

## FAQ: TU Research and Innovation Supporting Enterprise (TU RISE) Scheme

### 1. Institutional eligibility

**1.1 Is the intention to have applicants 'nominate' a region in which their proposal will work and be considered alongside just applicants based in the same region (i.e. Southern Region entities compete only with other Southern Region entities) and not with entities from the other region (i.e. Southern Region entities will not be competing against Eastern and Midland Regions)?**

*The TU RISE scheme will make a total of €83.68 million in funding available over four years (2023-2027) via two regional programmes. Funding of €63.68m is available under the Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme, and funding of €20m is available under the Northern and Western Regional Programme.*

*Institutional eligibility by regional programme is detailed in Section 2.2 of the TU RISE call document.*

*There are six institutions eligible for the Southern, Eastern and Midlands Regional Programme (IADT; DKIT; MTU; SETU; TU Dublin; TUS) and one institution is eligible for the Northern and Western Regional Programme (ATU).*

### 2. Eligible costs/activities

**2.1 Under which budget category would the following fall: open access publications, programme assessment, fees for external evaluators of postdoc applications, accreditation costs, i.e. industry programmes, computer costs for staff to be hired, and staff buy-out costs?**

*The following guidance may be applied:*

- *Open access publications, programme assessment, and fees for external evaluators of postdoc applications may be proposed under 'Other research capacity building costs'.*
- *Computer costs for staff should be proposed under 'Small equipment <€10,000'.*
- *Computer costs for research students should be proposed under 'Other research student costs'.*
- *Costs relating to industry engagement, such as design of accredited programmes, may be proposed under 'Collaboration or stakeholder engagement'.*
- *Costs relating to 'staff buy out' to support project activities should be proposed under 'Direct staff costs'.*

*Please note that a full breakdown of costs proposed is required in 'Appendix 1: Breakdown of Budget Costs'.*

**2.2(a) Are structured masters students costs eligible costs as these count towards the TU targets and have been funded previously?**

*Structured (Taught) Masters are not considered eligible for funding under the scheme. As per the Call Document, Section 2.4, "Recruitment of postgraduate research students (e.g., PhD; Research Masters) in research areas of strategic importance to institutions and/or regions aligned to regional priorities in Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy" will be applicable.*

**2.2(b) If so can these be part time (24 months) and full time (12 months)?**

*All research students funded from the TU RISE scheme should be working full time on a Research Masters or PhD project.*

**2.3 Can a work package related to management and administration of the project be included in the project proposal?**

*Project design, including the presentation of activities as work packages, is at the discretion of the institution.*

*Staff costs relating to the management of the project may be included in the project proposal under 'Direct staff costs' and should be itemised in 'Appendix 1: Breakdown of Budget Costs'.*

**2.4 How is 'postdoctoral fellow' understood within the TU RISE scheme?**

*As per the TU RISE call document, "postdoctoral fellows may be recruited at a faculty/school/discipline level in research areas of strategic importance to institutions and/or regions. Bringing relevant research expertise to institutions, fellows will enable knowledge transfer by generating opportunities for engagement with enterprise. Fellows will further enhance institutional research capacity at faculty/school/discipline level through research collaboration with academic staff, research-led teaching, and supervision of graduate research students, thus generating further institutional capability for stronger engagement with regional enterprises in the short and medium term".*

*Postdoctoral fellows should hold a doctoral degree (NFQ L10), and have a demonstratable track record of having authored, or co-authored, at least one published peer-reviewed research publication, or have demonstratable equivalence.*

*Salary costs for postdoctoral fellows must begin no lower than at the first point on the Irish Universities Association salary scale, or an equivalent, and are expected to be a maximum of 24 months duration.*

## **2.5 Can Senior Research Fellows be recruited as part of this scheme?**

*Research fellows may be recruited to the scheme in line with the [IUA salary scale](#), as per the call document: “Postdoctoral salary costs must begin no lower than at the first point on the Irish Universities Association salary scale, or an equivalent, and are expected to be a maximum of 24 months duration”. The point on the salary scale should be determined by the researcher’s qualification and experience, in line with institutional and sector norms. A rationale for the level of the salary scale chosen for budgeting purposes should be provided in ‘Appendix 1: Breakdown of Budget Costs’.*

