



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

Host Institutions and Partnerships	2
Eligibility	6
Salaries and Budgets	13
Application Process	25
Review Process	28
Awards	29
Monitoring	30



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 an 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 also be 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.

Q1i: Are both monetary and non-monetary forms of support permissible?

No financial contribution is required from any HEI or other partner involved in a proposal. However, monetary and non-monetary forms of support from partners aligned with the programme's key principles and its aims and objectives are permissible. Such support should be identified and detailed in the project proposal.

Proposals that might lead to a longer-term commercial application should have appropriate arrangements in place to manage this in accordance with the national protocol and institutional norms. External support for such proposals is permissible provided the need for that support is justified in the application and that the source of the support is aligned with and in agreement with the aims and objectives of the scheme.

Q1j: In 'Section 5.2: Team Composition' in the Indicative Application Form when listing the details of each role in the team, is there any flexibility post-award to changes in the team composition (e.g. the number of PhDs/Postdocs per institution)?

The 'Team Composition' provided in an application should reflect the resource requirements necessary to the completion of the project and, where relevant, projections for the number of research students that may need to be recruited onto a project to meet the aims and objectives of the project proposal. Costs for the 'Team Composition' should correlated with budget costs.

Any change, expansion, augmentation of the team at post award stage would not normally be permitted if it deviates from the proposed research proposal. Should difficulties surrounding recruitment or other unusual difficulties impacting on team composition arise post award initiation such difficulties should be reported in annual progress reports and/or interim reports when requests for a change in team composition may be considered. Please see Q6b regarding recruitment of postgraduates.



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 31st 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 the 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.



Q2d: In general, will the North-/South programme support research have related to education programmes, including medical education?

Yes, research proposals will be accepted from all disciplines.

See also question 4d.

Q2e: The FAQs makes a general statement that there is no limit on the number of lead institutions, however, is there any further guidance in this regard with respect to Strand III which is to support institution to institution strategic research engagement?

The number of partners included in a Strand III proposal is at the discretion of the proposers, provided the application includes at least one lead institution from the North and the South.

Q2f: The call doc states: 'Projects with a shorter timeframe will also be considered.' Does this apply to any of the three Strands? Is there a minimum and maximum duration for Strand II projects?

Yes, projects with a shorter time frame will be considered for any strand as long as the justification for requesting a shorter time frame is provided in the project proposal. For example, proposals on Strands II & III can be no shorter than 42 months and no longer than 48 months.

Q2g: Is there an estimate of how many proposals from each strand will be funded?

See question 3h.

Q2h: Can you define commercial applications and exploitation?

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.

For the purposes of an application to this programme:

- Commercial Application: means the exercise, assignment, or license of any rights to make, have made, use, copy, sublicense, sell, or otherwise exploit an invention or work for short term economic or commercial gain.



- **Exploitation:** means the action of making use of and benefiting from project outputs and outcomes for economic or commercial gain such as in accordance with National Intellectual Property Protocol.

As per the call, ownership of any intellectual property arising from collaborative projects shall be dealt with and ascertained through appropriate host and institutional partner structures, in line with the National Intellectual Property Protocol. Collaborative research agreements must be established between all institutions and organisations involved in a project. Where a project receives outside financial support, the source of that support should be included in the collaborative research agreement.

All applications must be in keeping with the key principles of the programme.

Q2i: Can a Project Manager role be included in a Strand II application, as these projects can be the same scale as a Strand III project (i.e. up to €4M)?

Yes, costs for up to €60,000 may be sought for a Project Manager on Strand II proposals.

Q2j: Can an 'academic research team' be made up of individual academics from a number of eligible HEI institutions and other RPOs (i.e. other eligible partners)?

Yes, academic research teams participating in a proposal to Strand II may consist of a number of individual academics/ researchers from eligible HEIs and organisations listed in Appendix 1.1 and 1.2. Other partners may also be involved in the proposal.

