Research Ireland Investigators Programme

Stage 1 (Expression of Interest) FAQs

Last Updated September 10th 2025

Table of Contents

Terms of Reference

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of this document, it is provided for information purposes only and as a guide to expected developments. It is not intended, and should not be relied upon, as any form of warranty, representation, undertaking, contractual, or other commitment binding in law upon Research Ireland, the Government of Ireland, or any of their respective servants or agents. Research Ireland Terms and Conditions of Research Grants shall govern the administration of Research Ireland grants and awards to the exclusion of this and any other oral, written, or recorded statement.

General Eligibility

Q1a: *I do not currently have a contract that covers the duration of the grant (if awarded). Am I eligible to apply?*

Applicants must hold a permanent contract OR a contract of sufficient duration; in this case for eligibility purposes, **a contract up to November 30ᵗʰ 2030**; 48 months from the projected start date of the Investigators grants. Additionally, applicants will be seen to have an eligible contract where the host research body guarantees that an appropriate contract will be provided should the applicant be successful. Please see Section 3.6.1 (Employment Status) of the call document for more information.

Q1b: *My current contract with my Research Body is less than 50% Full Time Equivalent (FTE) - am I eligible to apply?*

In line with the 'Who Can Apply' policy (https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/Who-Can-Apply-to-Science-Foundation-Ireland_Final.pdf) all applicants must hold (or be guaranteed, should they be successful) a minimum 50% FTE contract with an Eligible Research Body.

Q1c: *I hold a joint appointment between and Eligible Research Body (ERB) and a public hospital, am I eligible to apply?*

In line with the 'Who Can Apply' policy (https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/Who-Can-Apply-to-Science-Foundation-Ireland_Final.pdf), a Clinical Researcher/Scientist who is either employed by, or affiliated with, an ERB must hold a minimum 50% employment contract with a clinical research facility/practice within the public health system in Ireland **or** the Eligible Research Body.

Q1d: *I will not yet be three years post-PhD on the Expression of Interest deadline of September 17ᵗʰ, 2025, am I eligible to apply?*

To be eligible for this programme you must have held your PhD for 3 years (minimum) at the submission deadline (September 17th, 2025). The official date of a PhD is defined by the date printed on the official PhD certificate).

Q1e: *I do not see my Primary Research Area under either the AHSS or STEM Streams – am I eligible to apply for the call?*

We appreciate that our current list of research areas does not cover every discipline. We ask that applicants choose the areas that are closest aligned to their research. Please keep in mind, applicants will be restricted in their choice of Primary Research Area based on which stream they apply to, but Secondary Research Areas will include all AHSS *and* STEM areas for selection. Applicants will

also be able to use the keywords, abstracts and research plans to indicate their research alignment.

Q1f: ***Can Collaborators be based at a Research Body outside of Ireland?***
Yes, collaborators can be based at research bodies outside of Ireland. Please note that collaborators will only be added to proposal at Stage 2 – Full Proposal Stage.

Q1g: ***Can Co-Applicants be based at a Research Body outside of Ireland?***
No, Co-Applicants must hold a primary contact of employment at an [Eligible Research Body](#) in the Republic of Ireland. Please note that all eligibility criteria that apply to Lead Applicants also apply to Co-Applicants. See Section 3.6 (Eligibility Criteria of Applicant and Co-Applicant) of the call document for more information.

Active Awards and Existing Applications

Q2a: ***I am the Lead or Co-Applicant on an active Laureate/ Frontiers for the Future/ Strategic Partnerships/ Innovate for Ireland/ COALESCE programme grant. Am I eligible to apply?***
Lead or Co-Applicants who hold active IRC/SFI/Research Ireland grants (as Lead or Co-Applicants) should **review section 3.6.3 of the call document**. While holding certain grants means you are eligible to apply at any stage of the grant, others require you to be within the final 12 months. If you do not see your grant on the lists provided in section 3.6.3, please contact investigators@researchireland.ie.

Q2b: ***I am currently on the COALESCE/ Frontiers for the Future Programme reserve list, can I apply?***
Yes, you may apply for the Investigators programme if you have an application on the either of these programme's reserve lists. If you are on a reserve list for another Research Ireland programme, please contact investigators@researchireland.ie.

Q2c: ***I am currently a <u>collaborator</u> on an active IRC/SFI/Research Ireland grant, am I able to apply?***
Lead or Co-Applicants who are collaborators/mentors on active IRC/SFI/Research Ireland grants are eligible to apply for the Investigators programme.

