



IRISH RESEARCH COUNCIL
An Chomhairle um Thaighde in Éirinn

2022 EMPLOYMENT-BASED POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME

CALL DOCUMENT

Key Dates	
Call open	21 October 2021
FAQ deadline	16:00 (Irish time) 25 November 2021
Applicant deadline	16:00 (Irish time) 2 December 2021
Supervisor, mentor and referee deadline	16:00 (Irish time) 9 December 2021
Research office endorsement deadline	16:00 (Irish time) 16 December 2021
Outcome of scheme	End of March 2022
Award start date	1 September 2022

Due to heavy server traffic on the day of the applicant, supervisor, mentor and referee deadlines, all participants are strongly advised to submit their forms well in advance of the relevant deadline.



**An Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais,
Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta**
Department of Further and Higher Education,
Research, Innovation and Science

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1. Employment-Based Postgraduate Programme

The Irish Research Council's Employment-Based Postgraduate Programme is a unique national initiative linking excellent researchers in all disciplines with workplace experience in an employment partner; ranging from multinational corporations to SMEs, public-sector agencies and, where justified, non-governmental organisations. The scheme provides awardees with the opportunity to pursue research in collaboration with a higher education institution while based in, and employed by, their employment partner. Through this co-funded programme, postgraduate researchers develop new, advanced knowledge and skills in an industry or employer workplace setting. The programme trains early-career researchers for the diversity of employment opportunities in industry, the public sector and the non-government sectors. For employers, the scheme brings new talent directly into the organisation and provides a low-risk cost-effective route to research development and innovation in an area closely aligned with its strategic interests.

With consideration to national and global challenges, the involvement of those organisations, both large and small, who seek technological, social and sustainable solutions and opportunities for people and planet is welcomed. Pioneering proposals addressing new and emerging fields of research or those introducing creative, innovative approaches are also welcomed. Proposals of an interdisciplinary nature are encouraged as it is recognised that advancing fundamental understanding is achieved by integrating information, techniques, tools and perspectives from two or more disciplines.

Applications can be made in any discipline. The application should be written by the applicant in collaboration with their employment partner and host institution. Please consult the Irish Research Council's [research categorisation document](#) for further descriptions of the primary areas, disciplines and other research areas covered.

2. About the Irish Research Council

The Irish Research Council is the national funder of excellent research across all disciplines. It invests in discovery research and in ground-breaking ideas that address major societal challenges, funding a diverse range of excellent individual researchers across all career stages.

The Irish Research Council collaborates with enterprise, civil society, and with government to leverage the skills, knowledge, and talent of researchers to achieve maximum benefit for society.

Established in 2012, the Irish Research Council is an associated agency of the [Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science](#) and operates under the aegis of the [Higher Education Authority](#).

3. Purpose of this call document

This call document provides information for applicants in preparing and submitting an application for an Irish Research Council Employment-Based Postgraduate Programme Scholarship. It also provides a general overview of the assessment process.

This document, in conjunction with the [General Terms and Conditions for Early-Career Awards](#), the letter of offer and the Irish Research Council's policies and procedures, set out the terms and conditions for all early-career awards funded by the Irish Research Council. The Irish Research Council reserves the right to amend this call document at any time.

4. What we offer

- 4.1. The programme offers opportunities for suitably qualified individuals to take up an employment-based award to carry out research leading to a master's or doctoral qualification in any discipline.
- 4.2. For the period of the award, the awardee will have dual status as an employee of the employment partner and a postgraduate student at their host institution.
- 4.3. The duration of these awards ranges from one to four years.
- 4.4. The total value of the scholarship will be up to a maximum of €27,500 per annum in any approved year and will consist of the following:
 - a contribution of €18,500 to the awardee's employment costs;
 - a contribution to fees, including non-EU fees, up to a maximum of €5,750¹ per annum; and
 - eligible direct research expenses of €3,250 per annum.

