



# North-South Research Programme 2021

## Frequently Asked Questions

\*\*\* Please note, this document may be updated during the call process \*\*\*

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**New questions highlighted**

<b>Host Institutions and Partnerships</b> .....	2
<b>Eligibility</b> .....	4
<b>Salaries and Budgets</b> .....	5
<b>Application Process</b> .....	8
<b>Review Process</b> .....	9
<b>Awards</b> .....	9
<b>Monitoring</b> .....	9



## **Host Institutions and Partnerships**

### **Q1a: Are applications to Strands I, II & III made by individuals or institutions?**

The programme is open to applications led by individuals and teams located at the higher education and research institutions as listed in Appendix 1 of the call document, as well as the institutions themselves. All applications must be submitted under the auspices of and with the approval of these host institutions and include an administrative lead in Ireland as set out in 1.1 of the appendix (Institutions in Ireland eligible as lead institutions). Applications must include at least one lead (individual (Strand I), team (Strand II) or institution (Strand III)) from the North and the South.

### **Q1b: From the North-South Research Programme document it looks like some institutions can be a partner but not the lead and that two leads (one from the North and one from the South/as listed in Appendix 1: the eligible as leads lists) is required. Is this correct?**

The programme is open to all higher education and research institutions as listed in Appendix 1 of the call document.

While there is no limit on the number of lead institutions, there must be at least one lead from the North (appendix 1.3) and one from the South (appendix 1.1). An administrative lead (appendix 1.1) must also be clearly identified (for HEA communication and grant management purposes). The higher education and research partners, as listed in appendix 1.2, can be included, as partners or co-leads.

Other partners, alongside those listed in appendix 1.2, such as partners from further education, civic society, cross community, enterprise and innovation from Ireland and Northern Ireland are also welcome, however the proposed costs to be assigned to such partners should not exceed 10% of the total cost of the proposal.

### **Q1c: Can a HEI from the Northern Ireland Institutions eligible as lead institutions list lead and a HECA member HEI be a partner?**

The programme is open to all higher education and research institutions as listed in Appendix 1 of the call document. While there is no limit on the number of lead institutions, there must be at least one lead from the North (appendix 1.3) and one from the South (appendix 1.1). An administrative lead (appendix 1.1) must also be clearly identified (for HEA communication and grant management purposes). Other higher education and research partners, as listed in appendix 1.2, can be included, as partners or co-leads.

### **Q1d: Could you please distinguish between ‘non-higher education partners’ and ‘additional partners’ in relation to allowable expenditure?**

The programme is open to all higher education and research institutions as listed in Appendix 1 of the call document. The inclusion of ‘**non-higher education partners**’ from further education, civic society, cross community, enterprise and innovation from Ireland and Northern Ireland will be welcome. The



proposed costs to be assigned to such partners should not exceed 10% of the total cost of the proposal.

'Additional partners' are higher education partners or research partners or non-higher education partners from outside of Ireland and outside of Northern Ireland, may also be included in a proposal. Costs incurred by additional partners may not be included in the funding proposal.

**Q1e: Could I have more clarification on point 24 of the general guidelines which states that "the host institutions will accept full responsibility for the management, monitoring and control of all research funded by this award and all those persons involved, including but not limited to employees, whether full or part-time, permanent, or temporary, students and others employed or involved in any research funded by this award"?**

Should an application be successful, any funding awarded will be paid to the lead (admin/governance) institution in Ireland which will be responsible for the disbursement of funds in accordance with the terms and conditions of the award and the collaborative research agreement that must be agreed and signed by the partners involved.

Host institutions must manage and monitor the funding received in accordance with the same. The lead admin in Ireland will manage all reporting to the Higher Education Authority. Each host institution will be responsible for their involvement in the award including staff and research students in accordance with the terms and conditions of the award and institutional norms.

**Q1f: Could I have more clarification on point 25 of the general guidelines which states that "The host institutions accept responsibility for any litigation or liability that may arise out of research funded by this award and is responsible for ensuring appropriate insurance coverage in this regard"?**

Should an application be successful, any funding awarded will be paid to the lead (admin/governance) institution in Ireland which will be responsible for the disbursement of funds in accordance with the terms and conditions of the award and the collaborative research agreement that must be agreed and signed by the partners involved.

