



**2020 Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellowship Scheme:**

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**Final Version (20.11.19)**

**FAQ Deadline – 4pm (GMT) 20 November 2019**

Please note that the deadline for receipt of FAQs is **16:00 (GMT) Wednesday 13 November 2019**. FAQs must be submitted no later than this date. All enquiries should be submitted to the research office of the proposed Higher Education Institution/Research Performing Organisation. The Irish Research Council does not accept enquiries directly from applicants/mentors.

Similar questions have been grouped below in the following themes:

1. Eligibility;
2. Application Form;
3. Applying to the Scheme.

**1. ELIGIBILITY**

**An applicant is interested in applying for the 1-year GOI post doc scheme. This person meets eligibility requirements in terms of PhD graduation etc. This person is currently employed with the University on a short-term contract basis in a part time teaching role. If successful, the applicant will have completed this role in advance of taking up any award. Would this have any bearing on the individuals' eligibility for this scheme?**

No, this will not have any bearing on their eligibility for the scheme. Applicants employed on a short-term contract basis are eligible to apply as long as the contract has come to an end prior to the commencement of the Fellowship (should the application be successful).

**An applicant graduated before June 2015, but took an eligible career break, which will make up for the time difference. Should the applicant say in the eligibility quiz that their graduation date has been within the five-year period before 2020, even though this is not the case?**

Yes, in this instance, the applicant should say in the eligibility quiz that their graduation date has been within the five-year period before 2020

**Is a potential applicant who was previously awarded a CAROLINE fellowship permitted to apply for a GOI Postdoctoral Fellowship?**

Yes, the applicant can apply for a GOI postdoc fellowship.



**An applicant who got through to round 2 of last year's postdoc call wishes to re-apply to the scheme. However, his PhD graduation date is 25<sup>th</sup> May 2015. Is he ineligible because this date is over the 5-year cut off period, or is there flexibility around this?**

The applicant is ineligible to apply to this year's call.

**Who is eligible to apply to the new Department of Rural and Community Development 2-Year Fellowship?**

Applicants to this fellowship should have a PhD in social enterprise, economics, sociology or geography. In exceptional cases other disciplines may be considered. Separate to that, all applicants to this fellowship are subject to the same eligibility criteria as outlined in the 2020 Terms and Conditions and the Guide for Applicants.

**I applied last year for the fellowship, but my application was deemed ineligible. Am I required to complete the section "Description of modifications made to this proposal if the proposal has been previously submitted, but was unsuccessful under an Irish Research Council scheme"?**

No. If the application was not evaluated then it is not counted as an unsuccessful application.

**If an applicant applies and then decides to withdraw from the competition, does he/she lose out on another opportunity to apply for the Grant?**

As outlined in the terms and conditions, applicants may only re-apply to each scheme on one subsequent occasion. If an application undergoes evaluation, then that application counts as one of the two opportunities an applicant has to apply to an individual Irish Research Council scheme.

**I have just submitted my PhD Thesis, and I am waiting for my Viva, can I still apply to the scheme, or do I have to wait?**

Applicants to the scheme who have not been awarded a doctoral degree will "have been certified as having fulfilled within the five-year period before the 31 May 2020 all the requirements for the award of a doctoral degree, including the submission of the hardbound corrected thesis, but have not yet graduated."

If the applicant expects that they will meet this criterion, they can apply under this call. However, should they fail to meet the scheme requirements, they will be deemed ineligible. Documentary evidence confirming that applicants have met all requirements for the award of their doctoral degree by 31 May 2020 will be required from applicants whose application will be recommended for funding. No



documentary evidence pertaining to academic qualifications should be uploaded to the online system as a part of the fellowship application.

**Is it correct that the maximum extension to the five-year period for documented career breaks is five years? Are provisions made for having worked part time?**

Eligible career breaks of up to 5 years are taken into account when applying. Part-time work is not considered an eligible career break.

**By how much time does one period of maternity leave extend the eligibility window? Is it by 18 months, or by the time actually taken as per the documentary evidence such as a letter from HR?**

The eligibility window for maternity leave is based on the time actually taken as stated in the documentary evidence provided, such as a letter from HR.

