

## North South Research Programme 2024

### Responses to queries on the call document

Note: This document may be updated during the call process.

Last updated: 19 November 2024

*Please be aware that queries on the call document will be accepted until and including 17<sup>th</sup> February 2025. All responses will be published by 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025 prior to the call closing on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025.*

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## 1. Allowable Expenditure

### Stipends

**Q1a. Call document Page 13, pt 4.2.24 states that €30,000 per annum for research students can be sought. Also, this point states fees may be sought, is this in addition to the €30,000 or to come from that as well? Does the recently announced increased minimum PhD stipend of €25,000 per annum affect this? If we use the €25,000 per year, by the time this is covered and fees are paid, there would be nothing left from €30,000 for consumables and travel. Even if the fees are to come from elsewhere, this would mean that the PhD student only had €5,000 per annum for consumables and travel, whereas the cap is set at €10,000 per year for other research staff members (page 12 point 4.2.12).**

The total value of research student (Masters and PhD) costs being sought under Call 2 can be increased from €30,000 to €32,000 per annum for a maximum duration of four years for a PhD student and in accordance with the course duration for a Masters research student.

Costs, including stipends for research students travel and consumables, of up to €32,000 per annum per research student may be sought. Stipends must be no lower than €19,000 per annum. Fees for research students may be sought in addition to this, for up to a maximum of four years for a PhD student and in accordance with the course duration for a Masters research student. The level of stipend paid within the above limits is a matter for each institution to determine.

### Recruitment of research students

**Q1b. If a project is asking for €4,000,000 euros, and an external partner is entitled to received 10% of the award (€400,000), can the external partner use this money for recruitment of postgrad students?**

Recruitment of postgrad students by an External Partner on a project is not an eligible cost. All Research Students on a NSRP funded project must be registered at an HEI in the consortium. Research students may spend time at an External Partner, but terms of their registration are between their host institution and the research student.

## 2. Programme budget

### Number of projects to be funded

**Q2a. Call document Page 4, section 1.4: To clarify, is it expected that 4-5 projects will be offered funding across both strands, or 4-5 projects per strand?**

The value of funding available under Call 2 of the NSRP is €17.01m. Subject to available funding and recommendations of the international panel of assessors, 4-5 project proposals in total across Call 2 will receive offers of funding.

**Q2b. I'll be assisting QUB Academics with their costings for this upcoming call. Can I please ask if there is a set € conversion rate that we need to apply?**

There is no fixed exchange rate for calculating budgets. The date and exchange rate used in calculating budgets must be provided in the budget template accompanying each project proposal. When using an exchange rate use the [InforEuro](https://www.inforeuro.com/) website.

#### Budget

**Q2c. Is the budget maximum of €4million inclusive of overheads or are overheads calculated on top of the €4million?**

Overheads are inclusive of the maximum budget amount of €4 million.

**Q2d. Is the amount budgeted for buy-out included in staff costs for the purposes of calculating overheads?**

The cost of institutional overheads may be included at the cost of up to 25% of pay costs (full-time personnel). Where a staff member is not working full time on the project overheads may be calculated on a pro rata basis.

**Q2e. Is £10k the maximum expenditure on equipment, or can larger equipment be purchased?**

No single item of equipment may exceed €10,000.

**Q2f. The Call document limits expenditure on pieces of equipment to €10,000, but allows for budget for access charges for equipment. If the hiring of a piece of equipment for a project costs a similar amount as the cost of buying it, can a proposal make the case for the purchase of equipment beyond the €10,000 limit?**

See the answer to Q2e.

**Q2g. Point 4.2.7 indicates that buy-out costs for research staff, project manager, and core staff can be included. Is the buy-out cost to be based on the individual's actual salary costs?**

As per 4.2.8 buy-out costs should be applied in accordance with institutional norms. In relation to project managers costs sought should include provision for salary, PRSI and pension set out in 4.2.11.