5. Information for employment partners

- 5.1. An employment partner can be a company, registered charity, social, cultural or not-for-profit civic organisation, state-owned enterprise or an eligible public body² that will co-fund the researcher for the duration of the award.
- 5.2. The employment partner is expected to commit a minimum of €9,000 per annum towards the cost of funding the researcher.
- 5.3. The employment partner should be based in the Republic of Ireland and have suitable facilities to host and mentor the researcher.
- 5.4. The employment partner must be willing to employ the researcher for the duration of the award.

6. Eligibility

- 6.1. Potential applicants should carefully ascertain whether or not they are eligible in advance of applying to the programme.
- 6.2. There is no age limit for applicants to be eligible.
- 6.3. All applicants must be affiliated with an [eligible](#) Irish higher education institution.
- 6.4. 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;

¹ Any differential in fees must be paid by the awardee and/or host institution. Awardees who hold a fee waiver from their host institution, or where no fee is required, or where fees are paid in full or in part by a third party, must inform the Irish Research Council and the appropriate offices in their host institution and will not be eligible for the fee portion of the scholarship.

² A public body is a public service body with specific scientific or cultural infrastructure that is integral to the conduct and completion of the proposed research. If a public body or higher education institution is an eligible research-performing organisation, it is not an eligible employment partner under this scheme.

- 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.
- 6.5. Applications will only be accepted in either the Irish or English language³.
- 6.6. Applicants must not have had two previous unsuccessful applications to the programme. This applies regardless of whether the applicant has changed their host institution or research topic since a previous submission.
- 6.7. Applicants from any country may hold an Employment-Based Postgraduate Programme award.⁴
- 6.8. All applicants must have a first class or upper second-class honours bachelor's, or the equivalent, degree. If undergraduate examination results are not known at the time of application, the Irish Research Council may make a provisional offer of a scholarship on condition that the scholar's bachelor's, or the equivalent, degree result is a first class or upper second-class honours⁵. If the applicant does not have a first class or upper second-class honours bachelor's, or the equivalent, degree, they must possess a master's degree. The Irish Research Council's determination of an applicant's eligibility on these criteria is final.
- 6.9. Applicants for a research master's degree must not currently hold, or have previously held, an Irish Research Council scholarship.
- 6.10. Applicants for a doctoral degree must not currently hold, or have previously held, any Irish Research Council scholarship other than one which would have enabled them to obtain a research master's degree.
- 6.11. An applicant who is a new entrant to the postgraduate degree for which they are seeking funding is eligible to apply for funding for the full duration of the degree as outlined below:

Degree type	Duration of funding to be awarded
Research master's degree	1 year
Structured research master's degree	2 years
Traditional doctoral degree	3 years
Structured doctoral degree	4 years

- 6.12. For applicants who have already completed part of the postgraduate degree for which they are seeking funding, the duration of funding to be awarded is dependent on the type of degree being pursued and the date of first registration as outlined below:

³ In order to facilitate assessment, those submitting an Irish language assessment are invited to accompany it with an English language translation. Should an English translation not be provided by the applicant, the Irish Research Council will provide a translation to the relevant assessors.

⁴ Arrangements with respect to immigration and the right to work will be a matter for settlement between the awardee, their host institution, their employment partner and the relevant immigration authorities of the State.

⁵ Host institutions are expected to be guided by QQI and the NFQ in terms of the recognition and equivalence of a degree.

Degree type	Date of first registration ⁶	Academic year	Duration of funding to be awarded
Structured research master's degree	1 Sep 21 – 31 Aug 22 (registrations prior to 1 Sep 21 are ineligible)	2021/22	1 year
Traditional doctoral degree	1 Sep 21 – 31 Aug 22	2021/22	2 years
	1 Sep 20 – 31 Aug 21 (registrations prior to 1 Sep 20 are ineligible)	2020/21	1 year
Structured doctoral degree	1 Sep 21 – 31 Aug 22	2021/22	3 years
	1 Sep 20 – 31 Aug 21	2020/21	2 years
	1 Sep 19 – 31 Aug 20 (registrations prior to 1 Sep 19 are ineligible)	2019/20	1 year