**According the Call Guide, the graduation date for an applicant doctoral degree must fall within the 5-year period before 31 May 2020. However, an extension to this 5-year period can be considered on provision of documentary evidence of an eligible career break. During maternity leave, a person will often build up their 'holiday leave', and take it at the end of the maternity leave period. Will the IRC consider this period of holiday leave to be part of the person's overall 'maternity leave' period?**

Yes, the Council will consider this period of holiday leave to be part of the person's overall maternity leave period.

**Can you please clarify as to which periods of leave will be considered by the IRC to be an eligible career break?**

We consider all the following leave as eligible towards a career break as long as it has been certified.

- Carer's leave
- Paid maternity leave
- Paid paternity leave
- Adoptive leave
- Parental leave
- Holiday leave accrued as part of maternity or paternity leave.
- Prolonged sick leave.

**A prospective postdoc applicant graduated with her PhD in Dec 2013. She had 3 children before this date and one child after her PhD graduation. Do all periods of maternity leave count to extend the eligibility window to apply**



**for the GOI postdoc call (as they do when calculating ERC eligibility), or just those periods of leave taken after PhD graduation?**

Only career breaks that occurred in the period May 31 2015 and May 31 2020 would be considered. In this case, the three pregnancies before 2012 would not count as an eligible break. If the most recent pregnancy occurred within the 5-year period May 31 2015 and May 31 2020, it would count as a maternity break. Documentary evidence of this would have to be provided.

**In relation to the documentary evidence required for requesting an extension to the five-year period, what type of documentary evidence do you require for carer's leave? An applicant who has contacted us was a primary care giver to their father for 2 blocks of time (a 7-month duration and 18 month duration) between September 2015 and October 2018. The applicant graduated with their PhD in June 2014.**

To be considered eligible for 'carer's leave', the applicant would have to have been in receipt of the 'carer's allowance' or their country's equivalent. Documentary evidence from, for example, the Department of Social Protection, indicating this for the time period outlined above, would be required.

**Does time as a full-time carer for one's own children count as 'carer's leave' for the purposes of extending the eligibility window if the applicant has documentation to show they have been claiming home carers credit since then?**

No, this would not count towards an eligible career break. To be eligible for 'carer's leave', the applicant would have to have been in receipt of the 'carer's allowance' i.e. an allowance provided by the Department of Social Protection to someone caring for a person with a significant disability or illness.

**An applicant was wondering if their application from last year, which was deemed ineligible because it was missing one of the references, counts as one of their attempts at postdoctoral funding from the IRC.**

Ineligible applications do not count towards the two applications limit.

**Is a postdoc hired to work in a 'work package' on a Laureate Award eligible to apply to the scheme?**

Yes, provided they meet all other eligibility criteria.



**If I have two unsuccessful IRC grant applications (to the CAROLINE and GOI Postdoc Fellowship calls) am I restricted from applying for IRC Principal-Investigator level funding opportunities in the future?**

No. The maximum number of attempts to secure funding applies under each funding programme separately.

## **2. APPLICATION FORM**

**With regard to the extension of the 5-year eligibility period in the case of Maternity Leave or Carer's Leave - do you upload the documentary evidence to the online system as part of the application?**

No. Applicants do not upload evidence of an eligible career break (e.g. Maternity Leave or Carer's Leave) or any other documentary evidence as part of the application.

If successful, applicants will be required to provide this and any other documentation at the award offer stage. In cases where an applicant is unable to provide the necessary documentation at award offer stage or if discrepancies between information included in the application form and in the documentary, evidence exist, the award offer might be withdrawn.

**\*\*NEW\*\* As applicant has been a resident in Italy since 2009, but holds Iranian citizenship. Can they be considered an "ordinary resident"?**

The applicant would be considered a non-EU applicant.

**\*\*NEW\*\* An applicant submitted an application last year, but it was deemed ineligible due to an external referee missing the deadline to submit the referee form.**

- 1.) Can the applicant submit the same research idea this year, or must the proposed research differ somewhat?**
- 2.) Should the applicant answer yes or no to the following question where the application was deemed "ineligible", not "unsuccessful"?  
*Have you previously submitted all or part of this proposal to an Irish Research Council scheme and been unsuccessful?***

- 1.) Yes, the applicant can submit the same research idea.**
- 2.) Because the application was deemed ineligible and not 'unsuccessful', means the applicant should answer 'no' to the question above.**

**\*\*NEW\*\* I have an MSc (level 9) and a PGD which is also a Postgraduate Diploma level 9 course. Is it acceptable to put the PGD in as a second MSc?**



Applicants should include additional qualifications like a postgraduate diploma to the 'other education' section of the application form.

