



Disability Policy and Supplement Guidance & FAQ Document

1. How to use this guidance document

This document should be read in conjunction with the Research Ireland Disability Policy.¹

This document aims to support individuals who are seeking to request budget for reasonable accommodation costs associated with a disability/disabilities via the Research Ireland Disability Policy, as well as representatives of relevant Research Body offices (e.g., Disability/Access, Human Resources, EDI, Finance, Research, etc.).

While this guidance document attempts to address a wide range of questions which may arise, Research Ireland acknowledges that the sensitive and bespoke nature of disability and reasonable accommodation supports is multi-faceted. As such, this document will be regularly reviewed and updated to incorporate learnings gathered and specific questions submitted by stakeholders.

Queries relating to the Disability Supplement should be submitted to disability.support@researchireland.ie. Please note that submissions sent to this email address will **not** be anonymous. In your email, please indicate if you would like a relevant Research Ireland staff member to follow up with you regarding your query.

If you would like to ask a question or submit a comment anonymously, please do so using this Microsoft Form: [Research Ireland Disability Policy and Supplement](#)

¹ [Research Ireland Disability Policy](#)

[Feedback Form](#). This form does not collect any identifying information about you or your device. Please note that Research Ireland will be unable to personally respond to individuals who submit questions and/or comments to this anonymous form. However, Research Ireland will aim to address these questions in future updates to this guidance.

2. How does Research Ireland support and embed equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in the Research Teams and Research Programmes it funds?

Research Ireland is committed to being a key driver of an inclusive, engaged research culture where barriers to participation in the research endeavour are minimised and equity of access to the Research and Innovation (R&I) ecosystem are maximised.

In the Research & Innovation Act 2024, a key objective of Research Ireland is “to advance the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion with regard to opportunities to undertake research and innovation and in the undertaking of that research and innovation.”² Furthermore, the national research and innovation strategy, *Impact 2030*,³ the importance of equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) as good research practice is emphasised and is referred to as an essential dimension of Pillar Four (Talent at the Heart of the Research and Innovation Ecosystem).

To achieve these strategic objectives, Research Ireland is implementing its ambitious, cross-cutting External Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2023-2028 (“the Strategy”).⁴ The Strategy comprises five overarching goals, supported by several key objectives. The goals and objectives are the outcomes of an extensive review of best

² <https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/act/2024/15/eng/enacted/a1524.pdf>, pg. 11.

³ <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/97edf-minister-harris-welcomes-the-publication-of-the-first-impact-2030-annual-progress-report/>

⁴ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/gender/>

practice, a detailed analysis of Agency data, and a broad consultation with stakeholders, including representatives of Historically Underserved Communities.⁵

Research Ireland strives to ensure that all our researchers have equitable access to opportunities, resources, and supports to succeed in their research endeavours. As such, the Agency has implemented several initiatives and policies designed to support researchers and foster a more diverse and inclusive research culture. The Agency has made significant progress in improving the representation of women in its portfolio of Grants and is now proactively considering other areas of inequality and disadvantage, supporting an intersectional approach and in keeping with Research Ireland's values and best practice.

3. Why has Research Ireland developed a Disability Policy and Disability Supplement?

Research Ireland acknowledges that disability is a key social, economic, and political identity and that individuals with a disability/disabilities may have faced systemic barriers to Higher Education and the Research and Innovation (R&I) sector. According to the “Changing Landscapes: Examining the experiences of tertiary education students with disabilities returning to post-lockdown learning” report published by AHEAD⁶ in 2023, the rate of disabled students in postgraduate participation is “rising steadily”; however, “students with disabilities remain significantly underrepresented.”⁷ Through extensive stakeholder consultation, the Agency recognises that a broad cross section of disabled research students and staff at different career stages and levels face ongoing

⁵ For the purposes of this Strategy, Historically Underserved Communities encompass a broad and diverse range of historically marginalised groups including but not limited to the nine protected grounds established in the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 and socioeconomic status.