- 6.13. All degree results as entered in the application form and endorsed by the host institution must be the applicant's overall results and verifiable as such on official transcripts. Regardless of whether they are relevant to the eligibility requirements listed in clause 6.8, conditional awardees will be required to submit official transcripts for each degree listed in the application confirming the overall result, date of graduation and awarding institution⁷. If such transcripts cannot be presented, or do not verify the information exactly as detailed in the application, any conditional offer of an award will be withdrawn.
- 6.14. All applications require an academic supervisor willing to guide the proposed research project, an employment mentor designated by the employment partner as being responsible for supporting and mentoring the awardee in relation to the employment partner's involvement and two referees who know the applicant sufficiently well to provide a reference. The Irish Research Council is not in a position to assist applicants in finding an academic supervisor, employment partner or employment mentor for their application. It is possible to include a secondary or co-supervisor on the application. The primary supervisor may not act as one of the applicant's referees, however a secondary or co-supervisor supervisor is permitted to do so.

7. Ineligible applications

- 7.1. In addition to section 6 above, applications will be deemed ineligible and will not be considered for funding if:
- an applicant submits more than one application to this year's Enterprise Partnership Scheme or Employment-Based Postgraduate Programme calls⁸;
 - an application has not been submitted via the online system by the relevant deadline. No hardcopies or email forms will be accepted;

⁶ Exceptions to the above dates of first registration may only be made for those who have taken an eligible career break from their degree programmes.

⁷ Supporting, non-returnable material must be forwarded to the Irish Research Council for inspection before the award can commence. All transcripts must be appropriately stamped and signed to confirm that they are official documents of the institution.

⁸ An applicant may have submitted an application to the Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Programme in addition to either the Enterprise Partnership Scheme or the Employment-Based Postgraduate Programme.

- an application does not have all the required participant forms, i.e. academic supervisor, employment mentor and two referee forms, completed in full and submitted via the online system by the relevant deadline. No hardcopies or email forms will be accepted;
- an application is incomplete or exceeds the word limits;
- an application includes additional materials other than those requested;
- an application includes materials in a format other than those requested;
- it is found at any stage during the process that any section of an application has been plagiarised or is not the applicant's own work (see section 12 for more information);
- any information supplied in an application is false, misleading or unverifiable with appropriate documentation;
- 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;
- the application is not endorsed by the applicant's host institution, i.e. the vice-president/dean of research or their authorised nominee, via the online system by the relevant deadline;
- any potential or perceived conflict of interest between the applicant, employment partner, employment mentor or academic supervisor was not declared at the time of application;
- if the employment partner has outstanding payments at the time of application or there has previously been significant delays in payment of their contribution or progress reporting on a current or expired award;
- canvassing on behalf of the applicant occurs.

8. Thinking about applying?

- 8.1. For reasons of transparency and fairness to all applicants, we will not enter into written or telephone correspondence with any individual about the assessment process or their eligibility to apply.
- 8.2. In the first instance, you should contact the research office in your proposed host institution for information and clarification on the call. It is highly recommended that applicants contact the office well in advance of submitting an application.
- 8.3. If your research office is unable to answer your query, they should email it to schemes@research.ie for answer through the frequently asked questions (FAQ) process. An updated FAQ document will be published weekly on the [Irish Research Council's](#) website.
- 8.4. You should not add an academic supervisor or employment mentor to your application without their prior approval.
- 8.5. Prior to creating an application, you should contact and discuss your research project with your proposed academic supervisor and employment mentor as relevant.
- 8.6. It is the sole responsibility of the applicant to inform the proposed academic supervisor, employment mentor and referees of their nomination. This should be done well in advance of completing the online application.
- 8.7. It is strongly encouraged that application and participant forms are submitted well in advance of the relevant deadline as heavy server traffic on the day may slow down their submission. Applicants are advised not to wait until the day of the deadline to register on the system or submit their application. If you need to submit your application on the closing day, please do this at least six hours before the deadline.