Q2d: ***I am currently under review as a Lead Applicant on the Research Ireland Research Professorship OR Global Talent Ireland Programme, am I able to apply?***
No, you are not eligible to apply.

Q2e: ***I currently have a Frontiers for the Future Programme 'Award Stream' application under review, am I eligible to apply to the Investigators Programme?***

Yes, you are eligible to apply to the Investigators Programme. Per section **3.6.3** of the call document Applicants under review in the FFP Awards stream are eligible to apply to this Investigators Programme call, subject to meeting all other eligibility criteria. Should an Awards stream application under review be funded, the Investigators application will be withdrawn from review, even if a distinct submission.

Q2f: ***If I have applied to the Investigators programme, can I then apply to the Frontiers for the Future Programme Award stream?***

No. If an applicant submits an Investigators application, they cannot subsequently apply for the FFP Awards stream while their Investigators application is under review. However, should the applicant be declined or withdrawn (at any stage) from the Investigators competition, they may then apply to FFP Awards.

Salaries & Budgets

Please note, budget details are not required as part of the Stage 1 – Expression of Interest submission. More details on allowable direct costs will be provided at Stage 2 – Full Proposal.

Q3a: ***Will it be possible to claim applicant or collaborator salary as an eligible cost at Stage 2 - Full Proposal?***

No, Applicant's (Lead or Co-) or collaborator salary will **not** be an eligible cost at Stage 2 (Full Proposal) for the Investigators Programme.

Q3b: ***Will teaching replacement/buyout be an eligible cost at Stage 2 – Full Proposal Stage?***

At the full proposal stage, all applicants who require teaching buyout due to significant teaching loads, will be eligible to request teaching buyout as part of their budget. Clear justification will need to be provided on why the applicant requires teaching buyout, and this request will need to be supported by your host research body in the letter of support provided with the full proposal application. Further details on teaching buyout will be provided in the Stage 2 handbook.

Q3c: ***Is it allowable to subcontract to international services outside of the Republic of Ireland?***

As stated in Section 7 of Research Ireland's Grant Budget Policy (Interim) – if overseas services costs are sought, they must be strongly justified: "*If funding is sought for overseas services (e.g., contract research), this must be strongly justified and the rationale for not carrying out this activity in Ireland must be explained. Consideration must also be given to National and European law*".

Q3d: **Will costs associated with fieldwork outside of the Republic of Ireland be an eligible cost under this call?**

As stated in Section 7 of Research Ireland's Grant Budget Policy (Interim), if fieldwork costs are sought, they must be strongly justified: "*For travel, include details/locations (UK, EU, US, etc.) of conferences where possible. Visits to a collaborator's lab, or visits to collections, libraries, **or fieldwork,** must be strongly justified and must include estimated duration and specific purpose*".

Q3e: **Do I have to include 2 PhD students as part of my research team?**

No. While training of PhDs is an objective of the Investigators programme, it is expected that applicants will plan for the team that best suits the delivery of their research programme.

Application

Q4a: **Can you please provide some additional information regarding the anonymity aspect of the EoI application? Is an applicant able include information (citation of past work, mention of potential collaborators, discussion of the 'State of the Art' etc.) that may identify them?**

Regarding the anonymity aspect, it is '**as much as possible**'. We are trying to minimise personal information to reduce the chances of bias, and focus the Stage 1 application on the quality of the idea and plan. Aspects such as applicant background/experience/achievements, institutional commitment/infrastructure will all be formally reviewed at the full proposal stage.

While Research Ireland will not be including the Lead applicant/Co-applicant's personal or institutional details in the document that goes to the reviewers, **applicants can include information that they feel is necessary to support their research idea and plan. We understand that this can include citing their work, discussing preliminary data, discussing previous work or collaborations (etc.) that could in principle allow a reviewer to identify them.** We will not be prescriptive in how applicants use this content, and will only be concerned with the provision of unsolicited documentation such as CVs, Budgets, Letters of Support etc. We strongly recommend that the applicants read through the review

criteria (Appendix A of the Handbook) to help determine what aspects of their application will be assessed by the reviewers.

Q4b: ***My Research is interdisciplinary; how do I choose which stream (AHSS or STEM) to apply to?***

We ask that applicants consider what the primary element/primary research area of the research proposal is. For example, if the programme is a AHSS centric with a STEM component, the applicant should apply to the AHSS stream. As with selection of the Primary/Secondary research areas, we ask that applicants choose the stream that is most appropriate, with the understanding that keywords, abstracts and research plan will also be used to guide reviewer selection.

