

**2024 Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme
Frequently Asked Questions**

FAQs will be published every Thursday until 05 October 2023.

New questions will be marked ****New****

Updated questions will be marked ****Updated****

Questions are grouped under the following headings:

1. Eligibility
2. Applying to the programme
3. Conditions of award

1. Eligibility

The call document states that all applicants must:

- have been awarded their doctoral degree within the five-year period before 31 May 2024. For the purposes of this condition, the date of graduation will be taken into account;

Are there any circumstances under which an applicant whose PhD was awarded more than five years ago may be eligible for this programme?

All applicants must have been awarded their doctoral degree between 31st of May 2019 and 31st of May 2024 to be eligible.

Unless an applicant has graduated before 31st May 2019 but has taken an eligible career break. Only career breaks taken by the applicant as a statutory entitlement will be considered eligible.

Could you please clarify, does an unsubmitted draft for the IRC postdoctoral fellowship count as an unsuccessful application, assuming it is unsubmitted when the call ends?

An unsubmitted draft application would not count as an unsuccessful application.

An applicant has applied twice for the GOIPD call, the first time they were not successful but the second time they were offered a conditional award but couldn't take it up due to personal circumstances. They are enquiring if they can apply this year. The eligibility criteria states that "Applicants must not have had two previous unsuccessful applications to the relevant programme, including to strategic partner themes. This applies regardless of whether the applicant has changed their host institution or research topic since a previous submission" they are now wondering if they are eligible to apply as they were successful in the second attempt.

As the applicant has only had one unsuccessful attempt, they are still eligible to apply. A declined offer does not count as an unsuccessful attempt.

Are retired academics eligible to act as Mentor in the IRC Postdoctoral Fellowship scheme?

Once the Mentor is supported by the HEI and the research office, the IRC would have no objection.

A potential applicant wants to apply for the one-year fellowship aimed at the publication of their PhD thesis. However, they are currently funded by the IRC Enterprise Partner Scheme for their PhD programme. According to the call document, applications will be deemed ineligible if “the research project as proposed in the application form has previously been funded either in full, or in part, by the Irish Research Council or any other funding agency”. Can you please confirm if this rule applies in this circumstance, and the applicant is not in fact eligible to apply for the postdoc call?

If the purpose of the application is to prepare a doctoral dissertation for publication through a variety of high quality published academic outputs, e.g., monographs, peer-reviewed articles, edited volumes; etc. following on from their PhD, then this would be considered eligible.

Where someone has taken maternity leave, can you please clarify as to which specific supporting documents the IRC will require as proof of same? Is a letter from the applicant’s institution of employment at the time acceptable, or does the IRC require medical documentation such as a doctor’s note, or a birth certificate?

The IRC will require a letter from the institution of employment at the time. If this cannot be provided, we would also accept a doctor’s note confirming the same.

Where someone has taken carer’s leave, can you please clarify as to which specific supporting documents the IRC will require as proof of same? Is a medical certificate for the person who required care sufficient? If not, what else will suffice?

The IRC would accept a letter from the institution of employment at the time, confirming the period of carer’s leave.

In the eligibility quiz, the question is asked: “Will you have been awarded your doctoral degree within the 5-year period before 31 May 2024?”. Where an applicant graduated before 31st May 2019, but has taken sufficient career breaks to retain eligibility, how should they answer this question? It would be untrue to select “yes”, but there is no follow-up question for them to clarify the matter if they select “no”.

As the applicant meets the eligibility criteria, we would expect them to select ‘yes’. There is a section within the application where they can provide clarifying details related to career breaks.

Under the ‘Relevant Work Experience’ tab in the application, the applicant can clarify which career breaks they have taken.

****Updated****

A potential applicant had their PhD graduation in July 2019, which is within the eligibility bracket. However, the date on their graduation certificate is 21st May 2019; the date on which they defended their PhD (10 days outside the eligibility bracket). Can you please confirm if this person can still apply to the call, or does this disqualify them?

If the applicant can provide evidence of their PhD graduation taking place within the eligibility bracket, then the IRC will accept this application assuming the applicant meets all other eligibility criteria as set out in the Call document.

****New****

A potential applicant successfully completed their degree in December 2018 but, due to COVID, it was not conferred until July 2020. Are they eligible to apply for a Postdoctoral Fellowship?

