

Information on the assessment process

Key principles:

1. Our assessment procedures vary from scheme to scheme, being tailored to each specific programme's requirements.
2. We are consistently guided by a commitment to excellence, rigour, fairness and transparency. Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with the relevant scheme's eligibility and evaluation criteria prior to making an application.
3. We rely on the expertise and impartiality of our assessors to advise us, so that we can make the best possible funding decisions. We recognise the burden of peer review on the international research community and are grateful to our assessors for providing us with their expert reviews.
4. We ensure that the process of handling and evaluating proposals is carried out in a confidential manner. Assessors are bound by an obligation of confidentiality.
5. We seek to avoid assigning assessors where a conflict of interest is identified. If a conflict of interest is identified, the relevant application is swiftly reassigned to another assessor.

Applications are *not* assessed by the IRC Executive; our role is purely administrative and procedural. The IRC Board ('Council') plays no part whatsoever in the assessment process. The IRC executive team checks your application for adherence to the relevant call document to ascertain eligibility throughout the entire Call process. Applications may be made ineligible at any stage of the process including assessment and conditional offer stage.

Assessment process

To ensure that only proposals of the highest quality are selected for funding, we rely on independent experts. With the exception of a number of small schemes, assessors are drawn from the international research community. (Please see the Appendix for further detail.)

When selecting assessors, we look for:

- A high level of expertise in relevant disciplinary areas;
- Experience in assessing funding applications;
- Gender balance.

A Guide for Assessors and evaluation criteria are supplied to all assessors. The IRC Executive Team is at the assessors' disposal to respond to any practical queries that arise.

Assessors are required to consider their assigned applications and to allocate scores following the scheme's evaluation criteria.

Where the IRC partners with an international funding agency on a scheme, that agency's assessors also have input into the assessment process. Please see the Appendix for further information.

Some schemes include one stage of assessment, while others have two stages (also set out in the Appendix). In a two-stage assessment, proposals must pass all excellence thresholds and must score sufficiently highly to proceed to the second stage. Applications that have progressed to this phase are assessed afresh by a distinct group of assessors. In many of our larger schemes, the first stage is referred to as the 'Outer Assessment Board', and the second stage is named 'Inner Assessment Board'.

Award offer stage

All steps are overseen by the IRC Executive Team to ensure the robustness of the process. Assessors' views are routinely sought in order to improve the process.

The assessment process concludes with a ranked list of applications recommended for funding. Offers are made by the IRC Executive Team in ranked order, considering availability of budget and having regard to any limitations on the number of awards available for certain categories of applicants.¹ It is common practice for the IRC Executive Team to maintain a reserve list for a defined period of time, in order of ranking by assessors.

¹ The Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Programme has two categories of applicants: category one (resident EU nationals) and category two (all other applicants), and the majority of awards are made to those in category one. See relevant call document for further information.

The table below is indicative of the stages and assessors on the various Calls.

Funding scheme	National/ international assessors	Input by international funding agency's assessors	Number of assessment stages	Number of assessors at stage 1*	Number of assessors at stage 2*	Number of assessors at stage 3*
COALESCE	International	N/A	2	2	2	N/A
EBPP	International	N/A	1	2	N/A	N/A
EPS	International	N/A	1	2	N/A	N/A
ESO	Process run by ESO	Yes – ESO	Process run by ESO	Process run by ESO	Process run by ESO	Process run by ESO
GOIPD	International	N/A	2	2	2	N/A
GOIPG	International	N/A	2	2	2	N/A
SFI-IRC Pathway Programme – AHSS-led stream	International	N/A	2	3	2	N/A
Laureate Awards Programme	International	N/A	2	2 or more	2 or more	2 or more
Lindau	International	N/A	1	2 or more	N/A	N/A
New Foundations	International	N/A	1	2	N/A	N/A
Researcher of the Year	International	N/A	1	3 or more	N/A	N/A
Ulysses	National	Yes – Embassy & Campus France	1	2	N/A	N/A

*Where appropriate, an additional or alternative assessor is assigned.