North South Research Programme 2024

Strand II - Emerging Hubs of Excellence

and

Strand III: Partnerships of Scale

Key dates

Call Launch	*14 October 2024*
Expression of Interest Deadline	*05 December 2024*
Online System Opening	*Mid-January 2025*
Online Application Submission Deadline	*27 February 2025*
Research Office Endorsement Deadline	*14 March 2025*
Assessment Process Ends	*30 April 2025*
Panel Assessment Meetings	*May 2025*
Award start date	*Academic Year 2025/26*

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1. Overview, Call and Evaluation

1.1 Summary

The North South Research Programme is a collaborative scheme supported by the Government of Ireland funding through the shared island fund. The programme is supporting the strengthening of links between researchers, research communities and higher education institutions (HEIs) across the island of Ireland. 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).

1.2 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 includes commitments to:

- 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.

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

The North South Research Programme was resourced with an initial commitment of €40m from the Government's Shared Island Fund alongside resourcing from the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. A further allocation of €10m from the Shared Island Fund was made by the Government in December 2022 to contribute to a second call under the programme.

Further information on the Shared Island Initiative, including on other projects supported through the Government's Shared Island Fund, is available at www.gov.ie/sharedisland.

1.3 North South Research Programme

The North South Research Programme (NSRP) was established to support collaborative basic and strategic research, innovation and development. The NSRP supports research, innovation and development activity between individuals, research teams (in and between disciplines) as well as between higher education institutions on the island. In the case of the latter, this includes support up to and including all-island emerging hubs of excellence focusing on shared challenges such as, for example, those identified within Horizon Europe's mission-based approach and the United Nations identified Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The NSRP supports research of economic and social benefit to the island of Ireland. The **key principles of the NSRP** 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, in Ireland and Northern Ireland;
- 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, in Ireland and Northern Ireland;
- Contribute to capacity building, place-making/innovation districts within a regionally balanced framework.

Call 1 of the NSRP was launched in 2021. Under Call 1, 62 collaborative projects were awarded a total of €37.28m in funding across three strands - Strand I: Bilateral researcher projects, Strand II: Emerging Hubs of Excellence, and Strand III: Partnerships of Scale. Further information on the projects awarded funding is available here.

This significant investment is supporting 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.

1.4   Call 2

To build on the research partnerships supported through Call 1 of the NSRP and develop the ecosystem for research collaboration by higher education institutions across the island, Call 2 of the NSRP is centred on **Strand II: Emerging Hubs of Excellence which will support academic research teams to collaborate on a shared work programme** and **Strand III: Partnerships of Scale.** Applications will be open to all eligible researchers in any discipline, at early, mid or advanced stages of their careers. Institutions are expected to support applications led by researchers across all career stages and across all disciplines. The Lead Investigators and Consortium Co-Leads must be at a minimum two years post PhD.

Subject to available budget and the recommendation of the International Assessment Panel, circa 4-5 projects may be offered funding, balanced across STEM and AHSS research areas. Interdisciplinary project proposals are encouraged.

Type	Duration	Maximum Value of Award	Number of projects to be funded*
Strand II: Emerging Hubs of Excellence.	3.5 – 4 years	€4,000,000	TBC
Strand III: Partnerships of Scale	3.5 – 4 years	€4,000,000	TBC

*Subject to available budget

The Terms and Conditions outlined in this call document, the project proposal as submitted, and the Letter of Offer issued by the HEA at the time of contract signature and any agreed amendments to the Letter of Offer will govern the administration of the funding.

2. General Guidelines

2.1 Host institutions and partnerships

2.1.1 The NSRP will be open to joint applications from **Lead Investigators** located at eligible higher education institutions, as listed in Appendix 1. There must be a minimum of **one Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland** and **one Lead Institution in Northern Ireland**.

2.1.2 The lead HEI in Ireland will be regarded as the **Lead Administrative/Governance Institution** for HEA communication, award governance and management purposes.

2.1.3 All applications must be submitted under the auspices of and with the approval of all proposed host institutions.

2.1.4 All submitted applications must be signed by both the Lead Investigator in the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution and in the Lead Institution in Northern Ireland and endorsed by the President/Provost or their authorised nominee within the Lead Institutions.

2.1.5 Each application must have a Lead Investigator who will be employed at the **Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland** and one Lead Investigator employed at the **Lead Institution in Northern Ireland** at the time of award start.

2.1.6 While there must be a minimum of two lead partner institutions from higher education (one in Ireland and one in Northern Ireland), the application may include **other higher education partners (Partner Institutions)** and identified researchers to work as **Consortium Co-Leads**.

2.1.7 **External Partners** from outside higher education and research institutions are welcome, with their costs being capped at 10% of a proposal's total budget.

