



North-South Research Programme 2021

Timetable

Launch	9 th August 2021
Expression of Interest Deadline	1 st September 2021
Online System Opening	6 th September 2021
Deadline	18 th October 2021
Assessment	22 nd November 2021
Outcome	December 2021
Award start date	4 th January 2022



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Overview, Call and Evaluation

Summary

The North-South Research Programme 2021 is a collaborative scheme arising from the Government's Shared Island initiative. It is being delivered by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) on behalf of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science (DFHERIS).

Context

The Programme for Government sets out the Government's commitment to working with all communities and traditions on the island to build consensus around a shared future, underpinned by the Good Friday Agreement.

The Government's [Shared Island initiative](#) involves:

- working with the Northern Ireland Executive and the British Government to address shared strategic challenges faced on the island of Ireland;
- further developing the all-island economy, deepening North/South cooperation, and investing in the North West and border regions;
- fostering constructive and inclusive dialogue and a comprehensive programme of research to support the building of consensus around a shared future on the island.

In Budget 2021, the Government announced the Shared Island Fund, with €500m being made available out to 2025, ring-fenced for North/South projects. The Government is making allocations from the Shared Island Fund to support delivery on the commitments and objectives on a Shared Island, as set out in the Programme for Government.

In July 2021, Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD and Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris TD announced €40 million from the Shared Island Fund over 5 years for a new North-South Research programme. This significant investment will support the deepening of links between higher education institutions, researchers and research communities on the island of Ireland, delivering all-island approaches to research and innovation.

The Programme for Government includes the commitment to "support a North/South programme of research and innovation" and the North-South Research Programme 2021 is a significant step in the implementation of that commitment.

Further and Higher Education and Research North and South

Higher education in Ireland is provided by 22 institutions, comprising universities, technological universities, institutes of technology and colleges of education. In addition, a number of other public and private higher education institutions provide specialist education in fields such as art and design, medicine, business studies, rural development, theology, music, and law. Higher education in Northern Ireland is delivered through three universities and two university colleges. Higher education courses are also delivered in the six further education colleges.

There is a long-standing tradition of further and higher education and research collaboration both north and south on the island, as well as east-west across these neighbouring islands. A feature of this



collaboration is person to person as well as institution to institution and in and between academic disciplines. There is something of an ebb and flow to this work influenced by the availability of institutional, State and European investment but strong underlying connections remain and there is an opportunity to build greater harmony given the power of education and research to influence social and economic conditions.

North South Programme for Collaborative Research

This programme will specifically support collaborative research, innovation and development between individuals, research teams (in and between disciplines) as well as between higher education institutions on the island, up to and including support for all-island partnerships of scale focusing on shared challenges such as, for example, those identified within Horizon Europe’s mission-based approach and the United Nation’s identified Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The programme will support research which will be of economic and social benefit to the island of Ireland. The **key principles of the programme** are as follows:

- Strengthen research, innovation, development and collaboration in and between individuals and higher education institutions by rewarding innovation and excellence thereby enhancing the higher education sector, North and South;
- Enhance the research, teaching and learning continuum and the skills, quality and relevance of graduate output;
- Promote networks of excellence and partnerships of scale for research, innovation and development;
- Contribute to policy development relevant to the Shared Island initiative and benefiting enterprise and communities, north and south;
- Contribute to capacity building, place-making/innovation districts.

The Programme will be managed by the Higher Education Authority on behalf of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

The Terms and Conditions issued by the Higher Education Authority at the time of contract signature will govern the administration of the funding.

Programme Description

Applicants may apply for funding under three strands as set out below.