Q2k: Is there a minimum and maximum number of partners for an emerging hub of excellence in Strand II?

While there is no minimum and maximum number of partners for Strand II, please see question 1b and 2j.

Q2l: The call guidelines state that “at the time of the initiation of an award the lead individual investigator/ team lead in the lead institution in Ireland must be employed by the lead institution in Ireland with a contract of sufficient duration to cover the complete time scale of a funded project”.

- **Would it be acceptable for an institution to confirm that a successful applicant, who may not have a contract that spans the duration of a potential application at the time of**



submission, will be offered a contract to cover the duration of their project should they be successful?

- **If an applicant is not currently a permanent member of staff, are they eligible to apply?**

The call requires that *“at the time of the initiation of an award the lead individual investigator/ team lead in the lead institution in Ireland must be employed by the lead institution in Ireland with a contract of sufficient duration to cover the complete time scale of a funded project”*. These contractual matters are an issue for resolution between the prospective lead individual investigator/ team lead and their proposed host institution, should an offer of funding be made.

Q2m: Can a permanent staff member apply to this scheme and if successful employ a research fellow for a duration of 1 or 2 years?

See Q1A, Q1b and Q2l. As per the call, 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.

Q2n: In relation to the HEA North-South Research Programme, could you provide more clarity please on how "Demonstration of mechanisms which will assist in the understanding of cultural diversities" will be assessed? Could some context be provided here? What types of cultural diversities are being referred to?

The origins and source of funding comes from the [Shared Island Fund](#).

The Shared Island unit examines the political, social, economic and cultural considerations for a shared future in which all traditions are mutually respected. Operationally, the unit is focusing its work in three areas:

- building a Shared Island
- fostering constructive and inclusive dialogue, including the Shared Island Dialogue series
- commissioning research

The work of the Shared Island unit is guided by the principles of the Good Friday Agreement.



Key objectives for the unit are:

- delivery of the commitments on Shared Island in the Programme for Government
- strengthening social, economic and political links on the island
- the promotion of all-island approaches to the strategic challenges facing Ireland, North and South

Mechanisms identified in a project proposal that will assist in the understanding of cultural diversities should speak to the key principles of the call, its aims and objectives as set out in the 'Call Document'. Proposals should support the achievement of, and deliver outputs relating to, the goals and objectives of national and institutional research strategy; the objectives of the Shared Island initiative; national alignment with Horizon Europe's mission-based approach and/or one or more of the United Nation's SDGs. Where cultural diversity is identified as a goal or strategy in one of the aforementioned policies/strategies, project proposals and the cultural mechanisms contained therein may map onto those goals and/or strategies.

The HEA promotes equality of access to higher education for people with disabilities, mature students who previously had not had the opportunity to access higher education, those facing social and economic barriers and minority groups, including the Traveller community. Where relevant, project proposals should consider equality of access in relation to project design, outcomes, and outputs.

Applicants must demonstrate that they have given full consideration to whether there is a potential sex and/or gender dimension in their proposed research. Applicants who have indicated that there is no sex/gender dimension to their research will be asked to justify this assertion. As far as possible, the gender balance of a research team should also be balanced, and reporting requirements will include reflections on that balance.

Q2o: Is it mandatory for PhD students (and Masters students if applicable) to spend 12 months outside their host institution?

No, it is not mandatory for research students to spend 12 months outside their host institution.

Q2p: Can Healthcare and Epidemiology disciplines apply for funding under this programme?

See q2D.



When applying to the North-South Research Funding Programme use the Primary and Secondary Research Areas in the 'Indicative Form' to position the discipline and provide relevant keywords to further contextualise the specific discipline.

Q2q: Is there any PhD equivalence that would allow researchers from other backgrounds to qualify for the lead roles?

The lead investigators and/or team lead/s applying to North-South research Funding Programme must be, at a minimum, two years post PhD (see q2a).