2.1.8 While proposals will be led by higher education institutions, **External Partners** from further education, civic society, enterprise and innovation from Ireland and Northern Ireland are encouraged. NGOs, charities, and companies must be officially registered. Research Performing Organisations and other government agencies may be also included as **External Partners**.

2.1.9 Applicants must outline how the project will benefit from any such inclusion of External Partners and their contribution to the project must be clearly outlined in the proposal along with a description of their compatibility with the NSRP 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.

2.1.10 Spin outs and campus companies may act as **External Partners** provided their reason for collaboration is clearly justified and their inclusion does not contravene State Aid rules.

2.1.11 Other **Additional Partners** 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 and further support to the project in meeting the aims and objectives of the NSRP. Such additional partners should not be included in place of partners in Ireland or

Northern Ireland. Costs incurred by additional partners may not be included in the proposal or charged to the NSRP.

2.1.12 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.

2.2   Eligibility

2.2.1   A complete Expression of Interest & Endorsement Form must be submitted to the HEA by the Research Office at the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland on behalf of the proposed applicants by the **EOI deadline of 4pm on 05 December 2024**. The HEA will complete eligibility checks and inform the Research Office in the proposed Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland to confirm the list of eligible candidates who are approved to proceed to full application stage by the 18th of December 2024.

2.2.2   Application to the NSRP is open to researchers in any discipline from early to advanced career stages.

2.2.3   In line with the goals and objectives of the NSRP, 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.

2.2.4   The research proposal can be submitted by a partnership between individual Lead Investigators, or by a consortium that will include Lead Investigators and Consortium Co-Leads under the auspices of eligible host higher education institutions.

2.2.5   The identified Lead Investigators and Consortium Co-Leads must be a minimum of two years post PhD, having been awarded their doctoral degrees no later than the 31st of December 2022. For this condition, the date of graduation (conferral) should be taken into account.

2.2.6   At the time of the initiation of an award, the Lead Investigator in the **Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland** must be employed by that higher education institution with a contract of sufficient duration to cover the complete timescale of a funded project. Contractual matters are an issue for resolution between prospective team members and their proposed host higher education institutions.

2.2.7   Team members, with the exception of visiting researchers, are to be employed at an host institution. Research students are to be registered at an host institution.

2.2.8   Applicants whose proposals were unsuccessful or whose proposals were placed on the reserve list following their submission to the Call 1 of the NSRP may apply to Call 2 of the NSRP, provided their proposal is (i) eligible for Strand II: Emerging Hubs of Excellence and/or Strand III: Partnerships of Scale and (ii) all other eligibility requirements are met.

2.2.9   Applications will be assessed on the basis of the primary discipline indicated on the submitted application. Interdisciplinary proposals will be accepted.

2.2.10 Requests for funding must be in line with Allowable Expenditure. Specifically, a maximum of 50% of any award may be allocated to Northern Ireland partners.

2.2.11 Costs assigned to External Partners may be included in the proposal once clearly justified and not exceeding 10% of the total cost of the proposal.

2.2.12 Each research proposal must identify a **Primary Point of Contact** in the **Lead Administrative/Governance 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.

2.2.13 A Lead Investigator/Consortium Co-Lead may be involved in more than one application. Where more than one of the applications are recommended for funding, assurance from the researcher that the commitment needed to meet each project's requirements can be met will be required by the HEA prior to any offer of funding being made.

2.2.14 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 lifetime of funding under the NSRP.

2.2.15 In line with the objectives of the NSRP, proposals which can reasonably be expected to lead to commercial applications and exploitation in the short term will not be supported. However, collaboration and/or support from commercial sources is permissible. Such interactions must clearly be in the context of added value from a research quality perspective.

2.2.16 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. The source of the support should be shown to be aligned and in agreement with the aims and objectives of the NSRP. Proposals which might lead to longer-term commercial application must have the appropriate arrangements in place to manage this in accordance with national protocol and institutional norms.

2.2.17 Co-funding support may be obtained from other research funding agencies for related or complementary projects. Parallel funding for the same project work is not permissible.

2.3 Proposal Requirements

2.3.1 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. Due regard should be given to dealing with research misconduct, in line with institutional procedures and national policies.

2.3.2 The HEA's Principles of Good Practice in Research within Higher Education Institutions and the nine elements of good practice identified therein should be reflected as appropriate in project proposals.

2.3.3 Applicants must demonstrate that they have given full consideration to the potential sex and/or gender dimension of 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 sought, and reporting requirements will seek reflections on that balance.

2.3.4   In line with the National Access Plan 2022-2028, 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.

2.3.5   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 must 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 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 Ethics Committee or equivalent committee of the host institutions, written evidence of such ethical approval will be required by the HEA within six months of the start of the award. In instances where the project's ethical approval(s) is/are to be obtained in a staggered or sequential order based on the progress of work packages, written evidence will be required by the HEA and confirmation must be provided as each stage of the sequence is satisfied.

2.3.6   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.