**Q2h. 1. Can we pay costs for one off international speakers to come to Ireland for a masterclass/lecture series? 4.2.34 of the call document suggests that guest speakers can be paid for as long as there is balanced development and impact in Ireland and Northern Ireland. However, elsewhere, the call doc is very adamant that additional partners from outside Ireland and Northern Ireland cannot seek costs. So is it okay to pay external speakers as long as they are not 'additional partners'.**

Point 4.2.34 iterates that associated costs with the objective of building research capacity between institutions may be sought. Costs for external guest speakers to deliver talks on the island is an

example of an allowable cost under the category of ‘Other Cost’. Such costs are to be justified in the proposal by demonstrating how the expenditure will contribute towards building research capacity. As per the glossary provided in Appendix 2 of the Call Document’ 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.’

***Q2i. Can we name and cost particular people for postdocs? We are looking for people with particular skill sets and we are aware of some really highly qualified individuals who are finishing postdocs at other institutions. So these people would need to be paid at a higher postdoc rate to take into account their skills and experience. 4.2.8 says that salary costs may be sought for researchers recruited onto a project. Would it be better to name a potential postdoc to explain the reasoning for higher salary or is it more appropriate to think in terms of skill sets and open application for the posts.***

Identifying particular people in an application to fill posts not yet advertised is not appropriate. The costing of postdoctoral salaries should be in line with the IUA salary scale and institutional norms or an equivalent. The recruitment of team members should be in line with best practice and is a matter for the institutions involved.

### **3. Proposal Details**

Information on Strands II and III

***Q 3a. Call document Page 10, pt 4.1.3: There is very little information about Strand III other than ‘Higher education institutions will be supported to collaborate with each other on the basis of their respective institutional strategic research priorities.’ More information was provided in the last call, can we please get clarification on what is included under ‘Institution to Institution strategic research engagement’?***

***Q 3b. Can you provide more information on the difference between a Strand II and Strand III project? For example, would this cover non-research-based projects, such as projects with a goal of developing training in certain strategic areas?***

Response to Q3a & Q3b

Page 7, point 2.2.14 of the NSRP Call 2 document states that “...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...”

Strand II: Emerging Hubs of Excellence. This strand will provide funding for academic research teams to collaborate on an agreed programme of research. This might, for example, be several

departments or faculties with similar (or related) disciplines working collaboratively across a range of institutions and partners (north and south).

Strand III: Partnerships of scale. This strand will support institution to institution strategic research engagement: Higher education institutions will be supported to collaborate with each other based on their respective institutional strategic research priorities, aligned with the objectives of the scheme as set out in the call document.

Proposals submitted under the programme may address basic or strategic research and/or research strategies or design policies and/or programmes/networks that will build research capacity through collaboration on an institutional, national, all-island basis.

The objectives of an agreed work programme submitted as part of a proposal must align with the programme's key principles and specific programme criteria.

Training programmes may not seek funding under the Call. Research activities that support the building of research capacity and expertise across the island including the training of research students over the course of a specific programme of work leading to a Masters by Research or a PhD may seek funding under the Call.

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 further education, civic society, cross community, enterprise and innovation partners may include training costs but justification must be provided illustrating that the costs are absolutely necessary to carry out the project.

***Q3c. A colleague who is interested in applying to the North South Research Programme 2024 – Call 2 has been reviewing the EOI document and has queried where the list of disciplines are to complete the “Discipline” section of the EOI.***

***The form states that “The list of disciplines is available in the User Guide for Applicants available on the HEA website” – however these do not appear to have been included in the user guide.***

The list of disciplines is referenced in the Indicative [Application Form, Appendix Two](#).

***Q3d. Is the ROI institute only notified if projects can progress to full application stage? i.e. does the NI HEI have to wait to be notified by ROI research office on 18<sup>th</sup> Dec?***

Approval to progress to the submission of a full proposal, or otherwise, will be communicated to the Research Office in the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution by the HEA through the return of the Submission Pack, inclusive of the HEA decision.

## Expression of Interest

***Q3e. On p.8 of the User Guide for Research Offices, it states “Prior to the submission of an Expression of Interest by the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland, each Partner Institution involved in a proposal must provide the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution with confirmation that they agree to be included in the submission and to support the proposal”. The Endorsement form seeks signs off by the VP for Research or equivalent office holder in both lead institutions (Ireland and Northern Ireland) but there is no space for endorsement by partner institutions. Can you please clarify how this confirmation should be provided by partner institutions?***

Confirmation of each Partner Institution’s involvement in a proposal must be provided to and retained by the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution. Only the Lead Administrative/Governance institution and the Lead Partner Institution in Northern Ireland are required to endorse the application endorsement form. How this confirmation is provided by partner institutions to Lead Institutions is a matter for consortium partners to agree.