As per the Call document, all applicants must have been awarded their doctoral degree within the five-year period before 31 May 2024. For the purposes of this condition, the date of graduation will be taken into account. Applicants must not have been employed as a postdoctoral researcher for more than five years as at 31 May 2024.

Is it no longer a requirement that applicants must carry out their postdoc research at a different host organisation and with a different mentor, than those with which they completed their PhD preparation?

The applicant's choice of mentor and host organisation is entirely at their own discretion but must be appropriately justified as part of the application. While the research mobility requirement has been removed, assessors must be convinced that the mentor and host organisation are the ideal situation for the placement of the applicant and project. Please see the *General Application Feedback* document for further information.

Is it possible for the Irish Research Council to award funding to a project in the area of fossil fuel research that examines improving fuel injector efficiency in heavy engines/turbines and that could eventually lead to improved environmental sustainability?

Yes, such an area of research can be funded.

Please note that as per the Call Document, the Irish Research Council is not in a position to award funding for research activity under any of the following prohibited areas:

- human cloning for reproductive purposes;
- genetic modification of human beings that could make such changes heritable (with the exception of research relating to cancer treatment of the gonads, which may be funded); or
- creation of human embryos solely for the purpose of research or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer.

Can an applicant apply for the Postdoctoral Fellowship programme if they had two previous unsuccessful applications to the Postgraduate Scholarship program?

Yes, an applicant is eligible to apply for the Postdoctoral Fellowship even if they had been previously unsuccessful to the Postgraduate Scholarships.

****New****

A potential applicant has created two previous applications in the on-line system – one unsuccessful and one ineligible. As the ineligible application did not reach the review stage, could you confirm that this applicant can apply again this year?

As per the Call Document, applicants must not have had two previous unsuccessful applications to the relevant programme. An ineligible application does not count as an unsuccessful attempt. As

the applicant has only had one unsuccessful attempt, they are still eligible to apply.

2. Applying to the programme

Can an applicant include a monograph and edited collection both under contract in the publications and research outputs section of the application?

Yes, an applicant can include a monograph and edited collection both under contract in this section.

This is in relation to the following: “Please describe your research achievements since beginning your career as a researcher (including PhD and post-PhD, if applicable). Please bear in mind this could be read by non-specialists, as well as peers, and should be written in order to communicate with them effectively.” Some applicants have given a bullet point list of journal articles, impact factors, etc. but, because this could be read by non-specialists, are you looking for a more DORA style narrative here?

The IRC does not have a recommended style to answer this section of the application. For more insight into what the assessors look for in applications please see the *General-Application-Feedback* document under the FAQs section of the [website](#).

Can a research fellow, employed at the host institution, act as the mentor?

No, postdoctoral fellows must be mentored by suitably qualified and experienced staff members of academic staff at the institution.

I wish to confirm, that it is not possible to have a secondary mentor named in a specific section of a postdoctoral application form (although it is possible to write them in for training for specific tasks and career development)?

This is correct. It is not possible to have a secondary mentor in a postdoctoral application although it is possible to acknowledge them for training for specific tasks and career development.

Reference forms are no longer required, but is it possible to upload letters of recommendation as part of the application?

No, there is no possibility of uploading reference materials for an application. Letters of recommendation must not be included in any other section of the application.

Please note that as per the Call Document, section 8, an application that includes additional materials other than those requested will be deemed ineligible.

The wording in the application seems to suggest that a GANTT chart is mandatory, but any other supplementary information is optional. Could you clarify whether the GANTT chart is in fact mandatory?

GANTT charts are not compulsory and applicants can submit their application without including one.

Please note that we recommend applicants to review the “General Application Feedback” document before applying.

Can I put a book review essay (review of an academic book) published in an academic journal in the peer-reviewed publications section?

Unless the book review essay has been peer-reviewed by the academic journal, it should be listed in the ‘Other Publications and Research Output’ section of the application.

I want to apply for a GOIPD fellowship, but I don’t think I have any new skills to learn. Will my score be penalised?

As per the Call Document, appendix 7, the ‘Capacity to acquire new knowledge’ is included as an evaluation criterion under the ‘Training and Career Development’ section of the proposal.