It is recognised that in certain fields some other doctoral titles have the same status and represent variants of the PhD. Such qualified researchers from other backgrounds may be proposed to a lead role, so long as they meet all the other requirements of this scheme.

Q2r: If an applicant holds an adjunct/emeritus contract within a HEI would that qualify for eligibility under this call once the applicant is allowed to submit funding applications under the HEI policy?

Applications must be endorsed by the lead admin HEI. Internal HEI eligibility policies are a matter for the HEI and the potential applicant.

See q2l.

Q2s: Where an individual holds a lectureship based on their professional experience relevant to their discipline (e.g. writer, filmmaker), but does not have a PhD, are they eligible to be a lead in applications to this call?

As per q2a and q2q, to be eligible, lead investigators and/or team lead/s must be, at a minimum, two years post PhD.

Q2t. Suppose an applicant is involved in a discipline that is not listed and the respective sub-areas are not listed in the Call Document or other information. How does one proceed in the application, outlining the primary and secondary areas?

Applicants must use Appendix 2 to identify their discipline and provide this information in the application form. Appendix 2 is not a complete list. Where a discipline is not listed, an applicant may use a free text box in the online system to specify the discipline involved in their proposal.

Q2u: Would applicants who have Honorary Appointments be eligible for this funding call?



The lead investigators and/or team lead/s applying to the North-South research Funding Programme must be, at a minimum, two years post PhD (see q2a).

See q2l. See q2r.

Q2v: Is it possible to submit the same (or a very similar) application to Strand I and Strand II, but with the latter involving a larger scale project with a bigger group of contributors, more project staff, a larger sample size, etc. than the latter?

Similar proposals may be submitted to more than one Strand provided neither scaling a project up nor down impacts on the feasibility of a proposal. However, should both proposals be ranked highly by the assessment panel an offer of funding may be made to carry out both or to one of the proposals taking into account any potential for double funding and/or the duplication of research and effort.

Q2w: Would applicants be permitted to resubmit an unsuccessful proposal under this call to the proposed second call that will be issued as part of this initiative. As part of the above, if unsuccessful, would an idea/proposal be required to undergo any revision if it was deemed fundable in the first call?

If unsuccessful, applicants may resubmit once to any future North-South Research Programme funding calls. Where a project is deemed fundable but lies outside the budget threshold, any changes the applicant wishes to make while preparing the application for resubmission will be at the discretion of the applicant/consortium.

Q2x: Would a project on clinical medicine including a definitive trial be eligible for this scheme?

Applications from all disciplines are eligible to apply to the call. Proposals submitted may be in the areas of basic or strategic research. All proposals submitted must address the key principles and objectives of the Programme. Proposals that involve elements of and/or clinical trials as part of the overall project will be considered under this Programme.

The lead admin HEI in Ireland and the lead admin institution are responsible for ensuring proper management and governance of applications awarded funding, including securing the ethical approvals and licenses necessary to the completion of the project. Where a project involves clinical trials, all lead investigators/team leads are responsible for ensuring Irish, and EU regulations regarding clinical trials are adhered to. If the competent authority or a research ethics committee requires an



amendment that substantially affects the proposed project, the awardee must inform the HEA, and the project may need to be resubmitted to the HEA for reassessment.

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 postgraduate research 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 investigators 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 programmes' objectives 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 based on 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, including 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 are 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 a 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 postgraduate research 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 number 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 a 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 the 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 maximum allowable amount, clear justification for the request should be included in the proposal.

Q3m: Is pension at 20% to be included when calculating employment costs? Is there a specific method for calculating teaching buyout? Can staff employment costs include increments and cost of living increases (e.g. 1% p.a.)?

Proposals can include costs associated with establishing partnerships that improve researcher exchanges and interactions with each other and with external stakeholders. The employment and or buy out costs should be in accordance with institutional norms.

Q3n: Can Research Assistants be employed on a project?

Yes, a research assistant may be recruited for a project. Where a research assistant is employed, training costs for the development of the research assistant may be sought for the duration of their employment.