## **2.6 Would it be within scope to recruit an industry professional with research experience in a discipline that is of importance to the institution (who may or may not hold a doctorate degree) that could impact and accelerate research capacity in the institution?**

*TU RISE provides support for the “establishment and/or development of central research functions in institutions to support research capacity building and further engagement with regions. This will include, but is not limited to: a) Recruitment of research office staff to support research capacity building across the institution and facilitate stronger engagement with local and regional business, industry, and enterprise stakeholders. b) The establishment and/or development of centralised research advisory and support services to promote and provide staff development and training”.*

*The structure and staffing of central research functions is a matter for institutions to determine in line with their strategic ambitions and wider organisational structure. As such, an institution may determine that the recruitment of an industry professional with research and/or professional experience in a particular discipline is an effective means of building capacity. Such a post may be proposed under the ‘Direct staff costs’ category of TU RISE. A rationale for the staffing structure proposed should be provided as part of the information included in ‘Appendix 1: Breakdown of Budget Costs’.*

## **2.7 How should HEIs budget for the proposed increase in PhD stipends?**

*As per the call document, research student stipends must be “no lower than €19,000 per annum”. Institutions seeking to apply for funding for PhD stipends should build appropriate contingency*

*into project budgets to manage any increases in PhD stipends during the lifetime of the scheme. Applications should clearly state the level of contingency applied.*

**2.8 Can a contingency be built into project budgets to cover non-EU postgraduate student fees for students who have not yet been recruited?**

*International students must be identifiable at the time of the application, as outlined in the call document. Prior to the submission of the application for funding under the TU RISE scheme, only in cases where the institution has identified a highly competitive, named non-EU candidate for a Masters / PhD position may an institution request up to an additional €4,000 per annum over and above the standard (EU) fee contribution. Details of the recruitment process and the student's credentials must be included in the application (budget justification) and the additional funding for non-EU fees will be granted on a case-by-case basis.*

**2.9 In terms of expenditure, is it expected that if awarded the cost of a four-year PhD that the full expenditure associated with that PhD researcher will be expended by the end of the four-year grant agreement (e.g. Nov 23 to Oct 27). Should HEIs have research students ready to register at the start of any grant allocation agreement date or will no cost extensions apply?**

*An amendment has been made to the call documentation to provide additional time to institutions to incur costs relating to research students. Funding is available for activities arising from eligible costs for four years (48 months). An additional 12 months is available for costs relating to research students only.*

*As outlined in the [amended Call Document](#), Section 2.6, "Project budgets should present the total funding required over the timeframe of the scheme: 48 months with an additional 12 months available for costs relating to research students only. Any costs incurred outside the timeframes stipulated will be ineligible and the responsibility of the institution. PhD students funded under TU RISE must be registered no later than 1st November 2024 to facilitate the payment of stipends within the timeframe of the scheme."*

**2.10 We are aware of research students who are currently studying for a research masters who may want to undertake a PhD programme of study and register on the PhD register after the start date of grant agreement. Can the TU rise funding be utilised for this purpose to move the students onto a PhD research project with industry engagement?**

*Students who are currently studying for a research masters and who may want to undertake a PhD programme may register on a PhD programme, once the research area is as outlined in the*

grant agreement “in research areas of strategic importance to institutions and/or regions aligned to regional priorities in Ireland’s Smart Specialisation Strategy”. Furthermore, PhD students funded under TU RISE must be registered no later than 1st November 2024 to facilitate the payment of stipends within the timeframe of the scheme.