**Is gender blinding required in the project proposal?**

Although assessors will not receive the name/gender details on the applications when doing their assessments, applicants should nonetheless, avoid revealing their gender throughout their application i.e. using he/she pronouns etc. Applicants should also advise their mentors and referees to avoid revealing your gender in their submissions.

**Is it against IRC guidelines to include the score of your previous application in the section "Description of modifications made to this proposal if the proposal has been previously submitted" - i.e., would it be construed as influencing the reviewers' opinion?**

Applicants can refer to the suggested changes advised by the reviewers in this section of the application form. Applicants should not refer to the quantitative scores.

**In 'Research Achievements' section of the application form, is there scope to allow applicants to list more than three research awards, or they limited to listing their top three?**

Applicants should list their top three research awards in this section. However, they may also refer to other research awards in other relevant sections of the application form.

**Can you confirm that applicants with peer-reviewed publications may also include other publications and research outputs?**

Yes, applicants with peer-reviewed publications may also include other publications and research outputs.

**Is there a particular type of referencing system (e.g. Harvard) that the Irish Research Council would like applicants to use?**

No. The Council does not have a preferred referencing system. It is at the discretion of the applicant which referencing system to use.

**My university does not work with a final grade or grade point average system and therefore this information will not be provided in my academic transcript. In this case, what should I write in that particular field under the Academics Qualifications section?**



**An applicant obtained their masters at a Swedish institution, where each module is graded from F-A individually. They don't you give an average grade - it is either pass or fail. What should they include in their application form in this case?**

Information included in the application form must be consistent with that included in the relevant documentary evidence. If a degree is awarded on a "Pass/Fail" basis, then the applicant should write either "Pass" or "Fail".

**Is there any stipulation with respect to an applicant proposing to remain in their PhD awarding institution i.e. if an applicant successfully undertook their PhD in TU Dublin, can they propose to undertake their postdoctoral fellowship in TU Dublin of the institute and mentor are suitably justified?**

The research mobility criteria included in previous iterations of the scheme, has now been removed. This means that applicants no longer have to move institution following their PhD to carry out their fellowship, and no longer have to justify this decision in their application.

**We have had an expression of interest in relation to the postdoc call from a researcher who holds 2 PhDs. The first was awarded in 2009, the second in 2018. Do you know if this would render him ineligible? His application would relate to the second PhD?**

The applicant would be eligible to apply on the basis of his second PhD

**If an applicant plans to submit samples of their thesis with their application but their thesis is not written in English, are they required to provide an English translation?**

Yes, the applicant should provide an English translation.

**Could I include a secondment organisation in my application, with an advisor from it? If so, can I choose any secondment organisation?**

Yes, you can include a secondment organisation of your choice in your application. This should be outlined and justified in the 'proposed research' section of the application.

**In the context of Brexit, should British applicants declare themselves as EU or not EU residents on the application? Or, should each applicant put whichever status is applicable to them on the given the day they submit their application?**



Applicants should put the status that is applicable to them at the time they are submitting their application.

**I would like to develop my thesis into a book but I would prefer to extend it at the same time with new research. Can I apply for 2 years funding to do this?**

No, the applicant can either apply for a 1-year fellowship to prepare their thesis for publication or they can apply for a 2-year fellowship to do further research.

**Does the extension of a PhD thesis project to include, for instance, another corpus of texts that would be treated in additional chapters, qualify as a research project that demonstrates a significant development of the subject of the doctorate through a variety of appropriate, feasible and clear published outputs?**

The applicant must decide for themselves whether this is a significant development of subject of their doctorate and justify this argument in their application.

**Can I upload a letter of support from an important project partner with my postdoc fellowship application?**

No. Each application must receive two references, no more and no fewer. Applicants are not allowed to upload further references/letters of support, doing so will render the application ineligible.

### **3. APPLYING TO THE SCHEME**

#### **a. How do I apply to this scheme?**

All applicants to the Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellowship scheme must submit their application using our online application system. Hardcopies or emailed application forms will not be accepted.