2.3.7   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 and progressing Ireland's National Action Plan for Open Research, project proposals should make a commitment to making data and other types of research, open and accessible. Researchers and research team members may be requested to provide ORCIDs in relation to reporting.

2.3.8   Where co-funding is obtained or is already in existence, reference must be made to such funding at the time of application (in the relevant section of the application form) or if received subsequent to obtaining NSRP funding, the HEA must be informed in writing. The dominant concern in this provision is to maximise the cost-effective use of resources.

2.3.9   If the research project as proposed in the application form is currently or has previously been funded either in full, or in part, by the HEA or any other funding agency, applications will be deemed ineligible and will not be considered for funding.

2.3.10   The 'Team Composition' provided in an application should reflect the personnel requirements necessary to project completion, to meeting the aims and objectives of the project proposal and, where relevant, adequate projections for the number of research students that may need to be trained through the project. All eligible and relevant costs necessary to support the 'Team Composition' over the duration of the project must be reflected in budget costs at the time of application.

2.4 Institutional Responsibilities

2.4.1 A **Lead Administrative/Governance Institution** in Ireland must be identified for the purposes of the administration, monitoring and governance of the project. This Lead Administrative/Governance Institution will be responsible for all communication with the HEA regarding the management and monitoring of the grant. The project will be supervised and managed by the Lead Investigators/Consortium Co-Leads and their host institutions having regard to international best practice.

2.4.2 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.

2.4.3 The host institutions will take full responsibility for the provision of full supervision and training of any PhD students who join projects, with reference to Ireland's National Framework for Doctoral Education.

2.4.4 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; volunteers and others employed or involved in any research funded by this award.

2.4.5 The host institutions accept responsibility for any litigation or liability that may arise out of research funded by this award and are responsible for ensuring appropriate insurance coverage in this regard. Each host institution will be responsible for their involvement in the award in accordance with the terms and conditions of the award and institutional norms.

2.4.6 Any funding granted must be applied in a manner compliant with State Aid Legislation and Export Controls.

2.4.7 All publications and outputs from the research project must acknowledge the support of the HEA, DFHERIS and the Shared Island Fund and display the North South Research Programme logo on related documentation, media and social media.

2.4.8 Funding is conditional on meeting the specified criteria of the NSRP and on the outcome of the competitive process.

3. Specific Programme criteria

The objectives of the NSRP can be further clarified through the following specific criteria:

3.1.1 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 International Assessment Panel;

3.1.2 The discipline/research area proposed must be an area where the Lead Investigators/Consortium Co-Leads/partnering institutions have established and demonstrable strength/track record OR capacity to perform in an associated new and emerging area;

3.1.3 Proposals must have a demonstrable impact on the education sectors with regard to the following:

(a) quality of research work and outputs,

(b) illustration of the feedback into the teaching and learning domain (achieved through the input of project team members to policy design and implementation, addressing institution

and/or national strategies, by direct contribution to curricular reform or content, skills development and enterprise or societal engagement, and

(c) the building up of research capabilities in specific research areas on the island as a whole;

3.1.4 Proposals should support the achievement of, and deliver outputs relating to:

(a) the goals and objectives of [Impact 2030](#) and institutional research strategy;

(b) the objectives of the [Shared Island initiative](#) and the shared objectives of the Government of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Executive, including balanced regional development;

(c) national alignment with [Horizon Europe's](#) mission-based approach

(d) and/or one or more of the [United Nations SDGs](#)

(e) objectives of a unified tertiary system as relevant to achieving the shared priorities of the government of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

3.1.5 Proposals should be made with reference to the strengthening of current Ireland and Northern Ireland higher education collaborations or for the establishment of new collaborations with agreed joint programmes and project management processes;

3.1.6 Proposals must demonstrate the contribution to achieving the goals and objectives of the research strategy of the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution, the Lead Institution in Northern Ireland and any Partner Institutions.

4. Funding & Allocation of NSRP budget

4.1.1 The funding allocated to Call 2 of the NSRP is €17.01M over a four-year period, launching in October 2024.

4.1.2 Subject to available budget and the recommendations of the International Assessment Panel, funding will be awarded to circa 3-4 Strand II and 2 Strand III projects balanced across STEM and AHSS research areas.

4.1.3 Strand II: Emerging Hubs of Excellence will support academic research teams to collaborate on an agreed work programme. Interdisciplinary collaborations are encouraged. Strand III: Partnerships of Scale 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.

4.1.4 Applicants may seek up to €4,000,000 for projects with a minimum of 42 months duration and a maximum of 48 months duration. **A maximum of 50% of any award may be allocated to Northern Ireland Partners (including contingency costs).**

4.1.5 The HEA reserves the right to terminate funding in circumstances such as, but not limited to, the following:

(a) if progress is unsatisfactory,

(b) if funds have not been used for the activities/research approved,

(c) if work has stopped on the research project,

(d) if reporting requirements are not adhered to,

(e) if the project team or project contravenes institutional and/or national policies,

(f) if evidence of a research agreement between partners is not provided within the given time frame or

(g) if ethical approval is not granted where it is required.