Q3o: Is there a minimum/maximum stipend allowable?



Stipends can be no lower than €18,500 per annum. There is no maximum allowable stipend, but stipend plus costs per research student cannot exceed €30,000 per research student per annum. Fees may also be requested in addition to the €30,000 per student per annum. Furthermore, where research students spend time outside of their host institution, up to an additional €5,000 may be sought for costs incurred.

Q3p: Can the funding cover the costs of Research Masters students?

Yes, the costs of up to €30,000, including stipend and research costs per annum plus fees, may be sought for research students. Fees may also be requested in addition to the €30,000 per student per annum. Where research students spend time outside of their host institution up to an additional €5,000 may be sought for costs incurred.

Q3q: Is student stipend included as Pay for the purposes of the overhead calculation?

The cost of institutional overheads may be included at a cost of up to 25% of pay costs (full-time personnel). Research student/s' stipends should not be included as Pay for the purpose of overhead calculation.

Q3r: What types of costs can be included for further education, civic society, cross community, enterprise and innovation partners?

Costs for further education, civic society, cross community, enterprise and innovation partners, (such as small equipment (e.g., laptops), software licensing, training, travel, networking events including speaker costs), may be included but justification must be provided illustrating that the costs are absolutely necessary to carry out the project.

Q3s: Can you give an e.g., of how the 10% contingency cost should be calculated?

See Question 3K.

Q3t: 'Costs may include up to €60,000 per annum pro rata for a Project Manager on Partnerships of scale' – does the €60,000 include salary, PRSI + pension costs?

Yes, costs of up to €60,000 per annum pro rata for a Project Manager. This should include provision for salary, PRSI and pension costs.

Q3u: Does the 10% limit on costs apply to all organisations listed in appendix 1.2?



Higher education and research partners, as listed in appendix 1.2, can be included, as partners or co-leads. The breakdown of funding requested between lead partners is at the discretion of the partners participating in the project proposal. Up to 50% of funding may go to partners in Northern Ireland.

Q3v: Is there a minimum budget for Strand II?

There is no minimum budget for Strand II, however a Strand II proposal should be no less than 42 months duration.

Q3w: Is investigator time allowable as a cost or is it only buyout cost that are allowed for lead investigators?

No, only buy out costs are allowed for lead investigators.

Q3x: Would the allocation of summer (undergraduate) internships be an allowable expense?

No, internships are not an allowable expense under the North-South Research Programme.

Q3y: Is it possible for buy-out costs of an academic staff member to be included in a budget, notwithstanding that such a person does not meet the 2-year rule in order to be a team lead?

All research team leads/ lead investigators must at a minimum be two years post PhD as specified in the 'Call Document' and in Question 2a above.

Q3z: Could you please provide more information regarding staff costs for example:

- what proportion can be sought?
- Are salary costs and teaching buy out for core paid academic staff eligible?
- Are salary costs only eligible if the team leads and/or lead investigators are not core members of the applying institutes, i.e. the team leads and/or lead investigators are not permanent members of the academic staff?
- Can I include the salary of an academic member of staff who will be working on the project 0.1 FTE. If allowed is the above cost eligible for overhead allocation?

As per the call, allowable expenditure, costs may include buy-out or salary costs for research team leads and/or lead investigators. In addition, 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.



As with Strand I (see Q1g), other individual researchers may also be added to a proposal for Strands II, and III provided their necessity to the completion of the project is clearly justified in the proposal. Costs for such individuals may include buy-out or salary costs and a maximum of €10,000 per person for consumables and travel.

The proportion or share of buy-out or salary costs is a matter for the consortia to agree. This may include buy-out or salary costs of core academic and/or contract academic/research staff. The allocation of these costs within projects is not limited to team leads only.

The cost of institutional overheads may be included at the cost of up to 25% of pay costs (full-time personnel). Therefore, research student/s' stipends should not be included as Pay for the purpose of overhead calculation.

