



North-South Research Programme 2021

Frequently Asked Questions

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

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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.

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.

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.

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 3c 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.

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 *ex 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.

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.

Monitoring

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