4.2 Allowable Expenditure

4.2.1 The maximum award value is €4,000,000. Where the budget requested in a proposal is significantly lower than the maximum allowable amount, clear justification for the request should be included in the proposal.

4.2.2 Costs to fund estates, room rental, or office space within or outside of an institution are not allowable expenses.

4.2.3 Costs cannot be sought for seed funding to support further funding calls or sub-projects.

4.2.4 The breakdown of funding across partners is at the discretion of the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland and the Lead Institution in Northern Ireland with any Partner Institutions participating in the project proposal.

4.2.5 **Additional Partners from outside of Ireland and outside of Northern Ireland** may be included, however no costs may be requested for these partners.

Staff Members[1]

4.2.6 Buy-out costs may be included. Buy-out costs may be sought for core staff already employed in the institutions hosting the project. Institutions listed in Appendix One (List 1) can seek staff buy-out costs or request salary costs for eligible researchers/personnel. Costs anticipated for increments incurred over the course of employment on a project must be included in the proposed budget. No further funding will be made available to a project during the course of a project to cover raises in salary costs.

4.2.7 Buy-out costs for research staff and a project manager at the host institutions may be sought. Buy-out costs may be sought for core staff already employed in the institutions hosting the project.

4.2.8 Salary costs may be sought for researchers recruited onto a project. The staff employment, pension matters and/or buy-out costs should be in accordance with institutional norms.

4.2.9 The proportion or share of buy-out or salary costs is a matter for the consortium to agree. This may include buy-out or salary costs of core academic and/or contract academic/research staff. The allocation of these costs within projects is not limited to Lead Investigators/ Consortium Co-Leads only.

4.2.10 Irish HEI partners should use academic and research salary cost rates as per their institution. Postdoctoral salaries must begin no lower than at the first point on the Irish Universities Association (IUA) salary scale or an equivalent. For partners in Northern Ireland, salary rates should be relevant to the rate applicable in Northern Ireland.

4.2.11 Costs may include up to €80,000 per annum pro rata for a Project Manager for the complete duration of the project. Costs should include provision for salary, PRSI and pension. Costs for research consumables and travel cannot be sought for the project manager. An existing institution staff member may be recruited to this position. The Project Manager may be

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[1]*All costs for planned and approved roles must be budgeted from the outset - no further budget will be made available once the project commences. Budgets should include provision for advancement on incremental salary scales with appropriate justification provided.*

based at the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution or in one or more of the other lead partner institutions. The cost may be split across more than one Project Manager based in or across any of the lead partner institutions provided the maximum allowable value per annum is not exceeded. Breakdown of the costs and the Project Manager's location is subject to the agreement of all partners involved in the project.

4.2.12 Research consumables and travel costs are capped at a maximum of €10,000 per research staff member per year.

4.2.13 Inter-institutional visiting researchers' costs may also be included once clearly justified.

4.2.14 Employment and research consumable costs may be sought for individuals whose skills are crucial to the completion of the research (i.e., a digital archivist, lab manager participating in research, public engagement practitioner, etc.). The dependence of the project on these individuals must be demonstrated in the application.

4.2.15 Costs per laptop is capped at €2,000. Where a higher specification laptop is required, the cost and its clear justification must be included in the budget template to be reviewed at award offer stage.

4.2.16 In addition to those working on the project as part of the full team, research staff and research students may join on a temporary basis with a view to supporting the project on an operational basis.

4.2.17 Training costs for the development of research staff may be sought for the duration of their employment on the project. Training costs necessary to the completion of the project and/or appropriate researcher development should be justified in the proposal.

Overheads

4.2.18 Institutional overheads may be included up to a maximum of 25% of pay 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. Research student stipends and equipment should not be included as pay for the purpose of overhead calculation. Institutions may submit a flat rate for overheads at the time of application, provided this does not exceed 25% of pay costs. The division of overheads between the HEIs in Ireland and Northern Ireland is subject to the consortium's agreement and the institutions involved.

Partner(s)

4.2.19 The recurrent cost of collaboration sought by External 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 External Partners will not be covered by this provision. **Additional Partners from outside of Ireland and outside of Northern Ireland** may not seek costs, recurrent or otherwise.

4.2.20 External Partners may seek costs related to travel, networking (i.e., workshops & seminars), dissemination and impact (i.e., publication services), and fieldwork.

Research Students

4.2.21 Fees for research students (Masters and PhD) including international research students and associated registration and tuition fees may be sought as part of Research Student costs.

4.2.22 Research students may supplement their stipend/research costs/travel costs through funding awarded from other sources provided the terms and conditions of that other source do not inhibit or prevent the student from achieving the aims and objectives of their research as funded by the North South Research Programme.

