



COALESCCE Research Fund

Collaborative Alliances for Societal Challenges

GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

PLEASE READ THIS DOCUMENT CAREFULLY BEFORE YOU REGISTER AS AN APPLICANT TO THE COMPETITION

2024



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



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



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage

Contents

1. Important deadlines for this call	1
2. Purpose of the Guide for Applicants	2
3. About the Irish Research Council	2
4. Context for the COALESCE Call	2
5. Using the OLS (Online System): <i>SmartSimple</i>	3
5.1 Logging into <i>SmartSimple</i> and creating an Applicant Profile	3
5.2 Navigating SmartSimple and Creating your Application Form	5
5.2.1 Selecting your HEI/RPO	6
5.2.2 Editing Applicant Details	6
5.2.3 Uploading documents (PDF)	6
5.2.4 Mandatory Fields	6
5.2.5 ORCID Identifier	7
5.2.6 Detailed Project Description	7
5.2.7 Data Management Plan	7
5.2.8 Ethics Statement	7
5.2.9 Budget Tool	8
5.2.10 Academic Qualifications	9
5.2.11 Collaboration Statement	9
6. Assessment Process	9
7. Notification and Feedback	10
8. Information for successful award holders	10
9. Submission of Ethical Approval, a Data Management Plan and a Collaboration Agreement	10
10. Guidance on the Sex/Gender Dimension Statement	11

1. Important deadlines for this call

Call open	28 th September 2023 at 4pm (Irish time)
FAQ deadline	23 rd November 2023 at 4pm (Irish time)
Applicant deadline	30 th November 2023 at 4pm (Irish time)
RO Endorsement deadline	7 th December 2023 at 4pm (Irish time)
Outcome	May 2024

2. Purpose of the Guide for Applicants

This guide provides practical information to potential applicants in preparing and submitting an application for the Irish Research Council COALESCE Research Fund 2024 using the online application system *SmartSimple*. In addition, it provides a general overview of the Irish Research Council assessment process.

The Irish Research Council Coalesce Research Fund is governed by the particular Call Document underlying the award, and the Award Acceptance Form. The contents of this guide are for general information purposes and the assistance of applicants. In the event of any discrepancy arising between this guide and the Call Document/Acceptance Form, the latter will prevail.

Accordingly, applicants are strongly recommended to familiarise themselves fully with the Call Document, and also to read any Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) before completing and submitting applications.

The Irish Research Council reserves the right to revise this Guide for Applicants.

Applicants who were previously registered on SmartSimple as mentors/supervisors, and are currently experiencing issues accessing the application form, should contact the COALESCE Team directly at projects@research.ie. The system no longer supports self-registration of these people as applicants. Please check that your contact details are up to date after the COALESCE Team upgrades your access.

3. About the Irish Research Council

The mission of the Irish Research Council (“IRC” hereafter) is to support excellence in research talent, knowledge, and engagement, including by responding to emerging research and societal challenges and proactively assisting stakeholders to address complex issues. The [IRC’s Strategic Plan 2020-2024](#) seeks to position the IRC as a partner of choice nationally and internationally to support excellent research that addresses the challenges of our time. It also emphasises the importance attached by the IRC to facilitating the sharing of research and innovations to the maximum extent possible. Government and policymakers, enterprise and civil society are all key stakeholders with whom strong relationships with researchers are key. The COALESCE programme (Collaborative Alliances for Societal Challenges) is a key driver supporting progress on the strategic priorities.

4. Context for the COALESCE Call

Since the scheme was introduced, there have been a number of developments in the research landscape. The transition from Horizon 2020 to Horizon Europe continues the focus on challenges and mission-orientated research, while in May 2022, the national strategy for research and innovation, [Impact 2030](#) was published. COALESCE strongly aligns with the mission focus at European level and also with a number of core objectives within Impact 2030 such as enhancing the links between the research system and public policy; fostering interdisciplinary research; and a challenge-based focus. The various challenges we face, nationally and internationally, are well-articulated in the form of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), incorporating 17 goals.