**2.11 If travel to stakeholders to co-design a course is required does this fall under collaboration and stakeholder engagement or training and development?**

*Travel to stakeholders to co-design a course may be included in the project proposal under the ‘Travel and subsistence’ category of TU RISE and should be itemised in ‘Appendix 1: Breakdown of Budget Costs.’*

**2.12 For catering at training events, under which category would this fall under?**

*This should be reflected under ‘training and development’ and information provided as part of ‘Appendix 1: Breakdown of Budget Costs.’*

**2.13 If a company provide training to staff relating to course design or development, under which category would this fall?**

*Costs related to staff training or development may be proposed under the ‘Training and Development’ cost category in the application, providing that the training aligns with the objectives of the TU RISE scheme and adheres to the scheme’s terms and conditions.*

**2.14 Can you confirm whether overheads are to be included in the calculation referred to in section 1.3: “Project budget as a percentage of programme funds available (SEM: €63.68M; NW: €20M)”.**

*Overheads should be included in this calculation. As stated in the call document ‘The costs of institutional overheads may be included at 15% of eligible direct staff costs (full time personnel or full-time equivalency basis). Where a staff member is not working full time on the project, overheads may be calculated on a pro rata basis.’*

**2.15 Where courses targeting industry staff are developed and funded under the programme, would companies need to pay the fees to the university or could these be costed in?**

*Please refer to the call documentation to determine whether project activities are aligned with the objectives of TU RISE and the outlined eligible costs. As outlined in the Call Document, “Each institution must ensure compliance with State Aid regulations and ensure that project activities do not give rise to unlawful state aid. Funding allocated in accordance with this notice falls outside the scope of the State Aid rules by virtue of, and in reliance on, Section 2.5, Commission Notice 2016/C 262/01.”*

**2.16 Should applicants comment on how the institution has or will use other funding sources (e.g. TUTF/TSAF) to compliment or build on the TU RISE investment?**

*Where relevant, institutions are encouraged to comment on the use of other funds to build institutional capacity particularly where there are interdependencies with proposed TU RISE project activities. However, as referenced in the call document, ‘double funding is not permitted and institutions applying for funding under TU RISE should take the necessary steps to ensure there will be no double funding in respect of proposed activities’.*

**2.17 If an institution is currently funding PhD students can TU RISE be used to fund these students going forward?**

*No funding will be provided for students enrolled prior to the commencement of the institution’s project start date. TU RISE may only be used to fund students completing new research projects in areas of strategic importance to institutions and/or regions aligned to regional priorities in Ireland’s Smart Specialisation Strategy. Research students funded under TU RISE must be working on a research project that reflects the scope and outcomes of this ERDF-co-funded scheme and includes engagement with enterprise.*

### **3. Enterprise engagements**

**3.1 In terms of the definitions regarding enterprises, are bodies such as the HSE and not-for-profit organisations within scope?**

*The purpose of the TU RISE scheme is to establish, strengthen, and systemise research and innovation offices in Technological Universities (TUs) to enable greater and more structured engagement with local and regional enterprises and community stakeholders.*

*The European Commission Staff Working Document: Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the Just Transition Fund in 2021-2027, which sets out the requirements for performance, monitoring and evaluation, provides the following definition for enterprises (emphasis added):*

*“The enterprise is the smallest combination of legal units that is an organisational unit producing goods and services, which benefits from a certain degree of autonomy in decision making, especially for the allocation of its current resources. An enterprise carries out one or*

more activities at one or more locations. An enterprise may be a sole legal unit. **Legal units include legal persons whose existence is recognised by law independently of the individuals or institutions which may own them or are members of them, such as general partnerships, private limited partnerships, limited liability companies, incorporated companies etc.**

[...] For the purpose of this indicator, **enterprises are profit-oriented organisations that produce goods and services to satisfy market needs.** For Policy Objective 4 (Social Europe and a Europe that is closer to its citizens), the indicator includes also social enterprises defined by the Commission (DG GROW) as follows: **“a social enterprise is an operator in the social economy whose main objective is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for their owners or shareholders. It operates by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion and uses its profits primarily to achieve social objectives.”**

**3.2 Can you clarify what constitutes a "placement" for research postgraduates. Is it time spent physically in enterprise, or can virtual interactions also be counted?**