- 8.8. While an academic supervisor at an Irish host institution is permitted to support more than one award holder under each programme, this should not be used as a means for academic supervisors 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 academic supervisor.

9. Gender

- 9.1. A key feature of the [Irish Research Council's Gender Strategy and Action Plan](#) is to provide equal outcomes for all applicants so that Ireland can attract and retain the most talented, creative and innovative researchers, thereby maximising its collective research intelligence.
- 9.2. To ensure a level playing field for all applicants, the Irish Research Council seeks to gender-blind the assessment process for these programmes.
- 9.3. As such, profile information containing the name and gender of applicants is not provided to reviewers during the assessment process.
- 9.4. Applicants are therefore asked to refrain from identifying their gender when completing their application forms.
- 9.5. We also ask that supervisors, mentors and referees use 'the applicant', 's/he' and 'his/her' when providing their observations rather than the person's name or pronouns which would identify their gender.
- 9.6. Applicants are advised to consult the sex/gender dimension statement in appendix 1 in advance of completing the personal, ethical and sex/gender statements section of their application.

10. Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

- 10.1. The Irish Research Council is signatory to the [San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#) and, as such, we are aligning our assessment processes with DORA principles.
- 10.2. To this end, all types of research output are recognised and we are committed to assessing the quality and impact of research through means other than journal impact factors.

11. ORCID

- 11.1. ORCID provides a persistent digital identifier that distinguishes you from every other researcher and, through integration in key research workflows such as manuscript and grant submission, supports automated linkages between you and your professional activities ensuring that your work is recognised.
- 11.2. If you do not currently have an ORCID, please register for one at www.orcid.org in advance of submitting your application.

12. Plagiarism and related issues

- 12.1. Applications are expected to be entirely the applicant's own work.
- 12.2. Random sampling for evidence of plagiarism and excessive duplication will be carried out during the application and award process. Plagiarism is defined as the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit. It will

be deemed that excessive duplication has arisen when significant portions of multiple applications to the Irish Research Council are similar or identical in content.

- 12.3. If such instances of plagiarism or excessive duplication are identified by the Irish Research Council at any stage during the application or award process, the relevant application(s) will be deemed ineligible, award offers will be withdrawn, or active awards will be terminated with one month's notice.
- 12.4. Such instances of plagiarism or excessive duplication will also be brought to the attention of the host institution and the applicant in question will be prohibited from applying for Irish Research Council funding in the future.

13. Assessment process

- 13.1. Applications are first checked by the Irish Research Council for eligibility.
- 13.2. All applications will be assessed solely on the basis of the material provided at the time of submission.
- 13.3. Award holders will be selected following a transparent, merit-based, impartial and equitable selection procedure, based on international peer review.
- 13.4. Profile information containing the name, date of birth and gender of applicants is not provided to reviewers during the assessment process.
- 13.5. Each application is assessed by at least two independent, international reviewers. Each assessor submits their quantitative evaluation and the applications are preliminarily ranked.
- 13.6. Applications are then discussed at an international assessment board meeting to determine the final ranking of the applications referred to it, arrive at an overall judgment of standard and make final recommendations to the Irish Research Council.
- 13.7. The Irish Research Council will then fund down the ranked list presented to it by the international assessment board until funding is exhausted. The Irish Research Council's decision on whether to make an award is final.
- 13.8. Applications are assessed under four headings:
 - applicant;
 - project;
 - training and career development; and
 - environment.
- 13.9. Assessors consider all four headings and allocate scores as per the evaluation criteria detailed in appendix 2. Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves fully with the evaluation criteria prior to making an application.
- 13.10. If the total average score is the same between two or more applications, applications with the same average scores will be ranked according to average score under the project category.