4.2.23 All costs sought for research students (Masters and PhD) must be clearly set out in the application using the budget template. Costs may include fees, research consumables, travel and maintenance grants for postgraduate students which facilitate participation in the project on a full-time basis.

4.2.24 Research costs, including stipends for research students (Masters and PhD), consumables and travel, up to €30,000 per annum per student may be sought. Stipends must be no lower than €19,000 per annum. In addition, costs for fees may be sought for research students for up to a maximum of four years.

4.2.25 Costs required for the development of specific modules around transferable skills and academic context for research students and/or training necessary to the project for researchers may be sought under this Call. Costs for research students can only be sought for the period of the project's duration. Financial commitments that extend beyond the lifetime of the funding or beyond the stated funding allocation are the responsibility of the host institutions.

4.2.26 As far as possible research students (Masters and PhD) are expected to spend at least 12 months or more outside of their host institution with the view to increasing all island collaboration at the early career stage.

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

4.2.28 Research students recruited to a project funded from the NSRP should be working full-time on a PhD project that reflects the NSRP's key principles and criteria. Where a research student is already working on a project compatible with the NSRP and is in receipt of funding from another source, a request for research consumables for that student is permissible providing that their work is contributing to the project.

4.2.29 Under the NSRP, registration fees are understood to mean fees other than tuition fees, such as a levy for HEI student centres or sports facilities. Where a research student spends 12 months or more outside of their host institution and as a result incurs an increase in registration fees, the research student may use some of the additional payment of up to €5,000 pro rata to cover the increase in registration fees.

Research Equipment

4.2.30 A maximum of €10,000 may be sought for any single item of small research equipment. Clear justification must be provided in the budget that the equipment is absolutely necessary to carry out the research and that such a facility is not available through other means to the researcher(s). All costs for equipment must clearly pertain to the proposal submitted to the NSRP. Costs for equipment that are not fundamental to an approved project will not be permitted. Costs for laptops may be included in consumable costs or in research equipment costs.

4.2.31 Where access to equipment, and/or services, and/or infrastructures is necessary to the completion of the project, costs may be sought with justification provided. Should the project's sustainability or completion depend on the maintenance of equipment purchased as part of the project, anticipated costs may be included in the contingency costs to be sought in the submitted budget. Where the sustainability of a project is dependent on such costs, budgeted contingencies set aside for equipment maintenance may be used for a limited time after the completion of the project subject to approval by the HEA.

4.2.32 All equipment must be acquired, in compliance with all national and EU procurement guidelines, at the most cost-effective price and upon the most competitive terms, having regard to the needs of the project in relation to economy, time, and quality, and without any conflict of interest.

Other Costs

4.2.33 'Other costs' required must be specifically identified and justified, e.g., fieldwork, data collection, archives, open access publication, access to national infrastructures, etc.

4.2.34 Costs associated with the objective of building research capacity between institutions in Ireland and Northern Ireland may be sought, such as development of academic content, visiting researchers, guest speakers, workshops and seminars. Balanced development and impact in Ireland and in Northern Ireland should be demonstrated.

Contingency

4.2.35 Provision should be made for contingency costs at up to 10% of the overall budget. The total budget must not exceed €4,000,000 and be inclusive of contingency costs. Contingency costs can only be drawn down at the end of the project, and only after a request is made and approved by the HEA. The funds transferred to the project in the course of its duration will exclude the contingency amount until approval for their use is provided.

4.2.36 The contingency budget is intended to mitigate risk and to minimise the impact of risk related costs. Contingency is not to be used for research activity essential to the project which should be calculated in the budget. Details of risk mitigation should be included in the application.

4.2.37 Contingency provision should be apportioned to institutions involved in the consortium and in accordance with the consortium agreement.

4.2.38 Up to 50% of a proposal budget may be allocated to partners in Northern Ireland, inclusive of contingency costs and overheads.

General

4.2.39 No additional funding over and above agreed allocations to projects awarded funding will be made available by the HEA.

4.2.40 One consolidated budget in Euros must be submitted per application. The [InforEuro](#) website should be used for calculating exchange rate.

4.2.41 The foreign exchange rate risk is to be borne by the project. However, contingency costs **may** be used (at the end of the project and subject to approval by the HEA) to absorb downward changes in foreign exchange. Impact of severe changes in foreign exchange rates must be reported in annual progress reporting.

4.2.42 Taxation matters that may arise are to be addressed at an institution/consortium level.

4.2.43 Each project, host institution and the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution must ensure compliance with State Aid regulations in their jurisdiction. Payments to all partners should be agreed in the financial schedule of the collaborative research agreement between all partners on a project.