Type	Duration	Maximum Value of Award
Strand I: Bilateral researcher-researcher projects.	1 – 2 years	€200,000
Strand II: Emerging hubs of excellence.	1 – 4 years	€4,000,000
Strand III: Partnerships of scale.	1 – 4 years	€4,000,000



General Guidelines

Host institutions and partnerships

1. The programme will be open to those higher education institutions as listed in Appendix 1. There must be a minimum of one lead institution/lead investigator/team lead from both Ireland and Northern Ireland associated with each proposal. A joint proposal, with a lead investigator from each institution must be submitted, signed by both parties and a representative of each of the host institutions.
2. 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. NGOs, charities, and companies should be officially registered. Research Performing Organisations and other government agencies may be also included as partners. Spin outs and campus companies may act as partners provided their reason for collaboration is clearly justified and their inclusion does not contravene state aid rules.
3. Applicants must outline how the project will benefit from any such third-party inclusion and their contribution to the project must be clearly outlined in the proposal along with a description of their compatibility with the programme objectives. The dominant concern in this provision is to maximise the cost-effective use of Exchequer resources. Financial contribution to the project is not required from partners.
4. Other additional collaborators from outside of Ireland and Northern Ireland may be included in a project proposal provided their inclusion can be demonstrated by the proposers as bringing added value to the project, and further support the project in meeting the aims and objectives of the scheme. Such additional collaborators should not be included in place of collaborators in Ireland or Northern Ireland. Costs incurred by additional collaborators may not be included in the funding proposal.
5. 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. Where a project receives outside financial support the source of that support should be included in the collaborative research agreement.

Eligibility

6. In line with the goals and objectives of the scheme, the programme will support research, innovation, and development in and between any disciplines in science, medicine, engineering, technology, arts and humanities including areas of creative practice and social science. There will not be any *a priori* determination of funding levels for any particular areas of research.



7. The research proposal can be submitted by individual lead investigators, or a team of researchers including a team lead/s under the auspices of eligible host higher education institutions.
8. The lead individual investigators and team lead/s must be, at a minimum, two years post PhD.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. The research can be basic or strategic in nature and can include costs associated with the establishment of partnerships which improve researcher exchanges and interactions, with each other and with external stakeholders. The proposal should focus on the establishment of a critical mass of resource and expertise in a clearly identified area and, where relevant, demonstrate sustainability beyond the life of the scheme.
12. 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.

Proposal requirements

13. Reference must be made to project management procedures and how they will aid the collaborative process. Evidence must be provided of shared objectives, joint work programmes, costs, resources, joint responsibilities and associated clarification on roles and contributions of each party. Regard will be had for dealing with research misconduct and will be dealt with in line with institutional procedures and national policies.
14. The HEA's [Principles of Good Practice in Research](#) within Higher Education Institutions and the seven elements of good practice identified therein should be reflected as appropriate in project proposals.
15. Applicants must demonstrate that they have given full consideration to whether there is a potential sex and/or gender dimension in their proposed research. Where applicants have indicated that there is no sex/gender dimension to their research, they 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.

16. The HEA promotes equality of access to higher education for people with disabilities, mature students who previously had not the opportunity to access higher education, those facing social and economic barriers and minority groups, including the Traveller community. Where relevant, project proposals should take equality of access into account in relation to project design, outcomes, and outputs.
17. The proposed project shall comply with ethical principles and relevant national, EU and international legislation including [the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#) and the [European Convention on Human Rights and its Supplementary Protocols](#). Projects should adhere to the recognised ethical practices and fundamental ethical principles appropriate to their discipline(s) as well as to ethical standards as documented in the different various national, sectoral or institutional Codes of Ethics. An ethics self-assessment table will be required to be completed as part of the application process. Where a project requires approval by the Host Institution(s) Ethics Committee or equivalent committee, written evidence of such ethical approval will be required by the HEA, within six months of the start of the award.
18. Data management plans must be based on the [FAIR data principles](#) and developed in line with institutional policies. An outline of how data will be managed must be included in the proposal. Where relevant, details of data management plans will be sought at the time of contract agreement.
19. The principles of research integrity and responsible research practice underpin the [National Framework on the Transition to an Open Research Environment](#) as set out in the 2019 publication by the [National Open Research Forum \(NORF\)](#). In the spirit of supporting open research project proposals should make a commitment to making data and other types of research, open and accessible. As far as possible researchers and research team members must provide [ORCID](#)s in relation to reporting.
20. Co-funding support may be obtained from other research funding agencies for related or complimentary projects. Parallel funding for the same project work is not permissible. Reference must be made to such funding if in existence at the time of application (in the relevant section of the application form) or if received subsequent to obtaining North-South Research Programme funding, the HEA must be informed in writing. The dominant concern in this provision is to maximise the cost-effective use of resources.