Ireland has a cross-governmental challenge-based approach through the [National Planning Framework \(Ireland 2040\)](#) and the associated [National Development Plan](#). The framework sets out 10 National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs, see [Appendix 1](#)), the achievements of which are necessary to ensure prosperity, equality, a sustainable future, and protection of our natural environment. Impact 2030 outlines some of the key economic and societal challenges facing Ireland, including climate change and the need for decarbonisation; economic transformation fuelled by technological and other change; greater international competition and geopolitical instability; increased mobility of talent; and the need to build societal resilience. Research is essential to address these and other challenges, and to achieve the aims of the National Development Plan.

The achievement of national or global goals will be challenging in themselves and will require an unprecedented level of collaboration and coordination both within the State and on an interjurisdictional basis. Given the myriad agencies that will be at the ‘coalface’ in implementation of national plans, major opportunities for researchers to form new connections and links will emerge, regionally and locally, and, in doing so, will further demonstrate the value of the Irish research system as a national resource.

Excellent research across all disciplines has a major role to play in developing new knowledge and evidence, which policymakers and practitioners can utilise to guide action and interventions on the path to successfully achieving national or international societal challenges. Maximising the contribution of the research system in this regard requires a strong emphasis on building robust mechanisms to ensure the transmission and integration of knowledge and evidence into the policy and practice environment, including building the necessary relationships with the public sector, civil society, or elsewhere, to support this process.

5. Using the OLS (Online System): *SmartSimple*

The Online Application System *SmartSimple* is the portal through which all proposals are submitted and through which all reviews of your application are completed. The portal contains all necessary forms required to submit proposals and templates for file uploads to the system are available on the [COALESCE website](#).

You must submit proposals using the online system, which takes the form of dropdown menu selections, file upload sections, and comment boxes.

By blinding certain fields to certain participants in the application review process, and by having functionality that can delete or anonymise records over time, the Online Application System ensures the compliance of the Irish Research Council with respect to data protection requirements under Irish and EU law (incl. General Data Protection Regulation).

5.1 Logging into *SmartSimple* and creating an Applicant Profile

The link to the login page is [here](#).

To log in, ensure the following:

1. The email address ircapps@research.ie is on your ‘safe senders’ list in your email account.
2. You are using an approved internet browser. The online application system, *SmartSimple*, is only designed to operate on recent versions of Google Chrome, Safari and Firefox

3. JavaScript is turned on and up to date.

To register as an applicant on the online system for the first time, navigate to this link and complete the applicant registration form as prompted.

Note: Applicants who have previously registered as mentors, supervisors, or other non-applicant roles, should contact the COALESCE Team directly at projects@research.ie. The system no longer supports self-registration of these people as applicants. Please check that your contact details are up to date after the COALESCE Team upgrades your access. Please also read the guidance below.

Please note that 'ordinarily resident' refers to the applicant's place of legal and permanent residence. This will not be deemed as having been interrupted if an absence from the country of ordinary residency has been caused by the training, education or employment of the applicant or the applicant's spouse or parents.

Applicants deemed to be citizens of the EU are those applicants who are either citizens of Ireland or of a Member State of the European Union AND have been ordinarily resident within a Member State of the EU/Ireland for a continuous period of three out of the five years prior to the application deadline. Once you have filled in all the required details, click 'submit' at the bottom of the registration page. A confirmation email with the subject 'Irish Research Council, applicant registration' will automatically be sent to the email address you have provided. This email confirms that you have successfully registered for the online system and will issue you with a username and password.

If you do not receive this email, please check your spam folder and ensure that the ircapps@research.ie email address is on your 'safe senders' list. If you are using an institutional or work email account, you may need to check with your IT department to ensure there is no issue with your organisation's internal firewall.

Once you have received your username and password, you should access the online system using the login details provided.

If you have lost or forgotten your password, navigate to this link and click 'Forgot password?' A system-generated password will be forwarded to your email address. If you do not receive this email, please check your spam folder. Please note that it may take up to 15 minutes to receive the email containing your new password.

Please note: Researchers who register as an Applicant using a different email address from the one they already have as mentor or supervisor will effectively create a new profile within the system and this is discouraged.

Contact projects@research.ie if you experience any difficulties. If you can't remember your password there is a 'forgot password' facility. By clicking the 'forgot password' button a system-generated password will be sent to your email address.

Once you have logged in, NEVER use the "back" button on your internet browser while submitting a proposal, as you may lose essential information. Always click "Save Draft" and navigate away from the page by selecting the "Home" button indicated below.