4.2.44 Requests for costs for community participants should align with eligible budget costs and institutional norms.

4.2.45 The use of incentives/vouchers to recruit and incentivise participants/participation in a project will be a matter for the institutions/consortium to agree, in accordance with usual institutional convention and ethical oversight.

4.2.46 The type of incentives/vouchers being used, the stage of research at which they are being offered and the benefit they provide to the participant must be clearly stated in the Design, Methodology and Implementation template to be submitted as part of the project proposal and the stage at which any ethical approval is required for their use should be set out in the 'Ethics' section of the proposal.

4.2.47 Costs requested for the use of incentives/vouchers to recruit and incentivise participants/participation in a project should be clearly set out and justified under 'Other Costs' in the Budget Template to be submitted as part of the project proposal. Approval for these costs will be subject to evidence being provided to the HEA of approval for their use from relevant institutional research/ethics committees.

5. Application Procedure and Assessment

5.1 Application Procedure

5.1.1 Expression of Interest

5.1.1.1 All applications are subject to a mandatory Expression of Interest (EOI) process.

5.1.1.2 Expressions of Interest must be submitted on behalf of potential applicants by the Research Office of the proposed Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland by **4pm (Irish**

Time) on 05 December 2024. Expression of Interest & Endorsement Forms must be completed with appropriate signatures.

5.1.1.3 EOIs submitted directly by applicants to the HEA will not be accepted.

5.1.1.4 The deadline for submission of Expressions of Interest will be strictly enforced.

5.1.1.5 Following the deadline, the HEA will complete EOI eligibility checks and thereafter contact the Research Office in the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution to confirm the list of eligible candidates who are approved to proceed to full application stage. It is the responsibility of the Research Office in the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution to inform candidates of the outcome of the EOI process.

5.1.2 Application documents

5.1.2.1 Only applications progressed following receipt of confirmation of EOI approval by the HEA will be accepted.

5.1.2.2 Complete applications must be submitted to the online portal before the deadline of **4pm** on **27 February 2025**. This deadline will be strictly enforced.

5.1.2.3 A complete application will comprise the following documents:
   (a) Completed Application Form
   (b) Proposed Budget (template provided must be used)
   (c) Design, Methodology and Implementation Form (template provided must be used)
   (d) Gantt Chart
   (e) Signed Endorsement Form (template provided must be used)

5.1.2.4 An indicative application form is available on the HEA website to support the drafting of applications.

5.1.2.5 It is the sole responsibility of applicants to ensure that all required documentation is uploaded and submitted via the online portal by the stated deadline. Incomplete applications will be deemed ineligible.

5.1.2.6 An application will not be assessed in any of the following circumstances:

5.1.2.6.1   The application is incomplete;

5.1.2.6.2   The application is submitted after the stated deadline;

5.1.2.6.3   The application does not meet the eligibility criteria;

5.1.2.6.4   The application is not submitted using the online portal;

5.1.2.6.5   Approval to proceed to application stage was not provided by the HEA following completion of the mandatory EOI process.

5.1.2.7 Following the completion of eligibility checks by the HEA, applicants will receive notification of whether their application is being forwarded for assessment.

5.1.2.8 Due to heavy server traffic on the day of the applicant and Research Office deadlines, all participants are strongly advised to submit their forms well in advance of the relevant deadline.

5.1.2.9 In submitting an application, researchers and their host institution will be deemed to have accepted the conditions outlined in this call document and to have agreed to be bound by them. All applications must be endorsed by the Institution President/Provost or their

deputy/nominated person within the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland and the Lead Institution in Northern Ireland by the stated application deadline of **27 February 2025**. Electronic signatures (DocuSign/Adobe sign) may be used for this purpose. Applications submitted without the required signed endorsement letter will be deemed ineligible.

5.1.2.10 All proposals submitted before the application deadline will be available for review by an agreed Research Officer in the Research Office at the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland. Research Office approval must be submitted through the online system on or before **14 March 2025**. Applications that are not reviewed by or which are not approved by the appropriate research office will be deemed incomplete and will not be progressed.

5.1.2.11 Applications may be submitted in the English or Irish language. To facilitate assessment by an International Assessment Panel, an English language translation of any application may be uploaded by applicants. The HEA will procure an English language translation where one has not been provided by applicants.

5.1.2.12 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.

5.1.2.13 The application must outline the processes for the operational and fiscal management of the project.

5.1.2.14 Should an application to the NSRP be recommended for funding, acceptance of an award by a host institution will be in accordance with this call document 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.

5.1.3 Frequently Asked Questions

5.1.3.1 In the first instance, any questions or queries from a potential applicant should be raised with their institution's Research Office.

5.1.3.2 Queries which cannot be resolved by Research Offices may be submitted in written form to research@hea.ie by the Research Office.

5.1.3.3 Research Office queries will be addressed via a Frequently Asked Questions process (FAQ). Both the questions and answers will be published on the HEA website in the form of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document, which will be updated regularly. Queries are to be submitted by Research Offices before 5pm each Wednesday while the call is open until **20 February 2025**.

