

Information on IRC Assessment Process

Key principles of assessment

1. 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 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.

Assessment in 3 Steps

Stages of the IRC assessment process typically include 3 main steps:

1. *Application's eligibility is checked by the IRC Executive Team & assessors are assigned*

The IRC Executive Team checks your application for adherence to the relevant Call's Terms and Conditions to ascertain eligibility.

If your proposal satisfies the initial eligibility check, it will be evaluated by assessors. To ensure that only proposals of the highest quality are selected for funding, we rely on independent experts. Except for some 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.

The number of assessors who are assigned to your application varies from scheme to scheme (see the **Appendix**).

2. Application is assessed

A Guide for Assessors and evaluation criteria are supplied to all assessors. The IRC Executive Team is at 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'.

3. Application process is overseen & award offers are made

In many of the IRC's larger schemes, the assessment process concludes with a meeting of assessors. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these meetings moved from an in-person to an online format. **The IRC plans to hold all assessor meetings online in future. This is due to cost savings, reduced environmental impact, and the more diverse pool of assessors that the online format facilitates.**

All steps during the assessment process are overseen by the IRC Executive Team to ensure the robustness of the process. Assessors' views are routinely sought 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 to maintain a reserve list (in order of ranking by assessors) for a defined period.

¹ The Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Programme has two categories of applicants: Category One (resident EU nationals) and Category Two (all other applicants). Most awards are made to those in Category One. See Terms and Conditions for further information.

Funding Scheme	National/ International Assessors	Input by International Funding Agency's Assessors	1-stage/ 2-stage	No. of Assessors at Stage 1*	No. of Assessors at Stage 2*
CAROLINE	International	N/a – but reports to EU Commission on assessment process	2-stage	2	2
Citizens' Assembly Call	International	N/a	1-stage	2	N/a
COALESCE	International	N/a	2-stage	2	2
EBP	International	N/a	1-stage	2	N/a
EPS	International	N/a	1-stage	2	N/a
IRC-European Southern Observatory Studentship Programme	Process run by ESO	Yes – ESO	Process run by ESO	Process run by ESO	Process run by ESO
ESRC-IRC UK-Ireland Networking Grants	International	Yes – UKRI (ESRC)	2-stage	2	2
Gender-Net Plus	International	N/a	2-stage	2	2
GOI PD	International	N/a	2-stage	2	2
GOI PG	International	N/a	2-stage	2	2
HRB-IRC Rapid-Response Call	Process run by HRB	N/a	Process run by HRB	Process run by HRB	Process run by HRB
IRC-SPRINT	National	Yes – FAPESP	1-stage	2	N/a
Laureate Awards	International	N/a	2-stage	2 or more	2
Lindau	International	N/a	1-stage	2 or more	N/a
New Foundations	International	N/a	1-stage	2 or more	N/a
PPI Ignite	Process run by HRB	N/a	Process run by HRB	Process run by HRB	Process run by HRB
Researcher of the Year	National	N/a	1-stage	3 and a chair	N/a
SFI-IRC Pathway Programme	International	N/a	2-stage	3	2
Teaching and Learning Research Fellowships	Process run by National Forum	N/a	Process run by National Forum	Process run by National Forum	Process run by National Forum
UK-Ireland Collaboration in the Digital Humanities (networking awards)	International	Yes – UKRI (AHRC)	1-stage	2	N/a
UK-Ireland Collaboration in the Digital Humanities (main research grants)	International	Yes – UKRI (AHRC)	2-stage	2	3
Ulysses	National	Yes – Embassy & Campus France	1-stage	2	N/a

*Per application. Where scoring disparities arise, an additional or alternative assessor is assigned.