Host institutions must manage and monitor the funding received in accordance with the same. The lead/governance admin in Ireland will manage all reporting to the Higher Education Authority. Each host institution will be responsible for their involvement in the award including indemnity, etc., in accordance with the terms and conditions of the award and institutional norms.

**Q1g: For Strand I, is it intended that the funding is strictly on a one-to-one basis, or can collaborators be included? The call document says "This strand will support individual researchers based in an Irish higher education institution (HEI) to collaborate with a researcher in a HEI in Northern Ireland and vice versa on an identified research project.". However, on page 5, it states "There must be a minimum of one lead institution/lead investigator/team lead from both Ireland and Northern Ireland associated with each proposal". It goes on to say "While proposals will be led by host higher education institutions, the inclusion of partners from further education, civic society, cross community, enterprise and innovation from Ireland and Northern Ireland will be welcome. Research Performing Organisations and other government agencies may be also included as partners."**

The programme is open to applications led by individuals and teams located at the higher education and research institutions as listed in Appendix 1 of the call document, as well as the institutions



themselves. All applications must be submitted under the auspices of and with the approval of these host institutions and include an administrative lead in Ireland as set out in 1.1 of the appendix (Institutions in Ireland eligible as lead institutions). Applications must include at least one lead (individual (Strand I), team (Strand II) or institution (Strand III) from the North and the South.

Strand I provides funding to facilitate collaboration between individual researchers on a one to one basis. The application must be supported by the institutions involved with a lead admin institution identified in Ireland. There is no limit on the number of partners that can be involved on a proposal submitted to any of the three strands, and other individual researchers may be added to the proposal provided their necessity to the completion of the project is clearly justified in the proposal. Partners from outside higher education and research institutions are welcome with their costs being capped at 10% of a proposal's total budget.

**Q1h: Can a non-higher education/ non-research partner such as an NGO be involved in more than one application?**

A non-higher education/non-research partner such as an NGO may be involved in more than one application. Where more than one of the applications is recommended for funding assurance that the commitment required from the organisation in meeting each project's requirements can be met by that organisation will be required by the Higher Education Authority prior to any offer of funding being made.

**Eligibility**

**Q2a: It is stated that the lead individual investigators and team lead/s must be, at a minimum, two years post PhD. Is the two years minimum from VIVA and acceptance or graduation?**

The lead investigators and/or team lead/s must be, at a minimum, two years post PhD. They must have been awarded their doctoral degrees no later than 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019. For this condition, the date of graduation (conferral) should be taken into account. If the lead has not yet graduated, all the requirements for the award of a doctoral degree, including the submission of the hardbound corrected thesis must be complete within the required timeline.

**Q2b: Could you provide some clarity around the statement given in the call document (Section: Eligibility, pt 12 (pg 6): "In line with the objectives of the scheme, the programme will not support proposals which can reasonably be expected to lead to commercial applications and exploitation in the short term, however for particular proposals collaboration and/or support from commercial sources is permissible. This is at the discretion of the applicant(s), but such interactions must clearly be in the context of added value from a research quality perspective. Where the feasibility of a project proposal is dependent on external support from commercial sources, details of the support should be included in the proposal and clearly justified". We would appreciate further guidance on what particular proposals collaboration and/or support from commercial sources is permissible?**



Proposals that clearly set out how they address the key principles of the scheme and the specific programme criteria, and which might include support or involvement of commercial or enterprise partners may be submitted to the scheme. Such proposals which might lead to longer term commercial application should have appropriate arrangements in place to manage this in accordance with national protocol and institutional norms. External support for such proposals is permissible provided the need for that support is clearly justified in the applications and that the source of the support is aligned with and in agreement with the aims and objectives of the scheme.

**Q2c: Can I be part of two different research grants as a lead investigator from Northern Ireland is different from a lead investigator from Republic of Ireland?**

A lead investigator may be involved in more than one application across any of the three strands. Where more than one of the applications is recommended for funding assurance that the commitment required from the researcher in meeting each project's requirements can be met by that researcher will be required by the Higher Education Authority prior to any offer of funding being made.

**Salaries and Budgets**

**Q3a: In circumstances where a proposed project would include funding for a postgraduate research studentship, could the proposed student be a named individual on the bid, or would the studentship need to be advertised as an open competition?**

The recruitment of research postgraduate students should be in line with usual institutional conventions and is a matter for the institutions involved.