5.2 Navigating SmartSimple and Creating you Application Form

After logging in to the online application system, *SmartSimple*, search for eligible calls using the ‘open calls’ icon as seen below and select COALESCE 2024. Please be aware that it may take a few seconds (up to 20-30s) for eligible calls to appear after selecting the ‘open calls’ icon.

Applications

6
Open Calls


15
Draft Applications

5
Submitted Applications

8
Application Outcomes

0
Activities Pending Action

1
Submitted Reports


Open Calls Test

Open Calls

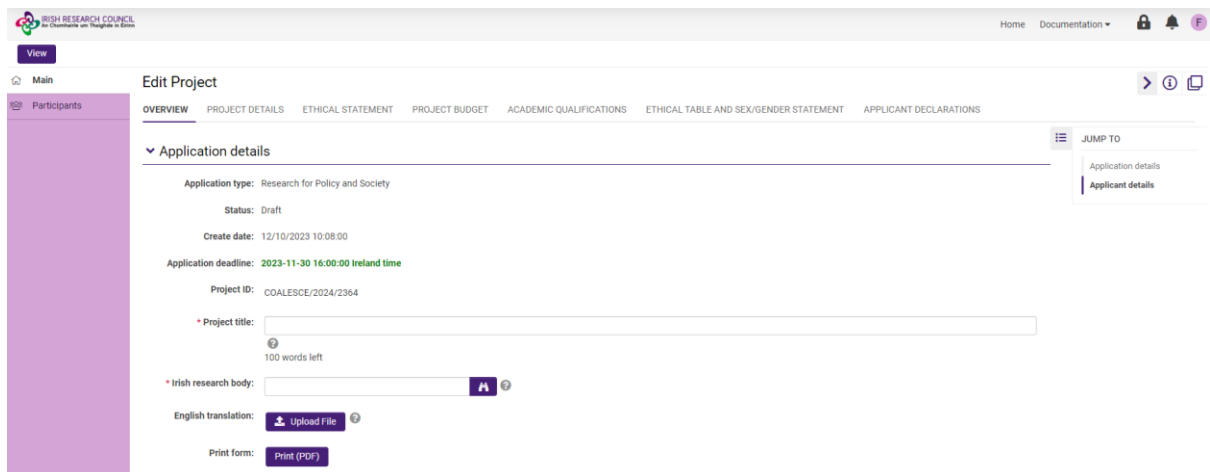
1-6 of 6

#	Call Name	Applicant Submission Deadline Date	Research Body Submission Deadline Date	Apply
1	Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellowship 2024	2023-10-12 16:00:00	2023-10-26 16:00:00	Apply
2	Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship 2024	2023-10-12 16:00:00	2023-10-26 16:00:00	Apply
3	COALESCE 2024	2023-11-30 16:00:00	2023-12-07 16:00:00	Apply
4	EPS Postdoctoral Application 2024	2023-11-16 16:00:00	2023-11-30 16:00:00	Apply
5	EPS Postgraduate Application 2024	2023-11-16 16:00:00	2023-11-30 16:00:00	Apply
6	Employment Based Postgraduate Programme 2024	2023-11-16 16:00:00	2023-11-30 16:00:00	Apply

COALESCE 2024

[Apply](#)

Please click on ‘Apply’ and a blank application form will be created for you to fill in. The beginning of the form looks like this:



IRISH RESEARCH COUNCIL
An tAidmear na hÉireann

Home Documentation

View

Main **Edit Project**

Participants

OVERVIEW PROJECT DETAILS ETHICAL STATEMENT PROJECT BUDGET ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS ETHICAL TABLE AND SEX/GENDER STATEMENT APPLICANT DECLARATIONS

Application details

Application type: Research for Policy and Society

Status: Draft

Create date: 12/10/2023 10:08:00

Application deadline: 2023-11-30 16:00:00 Ireland time

Project ID: COALESCE/2024/2364

* Project title:

100 words left

* Irish research body:

English translation: [Upload File](#)


Print form: [Print \(PDF\)](#)

JUMP TO

- Application details
- Applicant details



You can navigate to the different sections that need to be completed by selecting the relevant tabs. The Application Status will remain in 'draft' until you have submitted your proposal.