Q3aa: Can you include administrative support in your application if you are not the admin lead institution as per Appendix 1.1?

Strands II and III allow costs of up to €60,000 per annum for a Project Manager. The Project Manager may be based at the lead admin institution or in one or more of the other lead partner institutions. The costs may be split across more than one Project Manager based in any of the lead partners. Breakdown of the costs and the Project Manager's location is subject to the agreement of all partners involved in the project proposal.

Q3bb: Q1d of the FAQs outlines that proposed costs to be assigned to 'non-higher education partners' "should not exceed 10% of the total cost of the proposal". Is this 10% per non-HEI partner, or 10% across all non-HEI partners?

This is across all non-higher education partners and means that the total costs of all non-higher education partners involved do not exceed 10% of the proposal's total cost.

Q3cc: Can staff costs be funded for both lead applicants and named partners and is there a maximum number of lead investigators on a project i.e. one per participating institution or a maximum number of team leads?

Each project must, at a minimum, identify a lead HEI partner in Ireland and Northern Ireland as specified in the 'Call Document' and as addressed in Q1b. Applications must include at least one lead



(individual (Strand I), team (Strand II) or institution (Strand III)) from the North and the South. With the exception of Strand I (see Q1g), there is no limit on the number of lead investigators who may participate in a project across institutions/organisations provided that there is a research team lead/lead investigator in the lead admin HEI in Ireland and the lead HEI in Northern Ireland.

See Q3z regarding costs for research team leads/ lead investigators.

See Q3r regarding costs that may be requested for non-higher education and non-research partners.

Q3dd: Is the maximum funding available across each of the three strands inclusive of the direct costs overhead?

Yes, the maximum funding available for each strand is inclusive of the direct costs overhead.

Q3ee: Can a research student who already has funding (Stipend and fees) be added to a project and can we request to include consumables for that student?

Research students recruited onto a project funded from the North-South Research Programme should work on or be working on a PhD project that reflects the programme's key principles and criteria. It is envisaged that such students would be full-time students whose main source of funding is from the North-South Research funding programme.

Where a research student is already in receipt of funding from another source and is working on a project compatible with the key principles of the North-South research programme and with the programme's criteria, requests for consumables for that student are permissible.

The host institutions will take full responsibility for providing full supervision and training of any PhD students recruited onto projects, with reference to the [National Framework for Doctoral Education](#).

Q3ff: What is the difference between:

- **The lead investigator/team lead and the primary contact?**
- **The primary contact and the lead admin representative?**

An administrative/governance lead institution in Ireland must be identified for the purposes of the administration of the project. This administrative lead will be the primary point of contact and will be responsible for all communication with the Higher Education Authority. Each research proposal must identify a primary point of contact in the lead institution in Ireland.



The primary point of contact may be the lead investigator, a project manager or another suitably appointed representative in the institution in Ireland.

The lead admin representative referred to the endorsement template is the President/VP/Director of Research or the appropriate office holder in this regard within the lead admin institution that agrees to endorse an application.

Q3gg: Is there a difference between Consumables and Research Consumables?

Consumables refers to research consumables.

Q3hh: Is there the following:

- **Max budget for travel?**
- **Max budget for consumables?**

No, there is no maximum budget for travel and consumables for a whole proposal. However, consumables and travel costs are capped at a maximum of €10,000 per person per year for team leads/lead investigators. Specific costs for postdoctoral researchers and research students are addressed in the following FAQs: Q3f, Q3i, Q3z and Q3ee.

Q3ii: Could funds be requested for 4 year PhDs (which will require a No Cost extension), or should the project go for 3.5 or 3 year PhDs to ensure the PhD projects stay within the allowable lifetime of the project?

Where the duration of a proposed project on Strands II and III is the maximum of 48 months, costs for a research student recruited onto the project for a maximum of 48 months may be sought.

Q3jj: Does the lead applicant (ROI institution) and partner (NI institution) have to submit two separate budgets?