***Q3f. Is it necessary for the Research Office to record partner institutions on the EOI submission pack?***

Only the names of the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland and the Lead Partner Institution in Northern Ireland are required to be recorded on the Expression of Interest Submission Pack.

***Q3g. The Call documentation indicates that the Dean of Research can endorse the Eoi but that the full application needs to be endorsed by the Provost or President of the HEI? Is that truly the case or can the fully application also be endorsed by the Dean of Research if deemed appropriate by the applicant institution?***

As per the Call Document 5.1.2. 9, all submitted 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. The Application Endorsement Form also states the signature of the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution’s representative (President/Provost), or authorised signatory is required.

If deemed appropriate by the Lead Institution, authorised signatures may endorse the Application Endorsement Form on behalf of the Provost or President of the institution if they are authorised to do so.

***Q3h. Are clinical trials permitted as part of a research programme? I appreciate the scheme is likely not envisaged as trial funding, but is there any additional stipulation on clinical research?***

Proposals that involve elements of and/or clinical trials as part of the overall project will be considered under this Programme. All proposals submitted must address the key principles and objectives of the Programme. Where a project involves clinical trials, all lead investigators/team leads are responsible for ensuring Irish, and EU regulations regarding clinical trials are adhered to.

#### **4. Eligibility**

**Q4a. I am reaching out regarding a query from some of our prospective applicants. They are asking whether it is possible for two researchers to apply as Lead Investigators, both of whom would be employed at the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland, in addition to having a co-lead in Northern Ireland.**

Page 5, point 2.1.5 of the NSRP Call document states that “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”.

One Lead Investigator per partnering Lead Institution must be identified with the exception of proposals involving separate interdisciplinary teams from within a single institution, where more than one lead investigator may be identified.

**Q4b. Can you please clarify if previous NSRP awardees are eligible to submit a new application?**

Yes, previous NSRP awardees/Lead Investigators who were awarded funding under NSRP Call 1 may submit a new application for Call 2.

**Q4c. Can Lead applicants from currently funded Strand II projects from the HEA N/S 2021 call apply to this 2024 call?**

See the response to Q4b.

**Q4d. Can you please clarify the North South Research Programme (NSRP) Call 2 is only open to researchers who were successful in Call 1 of the NSRP?**

See the response to Q4b.

**Q4dd. Can the leader of a previously funded HEA project be a co-lead in this round?**

See the response to Q4b.

**Q4e. If so would it be expected that they apply for Strand III in this 2024 call rather than seeking additional funding from Strand II?**

Applicants may apply to either Strand II or Strand III provided they meet all eligibility requirements and new research activities are being proposed.

***Q4ee. Are those funded under Call 1 of the NSRP eligible to apply for further funding in this call, either for a different topic or as supplementary for the existing/ongoing project?***

See the response to Q4d, 4dd, 4e & 4f.

***Q4f. Is it possible for an ongoing Strand II project can be scaled up and evolved into a Strand III project, or does it have to be a bespoke, independent application?***

Double funding is not allowed under the programme. Initiatives and research activities already funded through the programme or through another source may not apply to Call 2 for repeat funding.

However, proposals that demonstrate that impact and/or outcomes from a project funded under Call 1 of the NSRP or under another funding stream suitability for further development into new research activities that meet the programmes key criteria and objective may be submitted.

***Q4ff. Can a previously funded HEA North South consortium reapply for further funding in this 2nd call?***

See the response to Q4d, Q4dd, Q 4e,Q4f, Q4g.

***Q4g. The Call Document (p.4) states that Call 2 is “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” but the eligibility criteria doesn’t state that applicants must have been successful in Call 1.***

Applications will be open to all eligible researchers in any discipline, at early, mid or advanced stages of their careers. Applicants do not need to have been awarded NSRP funding under Call 1 to be eligible to apply to Call 2.

***Q4gg. Having looked at the FAQs, question Q4d. Can you please clarify the North South Research Programme (NSRP) Call 2 is only open to researchers who were successful in Call 1 of the NSRP? is not completely clear, as doesn’t give a yes or no response and it refers to question Q4b, which then reads like only previous applicants can apply. But the original document does not suggest this.***

See Q4g.