**Does the eligibility quiz for this year's applicants require the inclusion of an abstract? Does this mean that the abstract on the GOI Postdoc form itself can differ from the abstract for the eligibility quiz?**

**Will the applicants be able to update/improve the abstract when they are submitting the actual application form? Or, on the actual application, are they obliged to submit the exact same abstract (word-for-word) that they entered on their eligibility quiz?**





Yes, you must submit an abstract as part of the eligibility quiz, which you will not be able to edit afterwards. However, this will not affect your actual application as you will be required to submit everything for your project as part of your application.

Although the Abstract field must be completed as part of the Application as well as part of the Eligibility Quiz, the Council kindly asks applicants for this information not to differ. Slight changes will be accepted, but major differences between Eligibility Quiz Abstract and Application form Abstract may compromise the assessment process of your application.

**\*\*NEW\*\* An applicant has not graduated yet but expects to have the hardbound corrected thesis submitted to the University by 31 May 2020. If their application is assessed by the reviewers and the outcome is successful but the applicant nevertheless fails to meet the criterion of having fulfilled all the requirements for the award of the doctoral degree by 31 May, what will the status of their application be – unsuccessful or ineligible? If the application is deemed ineligible, does this count towards one of their two chances to apply to the scheme or does the applicant still have two more chances to apply?**

In this instance because the application would have been fully assessed, the application would be considered 'unsuccessful' and this would count towards the applicant's two chances to apply to the scheme. The Council would advise applicants to apply only if it is realistic to expect that they will have submitted their hardbound thesis by the required date.

**An applicant put the name of their Academic Mentor into their eligibility quiz and saved. However, the Mentor's name is spelled differently in the Mentor drop-down menu of the actual application. Will the IRC reject this application because the Mentor's names slightly differ on the eligibility quiz and the main application?**

The Academic Mentor's name **must be exactly** as the Academic Mentor's name registered in the online system. Please contact your Academic Mentor to confirm this information prior to completing the Eligibility Quiz.

**I am interested in the possibility of publishing journal articles from my PhD thesis - is such an activity commonly funded by the fellowships? I would also however like to develop a proposal and conduct some research to support the development of a larger project in a related area to the thesis that I would then look to apply for funding for. Is it possible to join two such activities in a single application?**

Applicants can apply for three different types of award:



- A one-year fellowship, in order to prepare a doctoral dissertation for publication through a variety of high-quality published outputs: e.g. monographs, peer-reviewed articles, contributions to edited volumes;

Or

- A two-year fellowship, in order to develop either a new research project or a research project that demonstrates a significant development of the subject of the doctorate through a variety of appropriate, feasible and clear published outputs.

Or

- A *Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD)* two-year fellowship aimed at developing a rigorous impact-measurement methodology for the spectrum of social enterprise in Ireland in light of the new *National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022*, and international best practice.

Applicants must determine which is most appropriate for their project.

#### **b. What publications and supporting documentation should be included?**

**In the section that asks as to whether we have made any contact with book publishers, I wish to state that I have. I recently received a mail from the editor of Pittsburgh University Press stating that he thinks my project looks interesting and that as such he is going to carry out a detailed evaluation of my proposal. I was hoping to include a copy of his mail to demonstrate to the reviewers of my application that a leading university press editor has demonstrated an interest in my project, but not yet offered a contract. Could I include a pdf copy of the email I received from him?**

No you cannot include a copy of the email you have received from the publishers. However, you can refer to the email correspondence in the relevant section of your application form.

**On page 17 the application asks if you “have you previously submitted all or part of this proposal to an Irish Research scheme and been unsuccessful” – I have not applied to the postdoctoral fellowship before, but I applied for the IRC doctoral fellowship with my PhD proposal. Would this qualify as having submitted part of the proposal to an IRC scheme previously, and if so will I have to outline the modifications to this proposal.? Or is this question referencing past *postdoc* applications?**



The question is referencing past postdoctoral applications.

**On page 22/23 it asks to give “details of significant peer-reviewed publications”, and asks for the journal name etc. I do not have a journal article published yet, but I have published a book chapter in a peer-review book; can I cite this instead of providing a sample of my work, or would it be better to provide a chapter of my thesis?**

Yes you can include the book chapter as a significant peer-reviewed publication. In cases where you have a significant peer-reviewed publication, do not include a sample of your written work e.g. thesis chapter. Doing so will make your application ineligible.