⁶ <https://www.ahead.ie/>

⁷ <https://www.ahead.ie/news-participationrates2021/2>

challenges around obtaining appropriate reasonable accommodations from traditional funding mechanisms.⁸

To help address these identified gaps in funding, Research Ireland has developed a Disability Supplement underpinned by a Disability Policy. The Disability Supplement is, in the first instance, a pilot initiative which will enable Research Ireland to continue co-creating with relevant stakeholders to ensure that the Disability Policy and Supplement are providing the supports anticipated.

4. What is a reasonable accommodation?

Per AHEAD, a reasonable accommodation is “any action that helps to alleviate a substantial disadvantage due to disability or medical condition.”⁹ Employers have a legal obligation to accommodate individuals with disabilities per the Employment Equality Act 1998 & 2004 and the Equal Status Act 2000 to 2004.¹⁰

Reasonable accommodations vary greatly between individuals and those who may have “similar impairments may not have the same needs or requirements.” Reasonable Accommodations or adjustments help ensure that all individuals can fulfil their role in the research endeavour.

Examples of reasonable accommodations include, but are not limited to, assistive technology (e.g., screen readers and induction loops), adaptations to work environments (e.g., specialised office furniture, accessible internal websites and network systems), flexible working arrangements (e.g., flexible start/finish times, job sharing, remote working), and work task accommodations (e.g., implementing certain styles of communication, provision of specialised templates or alternative formats of information).

⁸ Disability funding mechanisms such as, but not limited to, [the HEA Fund for Students with Disabilities](#).

⁹ <https://www.ahead.ie/employer-accommodations>

¹⁰ See section 11 for links to these Acts and other relevant legislation, reports, and documentation.

Not all reasonable accommodation costs are eligible for funding via the Research Ireland Disability Supplement. For full details of what is and is not eligible for supplementary funding by Research Ireland, see the Research Ireland Disability Policy and section 6 of this guidance document.

5. How do I know if I'm eligible to request funds via the Disability Supplement?

Per the Research Ireland Disability Policy, Research Ireland Grant holders and Research Ireland-funded Research Team members who are funded by an eligible Research Ireland Grant¹¹ are eligible to submit a request for supplementary funding for reasonable accommodation costs associated with a disability/disabilities.

To be eligible to submit a Disability Supplement request, you must meet the below requirements:

- ✓ Be based at a Research Ireland Eligible Research Body¹²
- ✓ Be a Research Ireland Grant holder/Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator, or be a Research Ireland-funded Research Team member or postgraduate student on an eligible Research Ireland Grant¹³

For full details about the eligibility criteria for individuals, please see the “Who Can Apply” section of the Research Ireland Disability Policy.

¹¹ The Research Ireland grant must be active, i.e, within the term of the grant per the Letter of Offer. Retrospective costs for completed/closed grants are not eligible for funding via the Disability Supplement.

¹² <https://www.researchireland.ie/about/policies/>

¹³ Roles as defined by the [Research Ireland Grant General Terms & Conditions](#) and/or the relevant Letter of Offer.

6. What reasonable accommodations are eligible for funding by the Disability Supplement?

Research Ireland acknowledges that reasonable accommodations are unique to the individual who requires them. As such, we will assess Disability Supplement request forms on a case-by-case basis with the aim of funding as wide a variety of supports as possible, subject to our legal remit and available funding, and with consideration of supports which are already in place.¹⁴

Eligible Costs

Per the Disability Policy, eligible costs may include, **but are not limited to** the categories and example supports in the table below:

Support Category	Example Supports
Bespoke travel supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taxi fares to and from the Research Body• Care/travel costs for a support animal when travelling• Non-standard hotel and/or transport requirements¹⁵
Ergonomic equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Height-adjustable chair and/or desk for relevant lab and/or project work• Ergonomic mouse and/or keyboard• Ergonomic monitor equipment, such as a specialised desk mount
Accessibility hardware and software	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Screen readers• Subscription cost(s) for computer or mobile applications¹⁶

¹⁴ <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2024/1/>

¹⁵ For example, requiring accommodation near to conference location.

¹⁶ For example, applications designed to support those who are neurodivergent.