***Q4h. The Call document (p 6) states that 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.***

***We have a prospective applicant who is a funded Research Professor and as such has an appointment to for 5 years, would this be considered as an eligible contract?***

As per the Call Document, at the time of the initiation of an award the Lead Investigator in the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution in Ireland must be employed by the Lead Administrative/Governance Institution with a contract of sufficient duration to cover the complete time scale of a funded project. These contractual matters are an issue for resolution between the prospective individual Lead Investigator and their proposed host institution, should an offer of funding be made. Projects funded under Call 2 of the NSRP will begin during the academic year 2025/26.

***Q4i. Can a Lead Investigator on one proposal be a Consortium Co-Lead on another separate bid in the same call?***

A lead investigator may be involved in more than one application across the two strands. Where more than one of the applications is recommended for funding assurance that the commitment required from the researcher in meeting each project's requirements can be met by that researcher will be required by the Higher Education Authority prior to any offer of funding being made.

***Q4j. The Open University is listed as eligible institution in Northern Ireland. Is this limited to NI affiliated Open University staff or can investigators from other jurisdictions be included as the NI partner?***

The list of eligible institutions for NSRP funding is provided in Appendix 1 of the Call Document and are regarded as host institutions. All staff recruited onto a project must be employed by the lead or host HEI/s.

External Partners

***Q5a. I am looking through the call document), page 22 (Eligible institutions). If an organisation is in the list as "External Eligible Partners", does this mean that that organisation is not eligible to lead a project under this call?***

External partners are not eligible to lead on a NSRP project. An External Partner may partner with eligible education institutions in Ireland and Northern Ireland as set out under List 1 of Appendix 1 in the call document to collaborate on a project but cannot lead or act as a consortium co-lead.

***Q5b. I can see that there are eligibility criteria mentioned for the identified Lead Investigators and Consortium Co-Lead Partners page 6 (for example, "minimum of two years post PhD"). However, I cannot find the eligibility criteria for Leads from an external partner. Are the any***

***eligibility criteria regarding the PhD conferral, or type of contract (permanent, not-permanent)?***

See Q5a.

***Q5c. Do External partners also need to provide an Application Endorsement Form?***

An Application Endorsement Form from the External Partner is not required. It is a matter for the Lead Admin Institution to seek this on behalf of the proposed consortium. All offers of funding are subject to the completion of a research agreement involving all consortium partners.

***Q5d. An External Partner is listed in Appendix 1 as an external partner, but we are seeking guidance on whether***

- i) An External Partner is an eligible external partner which falls under the 10% cap of total project budget or***
  - ii) are we simply an eligible external partner and the 10% does not apply to us?***
- If its is scenario 1 – is the 10% cap on all external partners collectively or it is per external partner?***

External partners listed in appendix 1 may be included in a proposal. The total costs of all External Partners involved in a proposal must not exceed 10% of the proposal's total costs.

***Q5e. Re the criteria that External Partners may be allocated no more than 10% of the proposed overall budget, does this apply collectively or individually? i.e. can one external partner be allocated an amount equal to 15% of the overall budget, and another be allocated an amount equal to 5% of the budget therefore collectively not exceeding the maximum 10%***

The total costs of all External Partners involved must not exceed 10% of the proposal's total costs.

***Q5f. I understand that an external partner can join these proposals as “External Partner”, correct? Would it be a possible for an “external partner” to be part of two proposals?***

There are no limits to the number of proposals that an External Partner can be part of. External Partners may be included in the proposal once clearly justified and, in the event of an offer of funding being received on more than one proposal that the External Partner is involved in, they must demonstrate capacity to carry out the work being proposed.

## **5. Research Office Review Stage**

***Q6. During the RO review stage (4th-14th March), can the Research Office recommend amendments to the applicant and can changes be made by the applicant?***

Once an application is submitted by an applicant no further changes may be made to the proposal. The purpose of the Research Office review stage is to have visibility of the application



in order to confirm that proposals are eligible as outlined in the terms and conditions stipulated in the Call Document.

**END**

**19<sup>th</sup> November 2024.**