You may save your proposal and come back to it later, by clicking the 'Save Draft' icon at the bottom of your screen.


In the draft proposal, fill in your project details as appropriate. Most of the sections of the proposal form are either self-explanatory, explained on the assessment form itself (e.g., pay attention to the  icons – these provide clarifications when you hover your pointer over them), or are described in detail in the Call Document, available on the COALESCE web page.

5.2.1 Selecting your HEI/RPO

For the section 'Irish Research Body', please use the search function (binoculars) to select the appropriate body. This body is the institution where you propose to carry out the work set out in your proposal. Your proposal will be visible to the research office in the institution you select.

* Irish research body:  

English translation:  Upload File 

Print form:  Print (PDF)

5.2.2 Editing Applicant Details



For the 'applicant details' section, note the following:

The above fields in the **Applicant Details** section are populated based on your personal profile. If you would like to update this section, please click **Save Draft** below and navigate back to the **Home** screen where you can find the **Manage Your Profile** icon.


5.2.3 Uploading documents (PDF)

Documents are uploaded using the purple upload button, *SmartSimple* will only allow documents in PDF format to be uploaded so please convert any word documents before submitting:

* Detailed Project Description Upload

5.2.4 Mandatory Fields

This symbol  represents a mandatory field. Application submission will fail if fields containing this symbol are unfilled or unanswered, or if a document is not uploaded to the relevant document upload section.

1. No alterations can be made to an application once it has been submitted. Therefore, it is important to check the application form until you are fully satisfied with all sections of your application before you click 'Submit Application'.
2. If you enter information into the OLS application form and do not save before navigating away from the tabbed page, this information will be lost. You may log on, access, and edit your draft application as many times as you wish prior to the Applicant Deadline so long as the application has not been submitted and remains a 'Draft Application'.

5.2.5 ORCID Identifier

ORCID is 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 recognized. You can register for an ORCID here: <https://orcid.org/register>.

5.2.6 Detailed Project Description

A 'Detailed Project Description' must be uploaded by all applicants. It can be uploaded as a PDF only and cannot exceed 18 pages. **At least two of the 18 pages should be dedicated to providing a detailed description of methods and analysis to be used in the proposed project.** Methods and analysis should be clearly mapped onto overall objectives and proposed research question(s).

Further details including an information regarding the identification of a 'Steering Group or Advisory Committee', a 'Research Schedule' and a 'Data Management Plan' should also be provided in the 'Project Details' section.

Applicants should outline the step-by-step plan of action for their project, demonstrating how the stated research questions will be answered. This includes details of the project's location in existing literature, the methodology(ies) to be used, detailed implementation and dissemination plans, major project milestones and how intended project outputs and impact will be achieved.

5.2.7 Data Management Plan

The Data Management Plan must describe the data management life cycle for the data to be collected, processed and/or generated by a research project, as part of making research data *findable, accessible, interoperable and re-usable* (FAIR). See the Call Document for further details.

5.2.8 Ethics Statement

Where ethical issues may arise in the research, applicants are required to submit to the IRC a written statement that full consideration has been given to the ethical implication of the research proposal. Full ethical approval from the relevant HEI Ethics Committee is not required at the application stage. However, if the application is successful, evidence of full ethical approval will be required before any activities are undertaken on the project.

All applicants must answer Yes/No questions in the section concerning the ethics of their proposed research. For further information on ethics eligibility see the Call Document.

5.2.9 Budget Tool

All applicants must upload a detailed, itemised project budget with justification for the costs requested. Click button labelled 'Open Budget' to open itemised budget entry window.

Budget: Open Budget

Eligible Costs:	Total cost requested for the full duration of the award:	Justification. Please provide itemised breakdown of costs and reason needed (justification fields cannot be left blank. Enter 'n/a' if necessary):
Personnel/Staff:		
Collaboration:		
Dissemination and Knowledge Exchange:		
Travel Costs:		
Consumables: Maximum €2,000 on Strand 1L and Strand 2A; Maximum €5,000 on Strand 2B		
Consultancy: Maximum €10,000 on Strands 1L, Strand 2A and 2B		
Publications and Research Outputs:		
Access to Research Infrastructure:		
Overheads:		25% of direct cost excluding equipment.
Equipment:		
Total:		