Support Category	Example Supports
Salary of a support person(s)	<p>For necessary support with day-to-day activities related to the Research Ireland programme of research, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal administrative support • Communication assistance • Physical assistance¹⁷ • Proofreading/editing support

Ineligible Costs

There are some costs that the Research Ireland Disability Supplement cannot currently support due to a number of factors, including our legislative remit. We will continue to iteratively consult with all relevant stakeholders, including the Finance Offices at the Research Ireland Eligible Research Bodies and the Higher Education Authority (HEA),¹⁸ to explore how we can collaborate to best support disabled researchers.

Per the Research Ireland Disability Supplement, the below table provides examples of supports that are not currently eligible for support. **Please note that the ‘example supports’ below are not an exhaustive list:**

Support Category	Example Supports
Building/Infrastructure costs (at home or Eligible Research Body)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access ramps • Stairlifts • Accessible bathrooms
Healthcare/Medical related costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private health insurance costs • Occupational health assessments and/or therapy

¹⁷ For example, in a laboratory, archival, or library setting.

¹⁸ <https://hea.ie/>

Support Category	Example Supports
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical appointment costs – including those associated with receiving a diagnosis for a condition and/or disability • Home healthcare equipment¹⁹ • Home healthcare assistance²⁰ • Medication costs (prescribed and over the counter)
Childcare/carer's costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childminder costs • School/crèche fees and/or associated costs • Companion travel costs
Statutory Sick Pay and costs associated with Sick Leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative “Leave of Absence” fees²¹ • Payment of the PhD stipend during periods of sick leave when not in full-time research • “Return to Work/Study” Assessments and associated costs

7. How do I complete and submit a request form?

Recognising the time, energy, and emotional burden faced by individuals with disabilities in advocating for themselves and their communities, Research Ireland strives to make the Disability Supplement request process as straightforward as possible.

¹⁹ For example, respiratory machine(s), hospital bed(s), blood pressure monitor(s)

²⁰ For example, medical professional care such as home healthcare nurses

²¹ This includes any fees associated with going ‘Off-Books’.

If you meet the eligibility requirements for the Research Ireland Disability Supplement and require reasonable accommodations to successfully carry out your role in the research programme, follow the below steps to complete and submit the request form:

1. Reach out to the appropriate contact²² at your Research Body based on your status in the table below to ask if the required accommodation cost(s) are available via another funding mechanism (e.g., the HEA Fund for Students with Disabilities or institutional funding streams for staff with disabilities):

Status	Appropriate Research Body Contact
Member of staff ²³	Human Resources (HR)/EDI Office
Postgraduate student	Disability/Access Office

2. Discuss accommodations/supports required to ensure that budget cannot be accessed via existing funding mechanisms (e.g., HEA Fund for Disabled Students, NGOs, etc.).²⁴
3. Per the instructions on the Request Form, **do not** include any personal, medical information or documentation, including confirmation of a medical diagnosis.
4. Complete the Disability Request Form,²⁵ including the official signature/stamp of the relevant Research Body contact (see table above) and the Research Body Finance Office and [submit it by attaching it to an email sent to disability.support@researchireland.ie](mailto:disability.support@researchireland.ie).

²² The relevant office at your Research Body may have their own criteria for ‘registering’ or requesting reasonable accommodations, which may involve disclosure and medical documentation. Research Ireland cannot intervene in local, institutional policies and processes.

²³ Members of staff should contact either Human Resources (HR) or the EDI Office, whichever office manages staff reasonable accommodations at their relevant Research Body.

²⁴ Not an exhaustive list.

²⁵ [Disability Request Form](#)

- a. Please include the title “Research Ireland Disability Supplement Request Submission” followed by the relevant Grant ID.

