specific accomplishments in scientific, professional work or community service. In the cover letter, please include:

- The first and second (if relevant) traineeship preference;
- Reference to the relevant master's degree, overall result and completion date. If the result is not known at the time of nomination, please enter the overall grade to date, which needs to correspond with the attached transcripts.

### **Letters of nomination and references**

Please bear in mind that the letter of recommendation is an important factor in the evaluation process and that it does influence the results. The HEI letter of nomination may be written by the course coordinator, head of school or higher. Please ensure this letter is endorsed with the research office stamp. Letters should be A4 page/one standard letter size and may describe:

- point out any specific accomplishments of the candidate in scientific, professional work or community service;
- provide observations on the characteristics and achievements of the nominee and comment on their suitability for a traineeship with the ESA.
- referees/nominating institutions might wish to consider academic fit, experience to date, cultural sensitivity and adaptability to a new country.