One consolidated budget will be submitted per application.

Q3kk: Should the costs for the NI partner be in EUR or GBP?

All costs should be submitted in Euros.

Q3ll: Who bears the foreign exchange risk for the NI partner costs during the course of the award? Are they intended to be included in the 10% contingency? Is this a cost that the HEA - upon application - will approve?



The foreign exchange risk is to be borne by the project. Within reason, contingency costs can be used to absorb downward changes in foreign exchange. Details of such risk mitigation should be included in Section 4.1 of the application form and the submitted budget. Funding beyond what is requested in an application will not be provided. Should any project awarded funding be impacted by severe changes in foreign exchange rates, either negatively or positively, the impacts must be reported in annual progress an interim report. Should foreign exchange impact the feasibility of a project, the HEA will work with the consortium to consider potential solutions such as changes in project aims, objectives, outputs, and outcomes to reinstate project feasibility.

Q3mm: For NI partners' academic and research salary costs, are they at the relevant NI rate or should they be based on the IUA rates?

For NI partners, they should be relevant to the NI rate. For Irish HEI partners, they should be based on rates as per their institution.

Postdoctoral salary must begin no lower than at the first point on the Irish Universities' Association salary scale or an equivalent.

Q3nn: The call document refers to a "contract" issued to the lead applicant and NI partner if successful in the application. Would like to confirm that it is intended that this is a research grant and therefore falls outside the scope of VAT and that the funder will not own any IP arising from it - it will remain with the lead partner / NI partner.

Awards made will be issued as research grants. Any taxation matters that may arise are to be addressed at an institutional/consortia level. As per the 'Call Document', ownership of any intellectual property arising from collaborative projects shall be dealt with and ascertained through appropriate host and partner institutional structures, in line with the National Intellectual Property Protocol. Collaborative research agreements must be established between all institutions and organisations involved in a project.

Q3oo: Are the following costs acceptable under the North-South Research Programme concerning equipment

- Access charges/fees to use equipment
- Costs related to repairs of equipment
- Equipment service contracts
- Equipment replacement parts



Access charges to services and/or infrastructures necessary to the completion of the project may be sought. Should the project's sustainability or completion depend on the maintenance of equipment purchased as part of the project, anticipated costs may be included in the 10% costs contingency to be sought in the submitted budget. Where sustainability of a project is dependent on such costs approved budget may be used for a limited time after the completion of the project. Budgets submitted at the time of application are final unless changes are requested by the assessment panel or approved by the HEA after reviewing annual and/or interim reports.

All requests for costs must be clearly justified.

Q3pp: Is there a fixed exchange rate for calculating the Northern Irish partner budgets?

There is no fixed exchange rate for calculating Northern Irish budgets. The date and exchange rate used in calculating budgets must be provided in the budget template to be provided. If using an exchange rate, please use [InforEuro](#) website.

Q3qq: The call document states that institutional overheads may be included at 25% of pay costs. The appendix suggests that we will need to itemise them. However, itemising the included overheads would be a great administrative burden. Could the HEA confirm whether it is a flat rate?

Institutions may submit a flat rate for overheads at the time of application. An itemisation of that rate may be requested in any Letter of Offer issued.

Q3rr: Does the project manager role have to be included in a pension scheme if it is not in line with institutional norms as it is not a graded position?

This is a matter for the institution in question in terms of their norms (please see Q3m).

Q3ss: If overheads are included in the budget request, are these overheads exclusively allocated to the lead administrative Institute or can each named lead partner (Irish and Northern Ireland) request a share of the requested 25% overhead.

Overheads will be paid into the administrative lead (see Appendix 1.1). The issue of overheads and their division between the HEIs is subject to the consortium's agreement and the institutions involved.

Q3tt: Are the costs allowed if associated with equipment already available within an institution and not purchased as part of the project?

Costs associated with equipment not purchased as part of a North-South Research Programme funded project are not permitted. However, where a project requires access to equipment and/or to purchase



materials required to use equipment, requests for such costs may be included in the budget once clearly justified.