*The purpose of a placement is for students to spend time, in person, in an industry relevant to their research and in line with the institution's TU RISE project. As outlined in the grant agreement “Research students (Masters and PhD) are expected to spend at least 12 weeks on placement with enterprise with a view to increasing engagement at an early career stage.” It is at the discretion of the institution to determine the format of the placement but it is expected to be a learning and development opportunity for the student.*

**3.3 For research students who may have already spent time in industry (sometimes amounting to years) is the requirement for placement lessened?**

*As outlined in the grant agreement, “Research students (Masters and PhD) are expected to spend at least 12 weeks on placement with enterprise with a view to increasing engagement at an early career stage”. A minimum of 12 weeks is required regardless of whether students have previously spent time in industry. The placement should be in an industry related to the student's TU RISE funded research project.*

**3.4 Can sole traders and partnerships, etc., be counted in the ERDF metrics, rather than just incorporated companies with a CRO number. We are aware that many new enterprises don't incorporate for a while so it will be difficult to count the very early-stage companies, for example.**

*The European Commission Staff Working Document: Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the Just Transition Fund in 2021-2027, which sets out the requirements for performance, monitoring and evaluation, provides the following definition for enterprises:*

*“The enterprise is the smallest combination of legal units that is an organisational unit producing goods and services, which benefits from a certain degree of autonomy in decision making, especially for the allocation of its current resources. An enterprise carries out one or more activities at one or more locations. An enterprise may be a sole legal unit. Legal units include legal persons whose existence is recognised by law independently of the individuals or institutions which may own them or are members of them, such as general partnerships, private limited partnerships, limited liability companies, incorporated companies etc. Legal units as well include natural persons who are engaged in an economic activity in their own right, such as the owner and operator of a shop or a garage, a lawyer or a self-employed handicrafts-person.”*

#### **4. Completing the application form**

**4.1(a) In the table in section 3.2 overview of work packages, one would typically use Months so M1-M48 for example.**

*Applicants may set out the project timeline in months (e.g. M1-48). Please ensure that any abbreviations are explained at the beginning of the section for clarity.*

**4.1(b) Can we assume the project start date (or month 1) is January 2024?**

*As per the Call Document; “projects are expected to commence in Q1 2024.” With this in mind, for the purposes of the proposal, you may plan for the project to begin on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024. Confirmation of the project commencement date will be shared after the review process has concluded.*

**4.2 In application section 3.2: ‘Overview of project work packages’, should the names of individuals be provided in the column labelled ‘responsible persons’?**

*This column should provide the job title of the responsible person (e.g., VP for Research).*

**4.3 Can graphics be included in the application form?**

*Graphics may be included in the application form; however, applicants should be aware that any readable text must be included in the section word count. Tables and graphs with data are excluded from the word count, providing they do not include stand-alone text or prose.*



#### **4.4 Regarding the completion of 'Appendix 1: Breakdown of Budget Costs', should each piece of small equipment (<€10k) be itemised and justified?**

*Applicants are required to provide a rationale for the purchase of equipment (e.g. why the equipment is necessary; how the equipment will support project success). A rationale is required for each purchase proposed. Where an institution proposes purchasing multiple units of the same equipment (e.g. laptops) then justification for the total quantity may be provided.*

#### **4.5 Should pension funds be included in calculations of the total employment costs for postdoctoral researchers?**

*The HEA does not have a role in pension policy, and determinations regarding the total costs for postdoctoral fellows should be in line with institutional and sector norms and the relevant DPER circulars.*

*The HEA is aware that the pensionable status of researchers in the technological sector remains under review and that engagement has been taking place between the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science (DFHERIS) and the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform (DPENDPDR). As such, in the context of budgeting for TU RISE, and in order to ensure that budgets are complete, it is recommended that applicants include pension costs in the calculation of employment costs for postdoctoral researchers. This approach is proposed solely in respect of budget management and should not be interpreted as implying or signalling a particular policy direction.*

#### **4.6 Is there a draft Grant Agreement (referenced on page 12 of the call document, point (e) ) available? Can you provide some insight as to what it might specifically cover that might be relevant to the preparation of the grant applications?**

The grant agreement will be specific to each institution that is awarded funding under TU RISE, as they may have specific conditions set down for the institution to meet in order to receive funding. The grant agreement will be issued following the HEA's assessment of the application. Applicant institutions should familiarise themselves with the terms and conditions of TU RISE, as described in the call document, and use these to inform their application.