Budget Details for COALESCE 2024

Eligible Costs:	Total cost requested for the full duration of the award:	Justification. Please provide itemised breakdown of costs and reason needed (justification fields cannot be left blank. Enter 'n/a' if necessary):
* Personnel/Staff:	0	<input type="text"/>
* Collaboration:	0	<input type="text"/>
* Dissemination and Knowledge Exchange:	0	<input type="text"/>
* Travel Costs:	0	<input type="text"/>
* Consumables: Maximum €2,000 on Strand 1L and Strand 2A; Maximum €5,000 on Strand 2B	0	<input type="text"/>
* Consultancy: Maximum €10,000 on Strands 1L, Strand 2A and 2B	0	<input type="text"/>
* Publications and Research Outputs:	0	<input type="text"/>
* Access to Research Infrastructure:	0	<input type="text"/>
* Overheads:	0.00	25% of direct cost excluding equipment.
* Equipment:	0	<input type="text"/>
Total:	0.00	

The bottom of this window also has advisory notes on staff costs and staffing requirements.

Advisory Note on Staff Costs Staffing Requirements

Costs may include staff-replacement costs which facilitate participation in the project, but these must be clearly justified. All staff replacements ('buy-out' costs) must be accounted for according to approved Irish Research Council staff rates.

IRC Staff Costs	1 Calendar Year
Academic Replacements (can be pro-rata)	These are used to alleviate the awardee's commitments and to facilitate their participation as a principal investigator. Costs may be requested to facilitate the reallocation of existing commitments of the awardee (e.g. teaching) in order that they can devote appropriate time and effort to successfully completing the award. A value equal to point 1 on the IUA salary scale for postdoctoral researchers (excluding employer's pension contribution for members of the single pension scheme) may be charged to the project to facilitate the awardee's leadership of the project. If the existing academic commitments of the awardee are fully replaced, this money can be charged to the project in order to recruit one whole-time person, e.g. a postdoctoral fellow, to discharge the awardee's commitments. As part of the reporting requirements, the awardee will be required to report on how the replacement costs have been allocated.
Research Assistant (can be pro-rata)	HEIs should use the institutional researcher salary scale for research assistants and postdoctoral researchers. These costs must be clearly justified in the application form. The salary requested must include provisions for PRSI. As part of the award acceptance process, the Research Office must confirm that the requested salary is in line with the institutional researcher salary scale and provide documentary evidence.
Postdoctoral Researcher (can be pro-rata)	HEIs should use the institutional researcher salary scale for research assistants and postdoctoral researchers. These costs must be clearly justified in the application form. The salary requested must include provisions for PRSI. As part of the award acceptance process, the Research Office must confirm that the requested salary is in line with the institutional researcher salary scale and provide documentary evidence.

The recruitment of any staff to this project must be openly recruited through public advertisement. Staff must be recruited for the specific project and awarded topic only.

The only exception to this is the STEM Co-PI on strand 2A applications; due to being a named participant on the project, this post need not be advertised publicly.

Other Eligible Research Expenses

Please note that all research expenses must be strongly justified. Should a particular expense be insufficiently justified within an otherwise successful application, the Council reserves the right to remove/reduce this particular expense item at award-offer stage.

A table of other eligible research expenses are set out below:

Expense Type	Eligibility Criteria
Collaboration	Please provide details of expenditure to be incurred in terms of collaborative activities, where relevant. These will primarily consist of travel, networking and/or dissemination activities and must be strongly demonstrated. Maximum of 10% of the overall budget on Strands 2A and 2B and 20% on Strand 1L.
Dissemination	Details of costs proposed and channels to be used.
Travel Costs	Travel and accommodation costs may be included as part of the proposal. Details on the number and duration of trips being proposed are required. Every effort must be made to ensure that travel expenses are minimised (e.g. economy fares only).
Consumables	Maximum €2,000 on Strand 1L and Strand 2A; Maximum €5,000 on Strand 2B.
Consultancy	Maximum €10,000 on Strands 2A and 2B and €10,000 on Strand 1L.
Overheads	These must NOT exceed maximum of 25% of modified direct costs. Overhead does not apply to equipment costs
Equipment	Please provide details and justification for any items of equipment being sought. Computer equipment, fieldwork, data collection, archival and digitisation costs may be included under this heading. The Council will pay particular attention to any equipment sought (e.g. laptops, tablets, scientific tools etc.). Any such requests will require a strong rationale and an account of why such items might not be available to an applicant from any other source.