Please see Q3oo.

Q3uu: Concerning the additional €5,000 that may be sought for costs incurred in the situation of research students spending 12 months outside of their host institution, would there be an entitlement to this €5,000 if a research student was to spend less than 12 months outside their host institution (including secondments).

Where justified in the application, a research student may spend less than 12 months outside their host institution, and €5,000 pro-rata may be requested. A student may also spend in a number of different locations outside of their host institution. Time spent in this way may be counted accumulatively provided time spent outside of the organisation is in keeping with the funded project's aims and objectives to be counted accumulatively, and a pro-rata request for an additional payment of up to €5,000 may be sought for that research student.

Please see Q2o and Q3i.

Q3vv: If a project runs successfully without overspending, is the contingency returned to the grant holder team?

Budget spend will be monitored through annual progress reports, interim reports. Where the budget allocated to contingency costs is unused, the consortium may request to use the allocation for activities related to the award that will build on project impact and/or contribute to reinforcing the sustainability of the project beyond the duration of the award. In such circumstances, no further extension to the award will be granted.

Q3ww: Under what circumstances are salary costs rather than buy out costs eligible for lead investigators/team leads?

Salary costs may be sought for researchers recruited onto a project. In addition, buy out costs may be sought for core staff already employed in the institution hosting the project.

Q3xx: Can money be transferred to a third country outside the EU?

Additional partners from outside of Ireland and outside of Northern Ireland may be involved in a project, but no costs may be requested for these partners.



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 6th and close at the deadline of 4 pm on October 18th, 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 academies, 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.

Q4e: Are Letters of Support required as part of the application?

No, Letters of Support are not required. An endorsement form for each proposal must be completed by the lead admin institution and submitted to the online application system before the call deadline.

Q4f: Should details of support from commercial sources be included in Letters of Support?

Letters of support are not required as part of the application process.

Q4g: Is it possible for applicants to apply for more than one strand simultaneously?

Applicants can apply for more than one strand. Each application will require a separate submission.

Q4h: Can appendices be added to an application submission on the online system (e.g. letters of support, PhD supervisor CVs)? If yes, how many appendices/pages are allowed?

Appendices and additional materials, other than those requested, should not be included. These will not be considered and may invalidate an application to this scheme.

Q4i: Are references included in 3000-word count for section 3.2: Design, methodology and implementation. Can any related figures be included within this section? If so is there any limit on size and number of figures?

All text in uploaded PDFs should be provided in Calibri font or similar, with minimum font size of 11, and at least single line spacing as well as a minimum margin size of 2.5cm. Figures/diagrams may be included. Text in diagrams may be in any clearly legible font. The number of pages/words in uploads must not exceed the specifications for any given section.

Responses to Section 3.2 of the application form must not exceed 3000 words. Any references included go towards the 3000-word count. Figures may be included in this section provided the total number of pages uploaded to the online system in response to section 3.2 does not exceed 6 pages



and is within the 3000-word cap. Applications that do not comply with these requirements may be deemed ineligible and will be returned without review.

Q4j: With the delay in the Online Application process, will there be an extension of the submission date deadline?

An extension to the deadline will be facilitated to accommodate the deferred opening of the online system. The timelines between system launch to scheme close will be equivalent to those earlier advised, in that way, no applicant will be disadvantaged. In the meantime, the Indicative Application Form is available on the funding call webpage.

Q4k: Can multiple lead applicants have access to, and input into, the online portal?

No, the online system does not allow multiple lead applicants to have access to or to input data to the submission portal.

Q4l: Will there be a CV template for upload by each partner or is the consolidated CV section to be used to provide selected CV details for all lead partners?

No, a CV template will not be made available. Instead, the consolidated section should be used to provide selected CV details for all lead partners.

Q4m: Is there a corresponding NI endorsement page for upload?