Institutional responsibilities

21. The project will be supervised and managed by the lead investigators/team leads and their host institutions having regard to international best practice.



22. The host institutions will have full regard to any regulatory, safety, health or other statutory requirements associated with the carrying out of this work and protection of individuals involved in same.
23. The host institutions will take full responsibility for the provision of full supervision and training of any PhD students recruited onto projects, with reference to the [National Framework for Doctoral Education](#).
24. 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.
25. 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.
26. Any funding granted must be applied in a manner compliant with State Aid Legislation and Export Control Regulations.
27. 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.
28. All publications and outputs from the research project must acknowledge the support of the HEA, DFHERIS and the Shared Island Fund.
29. All funding is conditional on meeting the specified criteria for the scheme and on the outcome of the competitive process.

Specific Programme criteria

The objectives of the programme can be further clarified through the following specific criteria associated with the proposed programme:

- The proposal should be of a standard to be deemed of high quality on review by peers and to have merit on review by the Assessment Panel;
- The discipline/research area proposed must be an area where the lead investigators/team leads/ partnering institutions must have established, and demonstrate, some strength/track record OR capacity to perform in an associated new and emerging area;
- 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;
- 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](#).

- Proposals should be made with reference to the strengthening of current North/South higher education collaborations or for the establishment of new collaborations with agreed joint programmes and project management processes;
- Proposals must also demonstrate the mechanisms which will be used to develop mutual understanding of cultural diversities and aid the process of reconciliation on the island as a whole;
- Proposals must demonstrate the contribution to achieving the goals and objectives of the research strategy of the lead institution.

Funding & Allocation of overall scheme budget

The funding allocated to this programme is €40M over a five-year period from 2021. It is expected that at least two calls for proposals will issue under this scheme, an initial call in 2021 and a subsequent call in 2023.

Projects can vary in size from up to €100,000 to €4,000,000 and will be considered in light of overall funding requests and the final amount of funding available.

Partnerships of scale may seek up to €4,000,000 for projects with a minimum of three years duration and a maximum of four years duration. Partnerships seeking funding for smaller projects may seek up to €200,000 for projects with a minimum duration of one year and a maximum duration of two years. A maximum of 50% of any award may be allocated to NI partners.

Projects with a shorter timeframe will also be considered.

Applicants may choose from three different strands:

- i) Strand I: Bilateral researcher-researcher projects. This strand will support individual researchers based in an Irish higher education institution (HEI) to collaborate with a researcher in a HEI in Northern Ireland and vice versa on an identified research project.
- ii) Strand II: Emerging hubs of excellence. This strand will support academic research teams to collaborate on an agreed work programme. Interdisciplinary collaborations will be encouraged.
- iii) Strand III: Partnerships of scale. This strand will support institution to institution strategic research engagement: Higher education institutions will be supported to collaborate with each other on the basis of their respective institutional strategic research priorities.

The HEA reserves the right to terminate funding in circumstances such as

- (a) if progress is unsatisfactory, (b) if funds have not been used for the activities/research approved or (c) if work has stopped on the research programme d) if reporting is not adhered to e) if the project team or project contravenes institutional and/or national policies f) if ethical approval is not granted where it is required