Q4c: ***Can an applicant submit more than one application to the Investigators Programme?***

No. An Applicant is only permitted to be either the Lead or Co-Applicant on **one** application to the Investigators Programme. However, a Lead or Co-Applicant can be a *collaborator* (formally assigned at Stage 2), on any number of Investigators applications. Co-Applicant and collaborator roles are **distinct.** Please review section 3.5 of the call document for more information regarding these roles.

Q4d: ***Does my host research body need to guarantee that a contract will be in place until at least November 30, 2030 for the Stage 1 application?***

Yes. When an EoI application is being endorsed on SESAME by the Research Office, the host institution is acknowledging the eligibility of both the applicant(s) and application. In particular, the host Research Body is endorsing the eligibility of the applicant(s), and that applicants will either have a signed contract of employment in place that covers the duration of the requested Grant OR the applicants will be guaranteed a contract of employment in place that covers the duration of the requested Grant if their application is successful.

Q4e: ***I have an active Research Ireland grant where I need to be within the final 12 months to be apply to the Investigators programme. This grant is within the final 12 months. If I get a No Cost Extension (NCE) on this grant, will I then be ineligible?***

Research Ireland will review the end date on active grants **as of the submission deadline (September 17th 2025).** If your end date at that time is not within 12 months, you will be ineligible. We assess end date based on the current end date and **not** the original end date. Please plan your NCE requests accordingly.

Q4f: *How do I apply as an Emerging Investigator (EI) and what does that mean for my application?*

Formally applying to be evaluated as an EI can only be done at Stage 2, but potential applicants should consider this at Stage 1. Applying as an EI is completely optional and open to applicants who have **either** not held an IRC/SFI/Research Ireland grant of over €500,000 in direct costs **OR** have taken eligible leave as defined in section 3.5 of the call document. Applicants who choose to be evaluated as an EI will receive less weighting on their *Applicant* section evaluation at Stage 2 – as detailed in section 3.2 of the call document. **Please note that if you wish to be evaluated as an EI at Stage 2, you may not add a Co-Applicant at Stage 1.**

Q4g: **Is there any required naming convention that should be used for the Programme Document PDFs submitted on SESAME?**

No, there are no naming requirements ("Research Idea", "Research Plan" and "References" is sufficient), and applicants should submit these documents as 3 individual PDFs.

Review Process

Q5a: *How is the EoI stage application reviewed, and how will it be determined who gets invited to submit a full proposal?*

Details of the review criteria that will be assessed by reviewers can be found in **Appendix A of the Stage 1 Handbook.** Reviewers will evaluate and score the Research Idea and Research Plan components, and provide a *Yes/No* progression recommendation. Applicants who receive progression recommendations from both reviewers will progress to a ranked list. Applications will be ranked by score (averaged, weighted, and rounded to the nearest quarter point), with tiebreakers applied in the event of multiple applications receiving the same score. The top ranked applications will be invited to submit a full proposal, with numbers to be determined based on results and available budget. Applicants and Research offices will be made aware of any changes to the review process, and/or any tiebreakers used.

Q5b: *Will there be any feedback provided after Stage 1?*

Yes, all applicants will receive their reviews (narrative only), their final weighted and rounded score, and the progression decision for their application. Details of thresholds or tiebreakers used in the determination of their Stage 1 outcome will also be provided as part of the notification.

SESAME (Grants Management System)

Proposals will <u>only</u> be accepted through SESAME, Research Ireland's grants and awards management system.

Details on submission of applications on SESAME, including formatting requirements are available in the Stage 1 Handbook.

Q6a: *I do not have a SESAME login. How do I get one?*
You must be provided with a SESAME login by your host Research Body. Please contact your research office with a request for access.

Q6b: *I am having issues accessing the application form on SESAME/ there is an issue with my application form. What should I do?*
General details on using SESAME can be found here: http://www.sfi.ie/funding/award-management-system/. If you are having issues with accessing your form, or with the form itself, your research office may be able to assist, but otherwise please submit a **helpdesk ticket** from the homepage of your SESAME portal. Please clearly describe your issue.

Q6c: *What details do I need to complete on my personal SESAME profile, in order to submit a Stage 1 application?*
You must complete the **mandatory fields** marked in red in the '*GENERAL*' and '*ADDITIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION*' tabs, as well as connect to ORCID (instructions in the '*ORCID ID*' tab).