No, a corresponding Northern Ireland endorsement page will not be required. However, as per the endorsement template available through the indicative form before the submission of the endorsement form by the lead admin institution in Ireland, each lead investigator/team lead identified on the application must provide the lead admin institution with confirmation that their host institution agrees to the submission of the project proposal and the collaborative management of the project if successful.

Q4n: Will there be an excel upload for the budget in addition to the narrative /total costs sections as per the indicative form?

An excel template will be made available in conjunction with the opening of the online system.

Q4o: Will the data management plan be evaluated by reviewers?

A high-level description of the data management plan is a required section of the application form. The plan may be considered as part of the assessment process.



Q4p: Can an application be conducted in the Irish language?

The application form will be available in English through the online portal. Answers may be provided in the Irish language. All uploads may be provided through Irish. Since assessors involved with the call will be international, assigning Irish language speakers to the assessment of the application may be difficult. Applicants may upload an English language translation of their application to the online portal. If the HEA cannot identify suitable assessors to review the application through Irish, the English language translation will be made available to assessors in the area. If the applicant does not upload an English language translation and no suitable assessors to assess the application through the Irish language, the HEA will seek a translation of the proposal from external services in order to assign assessors.

Q4q: If a consortium has multiple researchers/lecturers (who will be supervising PhDs) in the same institution, should each individual researcher/lecturer be named as a Lead Partner on the application form?

Where a researcher/lecturer is involved in an application as the supervisor of a research student recruited onto the project, the individual researcher/lecturer may be added to the consortium using the 'Team Composite Form' on the online system where the applicant can outline the contribution the 'Individual researcher' will make to the project.

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.

Q5c: Could you provide some more detail on the review process including prioritisation between *aequo*/equally scoring proposals?

All eligible applications will be referred to an independent Panel for review. The Panel will be asked to review the proposals received, come to a judgment of standard in accordance with the principles of the programme as stated in the call, and make a recommendation to the HEA in the form of a ranked list. The HEA will seek to support as many proposals as possible within the funding available.

Q5d: Can you provide more detail on the panel composition who will assess the applications and other activities?

The panel will be made up of international experts in relevant fields and with experience in strategic engagement. Work will be completed remotely, and panel meetings will be carried out as virtual meetings. Still, they may be revised considering the implications of COVID and climate change on global travel. Each reviewer will assess a number of applications.

Awards

Q6a: Must all successful awards begin on the 4th 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.



Q6b: Will a No Cost Extension (NCE) be available for HEA North-South projects to facilitate the timely recruitment of PhD students and post docs and to ensure the completion of their studies/contracts within the requested duration of the project?

Projects are expected to begin in January 2022 and will be monitored by the HEA on an annual basis. Projects with a duration of more than two years will be required to submit a midterm report, at which point clearly justified requests for a No Cost Extension may be considered if deemed necessary to facilitate any PhD student recruited onto a project with time to complete their studies. Recruitment of PhD students onto a project and their registrations should be completed no later than 1st October 2022.

The duration of contracts of employment offered to Postdoctoral researchers recruited onto a project must take the project's duration into account. Therefore, where the recruitment of a Postdoctoral researcher is delayed, this delay should be detailed in the project's annual reporting and midterm review, at which point a justified request for a No Cost Extension may be considered.

Any No Cost Extension granted to facilitate the extension of an employment contract or the extension of time to allow for a course of study to be completed will be subject to agreement with the host institution.

Q6c: As outlined in the funding call document, the Research Ethics Committee (REC) approval must be evidenced within the first six months. Can a proposed programme include a series of work packages and other activities? Thus REC approval may take longer than six months to obtain for a project.

REC approval needs to be evidenced within six months of the funding award as per the guidelines outlined. However, where certain parts/ work packages of a proposed project depend on the completion of foregrounding project parts/work packages before a full submission to the relevant ethics committee can be made incremental approval may be accepted. Where relevant such acceptance will be detailed in any letter of offer issued to proposed projects.

Monitoring

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