**For ‘Publications and Other Research Outputs’, how many peer-reviewed articles are sufficient? If an applicant only has two, should they also submit samples of her written work?**

As per the Terms and Conditions 2020, an applicant must have authored or co-authored **at least one** published peer-reviewed research publication; or demonstrable equivalent intellectual property output; or provided samples of their written research work.

If an applicant has at least one peer-reviewed research publication or demonstrable equivalent intellectual property output, **they should not** submit other samples of their work e.g. thesis chapter. Doing so will make their application ineligible.

**Is it possible for an applicant to the two-year fellowship to plan to turn their PhD into a published manuscript and also to publish research from the elaborated research concept?**

No, applicants to our scheme can either apply for three different types of award:

- A one-year fellowship, in order to prepare a doctoral dissertation for publication through a variety of high-quality published outputs: e.g. monographs, peer-reviewed articles, edited volumes;

Or

- A two-year fellowship, in order to develop either a new research project or a research project that demonstrates a significant development of the subject of the doctorate through a variety of appropriate, feasible and clear published outputs.

Or

- A *Department of Rural and Community Development* (DRCD) two-year fellowship aimed at developing a rigorous impact-measurement methodology for the spectrum of social enterprise in Ireland in light of the



new *National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022*, and international best practice.

Applicants must determine which is most appropriate for their project.

**I have worked on a publication which went through peer-review, and I expect it to be published in January 2020. If I receive permission from the Journal, can I include the draft of the paper in my application?**

Yes, applicants can include a forthcoming publication, with permission from the Journal, as a sample of their written work. Applicants should not include a sample of their written work in their application if they have already authored or co-authored one published peer-reviewed research publication.

**In the 'Publications & Other Research Outputs' section of the application, it indicates that conference papers can be included. I have delivered a number of papers but the conference organisers have not added them to their websites which means they are not searchable. Can I still include them in this section?**

Yes, these conference papers can be included in the list of outputs.

### **c. Academic Mentors and Host Institutions**

**\*\*NEW\*\* Is it possible to change the name of the primary mentor (to another co-mentor listed in the application) after submitting the eligibility quiz.**

No, changes cannot be made to the name of the mentor once the eligibility quiz has been submitted.

**How can I obtain an academic mentor?**

It is the applicant's responsibility to locate a Host Organisation and an Academic Mentor before submitting their application to the online system. The Council does not provide advice in this regard.

Applicants must have the permission of their proposed Academic Mentor before adding this person as an Academic Mentor to their online application form. If you add an academic mentor to your application form without their prior consent your application will be made ineligible.

**I have a co-Mentor who is based in a different HEI where I will have access to some professional development training. Is it acceptable to include these training opportunities as part of my application?**

Yes, details of this training can be included in your application.



**The HEI of my primary mentor does not have access to professional development training but such training is available from another HEI allied to the first HEI. Can this training be included in my application?**

Yes, details of this training can be included in your application.

**The applicant in question is wondering whether joint supervision by 2 mentors is possible (both based in the same institution but in different schools). Can you confirm if joint supervision by two mentors is allowed under this scheme?**

**If an applicant includes a secondary mentor in the project, can they be based at a Higher Education Institution abroad?**

Yes, joint mentorship is possible, and it is encouraged for interdisciplinary applications. One mentor, however, will have to be designated the primary mentor.

A secondary mentor can be based in an institution abroad. The mentor based at the institution where the applicant will be primarily hosted must be the lead mentor on the project.

**In the event of dual supervision with primary and second mentor in a different academic institution, is the mentor form completed by the primary mentor only?**

**If successful, is there a mechanism in place (e.g.) a separate letter of offer so the fellow could have a small research consumables budget immediately available at the second academic institution?**

Only the primary mentor must submit the mentor form for the project through the online application system.

No, all funding will go directly to the fellow's host institution.

**Is it possible for a co-mentor to also be a referee?**

No. The same rules that apply to a mentor apply to a co-mentor.

**Would the Council support a project where a part of the research may be carried out in an industry based outside of Ireland or at another international institution (other than the candidate's PhD lab) in a collaboration for 3-4 months?**

In principle the Council supports this type of collaboration, but the applicant will need to provide a justification in their application form as to why this type of collaboration is required. If successful in the 2020 GOI Postdoctoral Fellowship scheme, Fellows must obtain the prior approval of the Council before undertaking a period of more than four weeks of fieldwork or research visits.



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An Chomhairle um Thaighde in Éirinn