5.2 Assessment Panel and Scoring

5.2.1 An assessment process commensurate with the objectives of the NSRP will be put in place.

5.2.2 An independent International Assessment Panel will be convened, comprising international experts in relevant fields and/or with experience in engagement with institutional, research

and policy development at a high strategic level. In establishing the panel, due regard shall be given to gender balance.

5.2.3   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 International Assessment Panel.

5.2.4   Two reviewers from the International Assessment Panel will be assigned to assess each proposal.

5.2.5   The final list of proposals recommended for funding by the assessment panel will be progressed to the Board of the HEA and will be shared with DFHERIS and the Shared Island Unit.

5.2.6   All proposals will be assessed and ranked according to their merit and in line with the specific criteria of the NSRP set out in the call document and in line with a balanced breakdown of awards between STEM and AHSS.

The evaluation criteria are as follows:

Support of NSRP objectives (50 points):		
	Compatibility with NSRP objectives on potential impact on the education and research sectors in Ireland and Northern Ireland including on the sectors' relationship with external partners.	*10 points*
	Substance, level, and quality of research collaboration including the justification and demonstration of the partnership.	*10 points*
	Demonstration of the adequacy and specificity of arrangements for formal governance management, financial and risk management and co-ordination of the work.	*10 points*
	Demonstration of mechanisms which will assist in the understanding of cultural diversities on the island, EDI principles and reconciliation on the island.	*10 points*
	Contribution of the proposal to achieving the goals and objectives of national and institutional research strategy; the objectives of the Shared Island initiative, including cooperation and delivery of shared priorities of the Government and the Northern Ireland Executive; developing	*10 points*

	the ecosystem for research collaboration by higher education institutions, compatible with balanced regional development across the island; and, national alignment with Horizon Europe's mission-based approach and/or one or more of the United Nations SDGs; progressing a unified tertiary system as aligned with the shared priorities of the Government and Northern Ireland Executive.	
Proposal Quality (50 points):		
	Established expertise/track record	*10 points*
	Research quality of proposal To include detailed description of: - **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. (10 points) - **proposed methods** including a clear description of the proposed project methodology and the credibility of the proposed approach. (10 points)	*35 points*
	Budget justifications Clear justification of budget requests (5 points)	*5 points*

5.3 Awards and Feedback

5.3.1 All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their applications and detailed feedback will be provided to all applicants.

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5.3.2   A Letter of Offer outlining the terms and conditions of the award will be issued to applicants recommended for funding for signature by the Lead Investigators in Ireland and Northern Ireland as well as by institutional representatives, such as the President or President's nominee.

5.3.3   Once the offer is accepted and required documentation and evidence of a signed research agreement between all partners is provided by the consortium to the HEA, an initial tranche of funds will be paid to the **Lead Administrative/Governance Institution** at the beginning of the project.

5.3.4   The HEA will pay the approved amount in instalments per the payment schedule as will be set out in the Letter of Offer and subject to compliance by the host institutions and by the Lead Investigators and Consortium Co-Leads with the Terms and Conditions of the award.

5.4   Monitoring

5.4.1   Reports covering all financial and programmatic aspects of the project will be required at the end of six months and on a yearly basis thereafter. Progress will be assessed based on the stated project milestones and outputs for the relevant reporting period. Feedback on the submitted reports will be provided by the HEA within 4 weeks of their receipt. Based on progress and adherence (or lack thereof) to reporting requirements, the HEA reserves the right to continue with or to withhold further payments and to seek reports at intermittent stages of a project's lifespan as deemed necessary by the HEA.

5.4.2   Any change, expansion, augmentation of the team at post award stage would not normally be permitted if it deviates from the submitted research proposal. Should difficulties surrounding recruitment or other unusual difficulties impacting on team composition arise post award initiation, such difficulties should be reported as they occur and should also be detailed in annual progress reports. Requests for a change in team composition may be considered with appropriate justification.

5.4.3   Adherence to other programme requirements including confirmation of approval of any requirements for ethical approval and data management plans will also be monitored.

5.4.4   The Lead Investigator and/or Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland will be required to provide documentation on behalf of all partners as requested by the HEA to satisfy reporting requirements.

5.4.5   Audits of all projects will be carried out once a project is finalised and the final report is submitted and reviewed.

5.4.6   The HEA will carry out onsite visits of HEIs and their partners over the course of the NSRP's duration and a HEI and/or their partner may be chosen for one or more site visits.

END

Appendix 1 - List of eligible institutions

Institutions in Ireland eligible as Lead Administrative/Governance Institutions and Partners: designated institutions of higher education as set down under Section 53 of the HEA, Act 2022.