As per the General Application Feedback document, assessors indicate that *‘The best plans are those that show an understanding of the applicant’s skills gaps and how they will be filled’* and that *‘For applications at any stage, it is useful to identify formal training (courses, workshops, placements etc)’*. Also, as per the General Application Feedback document, assessors also recommend that applicants should *‘Consider whether the training opportunities are being used to extend the applicant’s abilities for social engagement and for developing influential research impacts’* and *‘Consider wider skill sets beyond the practical aspects of research work, including management, administrative, leadership, and teaching skills’*. The General Application Feedback document state that assessors consider that *‘The best career development plans linked the skills the applicant already had to those they would gain because of the fellowship. These plans showed how the award of the fellowship would transform current skills into those the applicant had identified as being required to pursue their chosen career. It is important that the skills, career progression, etc., are linked specifically to the opportunities because of the fellowship and not just because of a generic postdoc position’*.

Regarding the evidence required to demonstrate a career break that is mentioned in section 7.2.4., in what section of the application should this be produced/uploaded?

Eligible career breaks may be indicated in the ‘**Relevant Work Experience**’ section of the application. At the end of this section, there is a heading *‘Breaks in Research Career Path’* with the question *‘Do you require an extension to this 5-year period on grounds of a career break?’*

If the applicant has an eligible, documented career break (please see section 7 of the Call document), they may answer ‘Yes’ to this question, another section of the form will appear where the appropriate eligible career break may be selected, and the relevant dates of the break recorded.

Applicants are asked not to upload supporting documentation in relation to eligible career breaks. Documentary evidence should be provided at the award offer stage should an application be successful.

The Call document states that ‘Applicants must not have been employed as a postdoctoral researcher for more than five years as at 31 May 2024.’ AND ‘An applicant’s eligibility may be extended as a result of any properly documented eligible career break, provided the grounds for the extension started before the call deadline.’

The applicant began employment as a postdoctoral researcher 5 years prior to 31 May 2024 but, during this time, had an eligible documented career break of 8.5 months such that the time employed as a postdoctoral researcher will be less than 5 years at 31 May 2024. Is the applicant eligible?

An applicant’s period of eligibility may be extended as a result of any properly documented eligible career break, provided the grounds for the extension started before the call deadline. Eligible career breaks include maternity leave, paternity leave, adoptive leave, parental leave, parent’s leave, extended sick leave and carer’s leave. Only career breaks taken by the applicant as a statutory entitlement will be considered eligible. Career breaks explained by working outside of academia or by being unemployed for a period of time will not be considered as valid reasons to extend the eligibility window.

****New****

A potential applicant is associated with this university as a visitor with the title ‘Adjunct Assistant Professor’. They do not have a contract with the university nor a salary. Can you confirm that they are eligible to apply for a fellowship?

An applicant is eligible to apply for a Postdoctoral fellowship as long as they are not a permanent member of staff in either an Irish or international higher education institution or research-performing organisation, and as long as they have been awarded their doctoral degree within the allowable period of eligibility, as outlined in the Call Document (please see section 7.2.1) and meet all other eligibility criteria as set out in the Call document.

3. Conditions of award

****New****

Can an applicant apply to the Government of Ireland Postdoctoral fellowship Programme and submit the same project to the Enterprise Partnership Scheme (Postdoctoral Fellowship)?

Yes, an applicant can apply for both the Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Programme and the Enterprise Partnership Scheme (Postdoctoral Fellowship). If successful in both programmes, an applicant can only accept one of the fellowships.

Can a potential applicant use the €5k for research expenses to hire a research assistant on a casual basis to assist with screening of literature and management of focus groups, and to pay for some travel involved?

No, the award is made to the individual awardee and the awardee's duty is to the successful completion of the research project for which they have been awarded Irish Research Council funding. Awardees are required to engage in full-time research in their host institution during the funding term to develop the stated research project and training and career development plan. It is not possible to 'transfer' funding to another recipient. Permitted costs include: materials and consumables; equipment; software and hardware critical for the proposed research; pay-as-you-go access to national research infrastructures; archival research costs; reasonable travel, subsistence, and conference costs; skills training directly related to the objective(s) of the award; publishing and write-up costs; and reasonable travel and refreshment costs for subjects and volunteers in studies.

Is there any impact or effect on the assessment of applications should a potential mentor be supporting for example four or multiple applicants?

As per the Call document, while a mentor at an Irish host institution is permitted to support more than one award holder under the programme, this should not be used as a means for academic mentors to form research teams. Each application must be in support of an individual and original project, written by the applicant and distinctively different to other applications which may be received under the same mentor.