Allowable Expenditure

- 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.
- Costs may include fees, consumables, travel and maintenance grants for graduate students and post-doctoral salaries which facilitate participation in the project on a full-time basis.
- Costs including stipend, of up to €30,000 per annum, plus fees may be sought for research students for up to a maximum of four years to include at least 12 months to be spent outside of their host institution, such as at the lead partner institution. Where research students spend time outside of their host institution up to an additional €5,000 may be sought for costs incurred.
- Postdoctoral salary must begin no lower than at the first point on the Irish Universities' Association salary scale or an equivalent.
- Costs may include up to €60,000 per annum pro rata for a Project Manager on Partnerships of scale for the complete duration of the project.
- Small equipment (single items should not normally cost more than €10,000) may be included but justification must be provided illustrating that the equipment is absolutely necessary to carry out the research work and that such a facility is not available through other means to the researcher(s).
- The cost of institutional overheads may be included at a cost of up to 25% of pay costs (full time personnel).
- Inter-institutional visiting researcher's costs may also be included.
- Other costs required must be specifically identified and justified, e.g., fieldwork, data collection, archives, open access publication, access to national infrastructures, etc.
- Provision should be made for contingency costs at up to 10% of the overall budget. Use of this contingency fund, should it arise, will require prior approval by the HEA.
- No additional funding, above the agreed budget, can be made available by the HEA.

With the exception of costs for 'additional partners', the recurrent cost of collaboration sought by non-higher education partners may be included in the proposal once clearly justified and not exceeding 10% of the total cost of the proposal. Any capital costs incurred by such non-higher education partners will not be covered by this provision.

Application Procedure and Assessment

Application Procedure

- Submission of an Expression of Interest (EOI) is not required but is encouraged by 4pm (Irish Time) on 1st of September 2021. A template will be made available on the HEA website (mid-August) and should be submitted to research@hea.ie using the subject line: 'Expression of Interest: North – South Collaborative Research Funding Call 2021'



- A guide to the application and submission system will also be made available on the HEA website (late-August) at (<https://hea.ie/funding-calls/north-south-research-programme/>).
- All applications must be submitted through the online portal at (<https://hea.ie/funding-calls/north-south-research-programme/>) before 4pm (Irish Time) on 18th October 2021.
- Applications to the scheme will be deemed ineligible and will not be considered for funding if:
 - an application has not been submitted via the online system. No hardcopies or email forms will be accepted;
 - an application is late or otherwise submitted subsequent to the advertised applicant closing date of 4pm (Irish Time) 18th October 2021;
- Any questions or queries from a potential applicant should be directed to research@hea.ie. Both the questions and answers will be published on the HEA website in the form of FAQs at (<https://hea.ie/funding-calls/north-south-research-programme/>).
- The proposal will specify the milestones, output measurements, indicators and other evidence which will be used to monitor and report on the performance and progress of the proposal (see Application Form).
- In submitting a proposal, researchers, and their host institution(s), will be deemed to have accepted the conditions outlined in this call and to have agreed to be bound by them. All proposals must be signed by the VP/Director of Research or the appropriate office holder in this regard within the host institution(s).
- Should an application to this scheme be successful, acceptance of an award by a host institution(s) will be in accordance with this call and any conditions as set out in the letter of offer. These conditions will include a requirement for a commitment from the lead institutions to provide all necessary support for the project.
- Whilst the lead applicant for the purposes of this programme will be the partner from Ireland, the proposal must also be signed by the lead investigator/team lead in Northern Ireland, and by the primary point of contact and appropriate officer in both partner institution(s).
- The administrative lead institution will be required to provide an outline of the processes for the operational and fiscal management of the project.
- Applications will not be assessed if incomplete or late and applicants will receive confirmation that their proposal has been received and whether it is being forwarded for assessment.

Assessment Panel and Scoring

- An assessment process commensurate with the objectives of the programme will be put in place. An independent Panel comprising of both international and Irish membership will be convened. In establishing the panel, due regard shall be given to gender balance.
- In order to avoid potential or perceived conflicts of interest, individuals who have close relationships with higher education and research institutions on the island will not be selected to serve on the Panel.
- With regard to assessment of Research Quality, three reviewers will be asked to assess each proposal. These assessments will form the basis of the allocation of the available points for this criterion.
- Observations on proposed projects to be presented to the assessment panel may be sought from the sponsoring Departments or other state agencies.