Atlantic Technological University
Carlow College, St. Patrick's
Dublin City University
Dublin Dental Hospital
Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (DIAS)
Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology
Dundalk Institute of Technology
Marino Institute of Education
Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
Maynooth University
Munster Technological University
National College of Art and Design
National College of Ireland
RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences
Royal Irish Academy
Royal Irish Academy of Music
South East Technological University
St. Patrick's College, Maynooth
Technological University Dublin
Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
University College Cork
University College Dublin
University of Dublin, Trinity College
University of Galway
University of Limerick

2. Institutions in Northern Ireland eligible as Lead Partner Institutions:

Armagh Observatory
Centre for Cross Border Studies
Queen's University Belfast
Stranmillis University College
St. Mary's University College
The Open University
Ulster University

3. Eligible External Partners*

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AFBI (Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute)
ESRI (The Economic and Social Research Institute)
Health Research Board (HRB)
HECA Member Institutions
Marine Institute (Foras na Mara)
National Institute for Bioprocessing Research (NIBRT)
SFI Research Centres
Teagasc (Agriculture and Food Development Authority)
Technology Centres
Technology Gateways
The Discovery Programme (Centre for Irish Archaeological Research)
The Open University in Ireland
Tyndall National Institute

FET Boards in Ireland
Cavan & Monaghan ETB
City of Dublin ETB
Cork ETB
Donegal ETB
Dublin & Dún Laoghaire ETB
Galway & Roscommon ETB
Kerry ETB
Kildare & Wicklow ETB
Kilkenny & Carlow ETB
Laois & Offaly ETB
Limerick & Clare ETB
Longford & Westmeath ETB
Louth & Meath ETB
Mayo Sligo & Leitrim ETB
Tipperary ETB
Waterford & Wexford ETB

FET colleges in Northern Ireland
College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise – CAFRE
Metropolitan College – BMC
North West Regional College – NWRC
Northern Regional College – NRC
South Eastern Regional College - SERC
South West College – SWC
Southern Regional College – SRC

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*While proposals will be led by host higher education institutions, the inclusion of partners from civic society, enterprise and innovation from Ireland and Northern Ireland will be welcome. NGOs, charities, and companies should be officially registered.

Appendix 2 Glossary

Additional Partner	Additional Partners are from outside of Ireland and Northern Ireland and, subject to clear justification, may be included in a project proposal. Costs incurred by additional partners may not be included in the proposal or charged to the North South Research Programme.
Commercial Application	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.
Consortium	The lead institutions, together with their partner institutions, and any External and/or Additional partners involved in a proposal will be referred to as a Consortium. Their partnership will be governed by the Terms and Conditions of the award and a corresponding Research/Collaboration Agreement.
Consortium Co-Lead	Each Partner Institution within the consortium must have a Consortium Co-Lead who leads the research at their institution, provides oversight of the project work carried out at their institution and/or an agreed work package, and as appropriate, provides support to any members of the project research team within their institution.
Exploitation	The action of making use of and benefiting from project outputs and outcomes for economic or commercial gain in accordance with National Intellectual Property Protocol.
Expression of Interest (EOI)	This is the first step of the application process. A complete Expression of Interest & Endorsement form must be submitted to the HEA by the Research Office at the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland on behalf of the proposed applicants by the EOI deadline. Approval to proceed to submit a full proposal or otherwise will be communicated to the Research Office by the HEA.
External Partner	External Partners from further education, civic society, enterprise and innovation from Ireland and Northern Ireland. NGOs, charities, and companies should be officially registered. These partners may be allocated a maximum of 10% of the proposed overall budget.
Host Institutions	Institutions within which a Lead Investigator or Consortium Co-Lead is employed and where research students and team members are registered/employed.
International Assessment Panel	An independent panel comprising international experts in relevant fields and/or with experience in institutional, research and policy development at a high strategic level, tasked with assessing proposals against the prescribed evaluation criteria for the North South Research Programme.
Lead Administrative/	The Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland

Governance Institution in Ireland	will be required to provide documentation as requested by the HEA on behalf of all partners in their consortium at all stages of the award. Responsibility for oversight and governance of the award lies with the Lead Administrative /Governance Institution in Ireland.
Lead Institution in Northern Ireland	There must be at least one Lead Institution in Northern Ireland associated with each proposal.
Lead Investigator	In the context of the North South Research Programme, the proposal must identify at least two Lead Investigators: one in Ireland at the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution, and one in Northern Ireland at the Lead Institution in Northern Ireland. The Lead Investigators must be employed at the host HEI at the time of the project start.
Partner Institution	A Partner Institution either in Ireland or Northern Ireland is part of the consortium. There is parity between a Partner Institution, the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland and the Lead Institution in Northern Ireland.
Primary Point of Contact	Each research proposal must identify a Primary Point of Contact in the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland. The Primary Point of Contact may be the Lead Investigator, a project manager or another suitably appointed representative in the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland.

END

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