14. Notification and feedback

- 14.1. The Irish Research Council is precluded from discussing results of the competition or the outcome of individual applications over the telephone or in writing.
- 14.2. Feedback to unsuccessful candidates will consist of the score assigned by the international assessment board. No additional qualitative feedback will be provided. This decision is final and no correspondence will be undertaken in relation to individual assessments or scoring.
- 14.3. Under no circumstance will feedback provided by the Irish Research Council compromise the confidentiality of any participant in the process.

APPENDIX 1

GUIDANCE ON THE SEX/GENDER DIMENSION STATEMENT

While there are research projects in which biological sex and/or gender may not be relevant in terms of the research content, it is well established that, where relevant, integrating sex and gender analysis into the design, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of the research can lead to better results and opportunities. If relevant sex-gender issues are missed or poorly addressed, research results will be partial and potentially biased. In worst-case scenarios poor consideration of the sex-gender dimension in research can result in real-world applications based on inaccurate results or conceptions. Full consideration of the sex-gender dimension in research content is a requirement for all Irish Research Council awards.

The integration of the sex-gender dimension in research is commonly mistaken for the integration of gender balance in research teams. These are two distinct matters, and the gender balance of a team should not be used to answer the sex-gender dimension in research question. We recommend this short video [here](#) from the European Commission on the integration of sex/gender dimension in research.

Definitions

Sex refers to a set of biological attributes in humans and animals. It is primarily associated with physical and physiological features including chromosomes, gene expression, hormone levels and function, and reproductive/sexual anatomy. Sex is usually categorised as female or male.

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender diverse people. It influences how people perceive themselves and each other, how they act and interact, and the distribution of power and resources in society. Gender is usually conceptualised as a binary (girl/woman and boy/man) yet there is considerable diversity in how individuals and groups understand, experience, and express it. The Irish charity, *BelongTo* provides a list of terminology associated with gender [here](#).

Resources

The following links provide positive and negative examples that result from the inclusion or exclusion of sex and gender in research respectively. These may be useful for applicants to complete the sex-gender dimension statement in the application:

General

- [Stanford University resource concerning the sex-gender aspects of research](#)

STEM

- [Online training for integrating sex and gender in health research](#)
- [Article about the dangers of drug testing on all-male animal populations](#) (animal studies, drug design)
- [Gender research focus in agricultural technology and botanical science](#) (agriculture, botanical science)
- [Transport Infrastructure Ireland report on the implications of transport design for women in Ireland](#) (transportation engineering)
- [Machine learning reinforcing gender stereotypes](#) (machine learning)

- [Book by Trine Rogg Korsvik & Linda M. Rustad on the gender dimension in research](#) (multiple examples provided in the chapter, Safe Societies)
- [Article on urban design principles that take into account the needs of women and minority groups](#) (urban design)

How to consider the potential gender dimension and implications for your research

The following is provided to help applicants complete the sex/gender dimension statement in the application. This is taken from the [‘Gender in EU-funded research’ toolkit](#), which aims to give the research community practical tools to integrate gender aspects into their research, including gender equality (equal outcomes for women and men) and integration of sex/gender analysis in research content.