## **5. Post-award requirements**

### **5.1 Can the HEA provide insight into how project metrics will be collected and tracked?**

*Robust monitoring and reporting requirements will be in place for institutions in receipt of funding under TU RISE. This will include biannual reporting to the HEA on project progress, as well as reporting to the Regional Assemblies (Managing Authorities for ERDF) and European Commission via an online platform. Reporting will include the provision of information on project expenditure, beneficiaries, and performance indicators for the scheme (baselines and targets), which are defined in the call documentation. Further information on project monitoring and reporting will be provided to applicants in receipt of funding.*

## **5.2 Could information be provided on the process for the initial appraisal of applications by the HEA?**

*The HEA will conduct an initial review of applications within one week of submission to ensure that all templates have been completed in full, have been received prior to the closing date, and are signed by the President.*

*As outlined in Section 3.2 of the call document, applications will then undergo independent assessment by a panel of four members of the HEA against the published assessment criteria. This will include due consideration of project relevance, quality of proposal and project design, efficiency and effectiveness, and governance, financial and risk management. To be considered for funding, proposals must attain a minimum score of '3' in each criterion. Proposals that do not achieve the minimum scoring threshold will be provided with feedback and the institution will have 14 days to revise and resubmit their proposal. Upon resubmission after 14 days, proposals will be re-reviewed independently by the HEA according to the process outlined above. Proposals that fail to achieve the minimum scoring threshold after revising and resubmitting will not be considered for funding.*

## **5.3 How will the HEA determine the amount of funding that each institution will receive?**

*As outlined Section 3.3. in the call document, 'The HEA will determine funding allocations for all proposals that have reached the minimum scoring threshold. In determining the allocation, the HEA will have due consideration of assessment scores and the HEA's knowledge of institutional and sectoral capacity as the funder and regulator of the higher education sector in Ireland. This knowledge is drawn from formal national processes with institutions, including annual governance and financial reporting, and strategy and performance dialogue, and reporting on institutional progress with national strategic initiatives relating to skills, equity of access, gender equality, capital projects, and research, and with other funding streams managed by the HEA. The HEA will draw upon this knowledge to identify institutions that will maximise the potential of the funding and to make informed decisions regarding institutions' absorptive capacity for further funding.'*

## 6. Performance Indicators

### 6.1 Would enterprises from Northern Ireland count in the performance indicators for TU RISE?

*Northern Ireland based companies are now eligible for the ERDF performance indicators, including RCO01, RCO04, RCO05, RCR03 and the RCO01F sub-indicator.*

### 6.2 In relation to the Performance Indicators, what counts as an enterprise supported? If a PhD student is working on a project with industry and a postdoc is working on a different project with the same industry is this counted as one engagement?

*Engagements refer to the number of enterprises supported. Engagements are counted at the enterprise rather than project level. See section 2.5 of the call document for further details on the performance indicators for the scheme, including definitions.*

### 6.3 For Performance Indicators, what is the cutoff date for achieving the 2029 targets?

*Under TU RISE, funding is available for activities arising from eligible costs for four years (48 months). An additional 12 months is available for costs relating to research students only. This means that latest end date for projects commencing in January 2024 is the 31st December 2028. Enterprise engagements must take place before the project end date (i.e. 31st December 2027/28), although the project may continue to gather data for reporting on targets into 2029. This may be particularly relevant for RCR03, 'SMEs introducing product or process innovation', where there may be a lag time between the engagement/support provided by the institution and product or process innovation introduced by the SME.*

### 6.4 Why are the target milestones for 2024 low?

*2024 is the commencement year for TU RISE projects. As such, targets are conservative to enable institutions to undertake preparatory work, with engagements expected to ramp up over the lifetime of the institution's project.*