**Q3b: The first bullet point on page 10 states the following: "Costs may include buy-out or salary costs for research team leads and/or lead investigators. Consumables and travel may be included in the proposal for team leads and/or lead Investigators and for any post-doctoral researcher recruited onto the project. These costs are capped at a maximum of €10,000 per person, per year." Does the last sentence mean that the cost of buy-out or salary costs for research team leads and/or lead investigator are capped at €10,000 per person, per year? Or is it that consumables and travel for those costs are capped at €10k per person, per year?**

In this case, the costs capped at a maximum of €10,000 per person per year refer to consumables and travel.

**Q3c: Is including an overhead contribution, and the amount of that overhead, at the discretion of individual HEIs, or will the HEA provide more definite guidance?**

Yes, the inclusion of an overhead contribution is at the discretion of the individual HEIs. An overhead contribution of up to 25% may be included in proposals.



**Q3d: Would a requested overhead contribution be above and distinct from the maximal allowed request?**

The inclusion of an overhead contribution of up to 25% is at the discretion of the individual HEIs. It should be included in the overall funding allocation sought and should not exceed the maximum project allocations as set out in the call document.

**Q3e: What do the HEA envisage is the exact difference between a Strand II and Strand III application, since both are of the same scale and also apparently scored using the same metrics? Could a project management/operations team be funded under Strand III to help implement the research programme in the various institutions?**

Strand II: Emerging hubs of excellence will provide funding for academic research teams to collaborate on an agreed programme of research. This might, for example, be several departments or faculties in similar (or related) disciplines working collaboratively across a range of institutions and partners (north and south).

Proximal and distal interdisciplinary collaborations will be encouraged. The agreed work programme may address basic or strategic research and the objectives of the programmes must align with the programme's key principles and specific programme criteria.

Strand III: Partnerships of scale. This strand will support institution to institution strategic research engagement: Higher education institutions will be supported to collaborate with each other on the basis of their respective institutional strategic research priorities, aligned with the objectives of the scheme as set out in the call document.

The collaboration may address basic or strategic research and/or research strategies, or design policies and/or programmes/ networks that will build research capacity through collaboration on an institutional, national, all island basis.

Proposals must include a research agenda, and this may include research that reflects on the policies/programmes being designed and/or implemented. A Project Manager may be included in strand III and research staff including research students may be recruited onto the team with a view to supporting the project on an operational basis provided any training requirements are provided for and the roles allow contribution to the proposed research agenda where relevant.

Outcomes that on balance benefit all institutions involved and demonstration of the sustainability of any policies, programmes or other capacity building mechanisms put in place as part of a project should be included in the proposal.

**Q3f: It is mentioned that €10,000 per year per person consumable costs is allowed. Can we add our lab manager to the project? If yes, can we ask additional €10K for lab manager under consumable budget?**

On Strand III: Partnerships of Scale up to 60,000 per annum pro rata may be sought for a project manager. Costs for consumables and travel cannot be sought for this person. Where a lab manager is also researcher and their contribution to the project team and to the project as a researcher is



clearly justified in the application, the lab manager/researcher may also be added to the team and consumables once clearly justified may be requested for that lab manager/researcher.

**Q3g: Can an existing post-doc be hired part-time to work on the project or can an existing PhD student work on the project?**

The recruitment of research postgraduate students, postdoctoral researchers and all staff recruited onto the project should be in line with usual institutional conventions and is a matter for the institutions involved.

**Q3h: Is there a certain percentage of the overall funding already assigned for the three different strands?**

No. The percentage of funding to be awarded to each strand will be in accordance with the numbers of proposals received, the quality of those proposals, and the recommendations of the assessment panel.

**Q3i: Could you clarify a point re postdocs/graduate students and research costs. In the call, it states: Costs may include buy-out or salary costs for research team leads and/or lead investigators. Consumables and travel may be included in the proposal for team leads and/or lead investigators and for any post-doctoral researcher recruited onto the project. These costs are capped at a maximum of €10,000 per person, per year. Does this mean that all research costs (i.e., consumables plus travel) of postdoctoral researchers and graduate students must be to a maximum of €10,000 per researcher/student per year?**

In this case, the costs capped at a maximum of €10,000 per person per year refer to consumables and travel for team leads and/or lead investigators and postdoctoral researchers recruited onto the project.

Costs including stipend, of up to €30,000 per annum, plus fees may be sought for research students for up to a maximum of four years to include at least 12 months to be spent outside of their host institution, such as at the lead partner institution. Where research students spend time outside of their host institution up to an additional €5,000 may be sought for costs incurred.