1. The best possible research validity: Research should take into account the differences between men and women in the research population, and results will be more representative. General categories such as ‘people’, ‘patients’ or ‘users’ do not distinguish between men and women. Research based on such categories may well draw partial conclusions based on partial data. For example, research on a new breast cancer treatment should include male patients, so as to draw a complete picture. Most basic research with animal models focuses on males to the exclusion of females (Zucker et al., 2010; Marts et al., 2004). Research on economic migrants cannot limit itself to male points of view if it wants to understand the whole migrant population.
2. Research ideas and hypotheses: The relevance of biological sex and/or gender for and within the subject matter needs to be analysed and an assessment made as to whether these are relevant variables. The formulation of hypotheses can draw upon previous research and existing literature. Indeed, the body of knowledge on sex/gender issues has been steadily growing over recent decades and can serve as interesting reference material to build new hypotheses for future research.
3. Project design and research methodology: While research methodologies may vary, they all strive to represent (aspects of) reality. Whenever this reality concerns humans, any sound methodology should differentiate between the sexes and take into account the men’s and women’s situations equally. Groups such as ‘citizens’, ‘patients’, ‘consumers’, ‘victims’ or ‘children’ are therefore too general as categories.
4. Research implementation: *Data collection tools* (such as questionnaires and interview checklists) need to be gender-sensitive, use gender neutral language, and should make it possible to detect the different realities of men and women. This will help to avoid gender bias. For example, answers to be provided by the ‘head of household’ are not necessarily valid for all household members.
5. Data analysis: In most research concerning human subjects, data is routinely disaggregated by sex, which would logically lead to analyses according to sex. However, to date this is still not common practice. Systematically taking sex as a central variable and analysing other variables with respect to it (e.g. sex and age, sex and income, sex and mobility, sex and labour) will provide significant and useful insights. Involving gender-balanced end-user groups in the course of the research is also a good way of guaranteeing the highest impact.
6. Dissemination phase – reporting of data: Collecting and analysing sex and/or gender specific data is not enough if they are omitted from the published results. Sex and/or

gender should be included in 'mainstream' publications as it is as much part of daily reality as any other variable studied. Specific dissemination actions (publications or events) for sex and/or gender findings can be considered. Institutions and departments that focus on gender should be included in the target groups for dissemination. Publications should use gender-neutral language.

Checklist for sex and/or gender in research content

Research ideas phase:

- If the research involves humans as research objects, has the relevance of biological sex and/or gender to the research topic been analysed?
- If the research does not directly involve humans, are the possibly differentiated relations of men and women to the research subject sufficiently clear?
- Have you reviewed literature and other sources relating to differences in the research field?

Proposal phase:

- Does the methodology ensure that (possible) sex/gender differences will be investigated: that sex/gender differentiated data will be collected and analysed throughout the research cycle and will be part of the final publication?
- Does the proposal explicitly and comprehensively explain how sex/gender issues will be handled (e.g. in a specific work package)?
- Have possibly differentiated outcomes and impacts of the research on women and men been considered?

Research phase:

- Are questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, etc. designed to unravel potentially relevant sex and/or gender differences in your data?
- Are the groups involved in the project (e.g. samples, testing groups) gender-balanced? Is data analysed according to the sex variable? Are other relevant variables analysed with respect to sex?

Dissemination phase:

- Do analyses present statistics, tables, figures and descriptions that focus on the relevant sex/gender differences that came up in the course of the project?
- Are institutions, departments and journals that focus on gender included among the target groups for dissemination, along with mainstream research magazines?
- Have you considered a specific publication or event on sex/gender-related findings?

**APPENDIX 2
EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Evaluation criteria and detail	Maximum marks
<p>PROJECT, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity and coherence of the proposed research • Quality of the proposed research design and methodologies • Feasibility of the proposed milestones, deliverables and contingency plans • Consideration as to how the proposed research will advance state of the art and make a contribution to existing knowledge • Plans for dissemination and knowledge exchange of the proposed research • Consideration of the relevant ethical issues and sex/gender dimension 	40
<p>APPLICANT, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track record and research potential of the applicant • Quality, significance and relevance of the applicant's key achievements, taking their personal statement into account • Match between the applicant's profile, the proposed research project and working environment • Evidence of independent thinking • Quality of the references provided by the academic supervisor, employment mentor and referees 	30
<p>ENVIRONMENT, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitability and ability of the academic supervisor(s) and employment mentor to provide adequate supervision • Quality of infrastructure and facilities provided by the employment partner and host institution • Match between the applicant, academic supervisor(s), employment mentor, host institution and employment partner 	20
<p>TRAINING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity and quality of training and career development plan • Potential for the development of new research-related and transferable skills and competencies, particularly those relevant to employment outside the traditional academic sector • Capacity to acquire new knowledge • Clarity of thought as to how the scholarship will impact on the applicant's career path 	10