When finished entering your budgetary information, ensure that you click 'Save' **before** clicking 'Close' at the bottom of the window.

5.2.10 Academic Qualifications

All applicants must provide details of their academic qualifications. Successful applicants will be required to provide official transcripts/parchments before awards are confirmed.

All applicants must also provide additional information regarding relevant research achievements since beginning a career as a researcher (since you completed the degree that qualifies you to embark on doctoral studies in Ireland or in the country of the proposed secondment/placement).

5.2.11 Collaboration Statement

Applicants under Strand 2A and Strand 2B are required to upload a statement (1 page PDF) outlining their track record and previous history (if any) in collaborating with the co-PI, together with a case for why the two parties are a good fit for the proposed project and how the collaboration will benefit the two parties or provide opportunity for further collaboration or capacity building in the research area. Furthermore, the statement should outline the Co-PI's intention to participate in the project, their role in the project and their commitment to same.

6. Assessment Process

Applications deemed eligible by the Irish Research Council will be assigned to international remote reviewers. Those found ineligible will not proceed to the assessment phase.

When all remote reviewers are complete, a short list of applications will be compiled. These applications will pass into the next phase of assessment. An international panel will assess the shortlisted applications. For more in-depth information, please refer to Appendix 4 'Evaluation Procedures and Criteria' of the [Call Document](#).

Applicants may check the status of their application by logging onto the OLS.

7. Notification and Feedback

Once the assessment process is complete, applicants will be informed of the outcome by email and their status will be updated on the OLS.

Feedback to candidates will consist of the score that the IAB assigned the application and the decision of the IRC in relation to funding. Additional feedback will not be provided beyond that which is provided with the assessment result.

Please note that this decision is final and that no correspondence will be undertaken in relation to individual assessments or scoring. Under no circumstance will feedback provided by the IRC compromise the confidentiality of a reference submitted to the IRC.

8. Information for successful award holders

Once recommended for funding, successful applications will appear in the OLS as 'conditional'. The IRC will issue a Letter of Offer and an Award Acceptance Form outlining the approved budget for the Award to the successful applicants. Each award is made subject to the terms of the Letter of Offer, the application, the approved budget, and the Call Document for this Scheme.

The conditional offer is subject to the Acceptance Form being signed by the successful award holder, the HEI, and returned to the IRC on time. It is also subject to any other required documentation (e.g. academic transcripts, collaboration agreements) being supplied to the IRC in a timely fashion.

9. Submission of Ethical Approval, a Data Management Plan and a Collaboration Agreement

If successful in the competition, a full ethical report and approval from an ethical review committee will need to be received by the IRC within six months of the start date. As ethical review committees only meet sporadically each year, it is recommended that applicants start thinking about this process early.

A detailed Data Management Plan (DMP) will need to be submitted with the first progress report at six months after the commencement of the project. The DMP should describe the data management life cycle for the data to be collected, processed and/or generated by a research project. As part of making research data findable, accessible, interoperable, and re-usable (FAIR), a DMP should include information on:

- the handling of research data during and after the end of the project;
- what data will be collected, processed and/or generated;
- which methodology and standards will be applied;
- whether data will be shared/made open access. If data cannot be made available, explain why;
- how data will be curated and preserved (including after the end of the project).

For further information and advice concerning DMPs, see sections 8.2: Data management plans and Appendix 7 of the [COALESCE 2024 Call Document](#).

Where more than one institution is involved in an award, a Collaboration Agreement must be submitted within 6 months of the award commencing.

10. Guidance on the Sex/Gender Dimension Statement

An initiative arising from the [IRC's Gender Strategy](#) is the requirement for all applicants to demonstrate that they have given full consideration to whether there is a potential sex and/or gender dimension in their proposed research. Applicants should consult Appendix 5 for further information.

Where applicants have indicated that there is no sex/gender dimension to their research, they will be asked to justify this assertion.

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. 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, not integrating sex and gender analysis into the design, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of the research can lead to poor results and missed opportunities.