**Q3j: Is there any additional guidance regarding the scale of the consortium needed for Strand II?**

Please see Q1g and Q3e above.

**Q3k: "Provision should be made for contingency costs at up to 10% of the overall budget", does this mean that Strand I applicants calculate 10% contingency on €200k budget (total €220k) or is 10% contingency included in the €200k total.**

Contingency of 10% must be included in the total budget, in this case in the €200k total.

**Q3l: For Strand II (Emerging hubs of excellence) and Strand III (Partnerships of scale), is there a minimum budget to be exceeded?**





There is no minimum budget to be exceeded, the maximum value of award for Strand II and Strand III partnerships is €4,000,000. Where the budget being requested in a proposal is significantly lower than the allowable maximum amount, clear justification for the request should be included in the proposal.

### **Application Process**

**Q4a: Can more information be offered in relation to the institutional endorsement for applications for the North-South Research Programme Call, e.g., is an institutional Letter of Support and/or a signed & stamped Cover Sheet required?**

An endorsement template will be provided. Once completed, signed, and stamped by the lead admin institution in Ireland the endorsement template must be uploaded to the online application system which will open on September 6<sup>th</sup> and close at the deadline of 4 pm on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

**Q4b: Will further guidelines be published for host institutions about the application process?**

An indicative application form along with a guidance document will be issued in late August.

**Q4c: Can a PI from an eligible institution submit more than one application to this programme, given that each application will have a different research aspect and each application will be different and unique?**

As with the answer provided for question 2c above, a lead investigator may be involved in more than one application across any of the three strands. Where more than one of the applications is recommended for funding assurance that the commitment required from the researcher in meeting each project's requirements can be met by that researcher will be required by the Higher Education Authority prior to any offer of funding being made.

**Q4d: In the call document it is stated that "proposals must have a demonstrable impact on the education sectors with regard to a) quality of research work and outputs, b) illustration of the feedback into the teaching and learning domain and c) the building up of research capabilities in specific research areas on the island as a whole;" Does this mean the research must directly feed into research areas of interest to higher education academics, and directly impact on teaching and learning (i.e. research about teaching methods/approaches/topics etc)? Or is the scope wider than this however findings must have some relevance to HEAs?**

Proposals must set out how the project will have a demonstrable impact on the higher education and research sectors north and/or south and contribute to enhanced teaching and learning. This may be achieved in relation to teaching and learning at an institutional/national/ all island level in one or more of the following ways, amongst others:

- by individuals involved in a proposal through the teaching and learning they carry out in their institutional roles or through their input to programme and policy design,
- by addressing institutional and/or national strategies relating to teaching and learning through input to policy design and implementation,





- by a direct contribution to curricular reform or content, skills development and enterprise or societal engagement.

## **Review Process**

### **Q5a: Would a financial contribution from the applying HEI towards the costs of the project be seen as a positive in terms of overall score?**

No financial contribution is required from any HEI, or other partner involved in a proposal. All proposals will be assessed and ranked according to their merit and in line with the specific criteria for the programme set out in the call document. While financial commitment from an HEI is not prohibited, a proposal that includes such a commitment will not be placed at an advantage or disadvantage in terms of overall scores awarded.

### **Q5b: Is there an advantage in terms of score to including more than one HEI from the South and the North?**

The programme is open to all higher education and research institutions as listed in Appendix 1 of the call document. While there is no limit on the number of lead institutions, there must be at least one lead from the North (appendix 1.3) and one from the South (appendix 1.1). An administrative lead (appendix 1.1) must also be clearly identified (for HEA communication and grant management purposes). Other higher education and research partners, as listed in appendix 1.2, can be included, as partners or co-leads.

Where a proposal includes more than one HEI from Ireland and/or more than one HEI from Northern Ireland the proposal will not be at any advantage or disadvantage in terms of scoring. All proposals will be assessed and ranked according to their merit and in line with the specific criteria for the programme set out in the call document.

## **Awards**

### **Q6a: Must all successful awards begin on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January or could we begin in June 2022? Can projects run for 42 months?**

Projects on Strands II and III may run to a maximum of 48 months. Where the project duration is 42 months or less, reasons for the shorter duration and justification of the project's feasibility in that time frame should be provided in the project proposal. Projects are expected to begin in January 2022.

## **Monitoring**

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