8. How are request forms processed by Research Ireland?

The Disability Supplement process is managed by a Research Ireland programme manager in collaboration with the Research Policy team. Below is an overview of the Disability Supplement Request Process within Research Ireland:

1. A completed and appropriately endorsed request form is received in the [Disability Supplement email inbox \(disability.support@researchireland.ie\)](mailto:disability.support@researchireland.ie) by the Disability Supplement Programme Manager.
2. The relevant Programme Manager and a relevant member of the Research Policy team review the submitted request form.
 - i. If the Research Ireland staff members need further information or detail about the requested supports and/or their costs, the Disability Supplement Programme Manager may reach out to you and the relevant Research Body contact who endorsed the request form using the details provided on the request form.
 - ii. In certain instances, team members such as those from the Research Ireland Finance team or the Research Policy Head of Team may be consulted.
3. If the requested support(s)/cost(s) have been deemed eligible for funding by Research Ireland, the Research Ireland Programme Manager will confirm this with you and the relevant Research Body contact via email.
 - i. A Letter of Offer for a Supplementary Grant will be issued to the relevant Research Ireland Grant holder’s Research Body for acceptance.²⁶

²⁶ Details about disclosure and data privacy can be found in Section 8 of this document.

4. If the requested support(s)/cost(s) have been deemed ineligible by Research Ireland, the Research Ireland Programme Manager will confirm this with you and the relevant Research Body contact via email.

9. What information should I know about disclosure and data privacy when thinking about submitting a request form?

Research Ireland acknowledges that the disclosure of a disability is a sensitive, multi-faceted, and frequently fraught process for individuals with a disability/disabilities. As such, we strive to ensure the limitation of disclosure requirements and the protection of personal data:²⁷

- If you are requesting support from the Research Ireland Disability Supplement and are **not** the relevant Research Ireland Grant holder/Principal Investigator, you are **not** required to inform the Grant holder/Principal Investigator that a request form will be/has been submitted.
- Research Ireland explicitly requests that no personal health and/or medical documentation and/or information (including evidence of a medical diagnosis/diagnoses) be included in correspondence with Research Ireland when completing and submitting a Research Ireland Disability Supplement Request Form.
- Research Ireland will only share submitted request forms and relevant information therein with relevant internal Research Ireland staff as necessary to confirm the eligibility of requested support(s) and associated cost(s). Our overarching principle is to limit the sharing of information concerning requests

²⁷ The included points are not an exhaustive list.

made under the Research Ireland Disability Supplement only as far as possible within internal, Research Ireland staff.²⁸ Per the Disability Supplement Request Form, the information you provide in the request form may be used for a financial audit with the relevant parties. All Research Ireland staff will act in compliance with the Research Ireland Privacy Policy²⁹ and the GDPR.

While Research Ireland is taking steps to limit the requirement of formal disclosure and the risk of unwanted disclosure for disabled researchers, there are several considerations for prospective requesters of Disability Supplement funds as outlined below (*not an exhaustive list*):

- Principal Investigator(s)/Grant Administrator(s) should the request be approved
 - The Grant holder will be required to sign the Supplemental Letter of Offer. However, no personal details about the individual or their disability will be shared by Research Ireland.

- The Research Office and/or Finance Office at your Research Body
 - As members of the Research and/or Finance Office at your Research Body help support and manage Grant funds, these offices may know details of the approved cost items/budget lines associated with the Disability Supplement.

²⁸ Research Ireland staff will be provided with guidance to ensure that the risk of unintended data sharing is minimised, including through restricting access to sensitive, personal data.

²⁹ <https://www.researchireland.ie/privacy-policy/>

10. Who do I contact in Research Ireland if I have questions regarding the Disability Supplement, and how can I provide feedback?

- All [questions related to the Disability Supplement application should be sent to disability.support@researchireland.ie.](#)
- We welcome feedback and comments about the Disability Supplement from all relevant stakeholders. Please [submit your comments anonymously via this Microsoft Form](#) or [non-anonymously to disability.support@researchireland.ie.](#)
 - All other [EDI-related comments should be sent to diversity@researchireland.ie.](#)

11. What are other resources that provide further useful information?

- [Research Ireland EDI Strategy](#)
- [Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Overview of Equal Rights Act](#)
- [AHEAD](#)
- [NDA](#)
- [National Advocacy Service](#)
- [DAWN Teaching Students with Disabilities: Guidelines for Academic Staff](#)