The scoring allocations will be as follows:

Proposal Quality	55 points	
	Established expertise/track record	<i>10 points</i>
	<p>Research quality of proposal To include detailed description of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the project idea with clear abstract and pertinent project objectives. (15 points) - the project design with plan specifics including work packages with clearly identified SMART deliverables (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) Specification of milestones, output measures, indicators and evidence which will be used to monitor the performance and progress of the proposal and where relevant a description of how the project's sustainability is to be maintained. (15 points) - proposed methods including a clear description of the proposed project methodology and the credibility of the proposed approach. (10 points) 	<i>40 points</i>
	<p>Budget justifications Clear justification of budget requests</p>	<i>5 points</i>
Support of scheme objectives	45 points	
	Compatibility with programme objectives on potential impact on the education and research sectors North and South	<i>10 points</i>
	Substance, level, and quality of research collaboration including the adequacy and specificity of arrangements for formal governance, management, financial and risk management and co-ordination of the work.	<i>10 points</i>
	Demonstration of mechanisms which will assist in the understanding of cultural diversities.	<i>10 points</i>
	Contribution of the proposal to achieving the goals and objectives of national and institutional research strategy and the objectives of the Shared Island initiative and national alignment with Horizon Europe's mission-based approach and/or one or more of the United Nation's SDGs.	<i>15 points</i>



Awards

- All applicants will be informed of the success or otherwise of their applications.
- A contract will be issued at this time for signing by the Lead Investigators and Institutional representatives.
- Funds will be paid to the higher education institution at the beginning of the project. Further payments will be on a six-month basis if progress is satisfactory and other terms and conditions have been complied with.
- An initial outlay of 30% will be made at the initiation of the project with 30% of funding to be issued after the submission and review of the complete final report. The remaining funding will be issued subsequent to the submission and analysis of each completed progress report and where relevant interim review.

Monitoring

- Reports covering all financial and programmatic aspects of the project will be required at the end of six months and at the end of each year and progress will be assessed based on the stated projected milestones and outputs for that time point. Notification on success or not for further funding will be forthcoming within 4 weeks of submission of reports.
- Interim reports will be required for projects of 2 years or more duration.
- Adherence to other programme guidelines will also be monitored.
- In addition, the Lead Investigator and/or institution will be required to provide documentation on behalf of all partners in the programme as requested by the HEA to satisfy reporting requirements.
- Audits of all projects will be carried out once a project is finalised, the final report is submitted and analysed.
- The HEA will carry out onsite visits of HEIs and their partners over the course of the programme's duration and a HEI and/or their partner may be chosen for one or more site visits.
- A biennial conference will take place. HEIs may be requested to present on the delivery and impact of their project at the conference.

END



Appendix 1

List of eligible institutions

1. Institutions in Ireland eligible as lead institutions:

Athlone Institute of Technology (Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest)

Marino Institute of Education

Carlow College, St. Patrick's

Dublin City University

Dublin Dental Hospital

Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (DIAS)

Dundalk Institute of Technology

Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology

Galway–Mayo Institute of Technology

Institute of Technology, Carlow

Institute of Technology, Sligo

Letterkenny Institute of Technology

Limerick Institute of Technology (Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest)

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick

Maynooth University

Munster Technological University

National College of Ireland

National University of Ireland, Galway

National College of Art and Design

RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences

Royal Irish Academy

Royal Irish Academy of Music

St. Angela's College, Sligo

St. Patrick's College, Maynooth

Technological University Dublin



University College Cork

University College Dublin

University of Dublin, Trinity College

University of Limerick

Waterford Institute of Technology

2. Other eligible partners (non-exhaustive list*)

ESRI (The Economic and Social Research Institute)

Health Research Board (HRB)

Marine Institute (Foras na Mara)

National Institute for Bioprocessing Research (NIBRT)

Teagasc (Agriculture and Food Development Authority)

The Discovery Programme (Centre for Irish Archaeological Research)

The Open University in Ireland

HECA Member Institutions

*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. NGOs, charities, and companies should be officially registered.

3. Northern Ireland Institutions eligible as lead institutions:

Armagh Observatory

Centre for Cross Border Studies

Queen's University Belfast

Stranmills University College

St. Mary's University College

The Open University

The University of Ulster