

Research Ireland Appeals of Funding Decisions Policy

Introduction

This policy establishes procedures and responsibilities for the appeal of the declination of a proposal by Research Ireland.

Please note that this policy does not encompass the process for appealing decisions related to the termination of grants and rescinding of funds that have already been awarded¹.

In making its decision regarding funding, Research Ireland takes into account the peer review assessments of the proposal, but also the value to Ireland of the research programme, the budget availability, and programmatic priorities of Research Ireland. Proposals are evaluated in open competitions via a combination of international peer review and strategic fit with Research Ireland's mission.

The primary aim of Research Ireland's appeal process is to ensure that Research Ireland's review process itself has been fair and reasonable and that the stated review procedures were followed. Although the appeal process is not a peer review process itself and will not reopen such a peer review process, it may address errors in the proposal review including:

- Procedural errors in the peer review process
- Unaccounted-for conflicts of interest
- Inappropriate consideration of rumour/hearsay
- Incomplete/inconsistent documentation being made available to the reviewers

Research Ireland would like to emphasise that in all such cases a robust argument must be articulated and that the appeal will subsequently follow the specific procedures outlined below.

It is appreciated that applicants may, from time to time, disagree with the academic perspective of the expert reviewer, or their position on the overall quality or impact of the proposed research. However, Research Ireland has full confidence in the high quality of experts that it engages in the peer review process and takes the position that this source of expert input allows Research Ireland to make the best and most informed decisions. The judgment, interpretation, or level of understanding of an expert reviewer is, therefore, **not** an admissible ground for appeal.

¹ As described in the [Research and Innovation Act 2024](#), Sections 42 to 46.

Research Ireland now has a formal process integrated into some of its Programmes, whereby applicants are invited to provide a response. In Programmes where this response stage does not form part of the Research Ireland review process, an appeal may be accepted where specific factual inaccuracies can be clearly identified. Otherwise, appeals must be limited to clearly identifiable issues of procedure. The process required for invoking the formal process of appeal is outlined in detail below.

Regarding appeals made prior to full peer review of a proposal, Research Ireland remains confident that the procedures for submission of expressions of interest, pre-proposals, and full proposals are clearly delineated in the call documentation and that it remains the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that these are followed correctly. For this reason, appeals based on applications that have been deemed administratively ineligible, including, but not restricted to, late applications, applications exceeding page limits or missing documentation, will not be considered unless it can be explicitly demonstrated that this resulted from an oversight by Research Ireland.

Appeals based on funding levels or grant conditions on applications that have been approved for funding, will not be considered.

Award of Research Ireland funding is discretionary, and the appeal process is not an adversarial one. A formal hearing, therefore, is not provided. Factors such as Programme budgets and priorities will have to be taken into account when making a decision on an appeal.

Appeal Process

There are three stages to the appeal process:

Stage 1: Further information provided to the applicant by the relevant Programme Manager or Director.

An individual whose application has been declined is encouraged to request more information from the relevant Research Ireland Programme Manager, over and above the explanatory materials received with the declination notice. The Programme Manager will afford the applicant an opportunity to present their point of view, will provide additional information if any exists, and will take any further action that seems appropriate in consultation with the relevant Research Ireland Director. Following this engagement, an applicant may be satisfied with any action taken and/or may accept that no further action is required. If, however, an applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome of this engagement, a written explanation will be provided to the applicant by the Programme Manager.

Stage 2: Review of the appeal by a Research Ireland Director not involved in the original review

If dissatisfied with the explanation or action provided under Stage 1, the applicant may submit a written request that Research Ireland reconsider its decision.

Research Ireland will consider such a request:

- only if the applicant has first sought and obtained an explanation under the procedures described in Stage 1;
- only if the request is received by Research Ireland within 30 days of the date of the declination notice; and
- provided that the request for an appeal has been sent through the research office of the Research Body and is endorsed by the Research Body (VP for Research or equivalent)

In the letter requesting the appeal, the applicant should state whether the appeal is based on:

- a) factual inaccuracy (only applicable to Programmes that do not already include a response process); or
- b) procedural error

The applicant should also provide a concise written statement (no more than 300 words) clearly explaining the grounds for the appeal. The request will be sent to a Director at Research Ireland who was not involved in the original review of the proposal. This Director will reconsider the record to determine whether Research Ireland's review of the declined proposal was fair and reasonable. The Director may personally conduct the review or may designate a Programme Manager in their Programme area, who had no part in the initial review, to do so.

Within 30 days after the date of the request, the Director will provide the results of the appeal, in writing, to the research office of the Research Body with a copy to the applicant. If the results cannot be furnished within 30 days, the allocated Director will give the Research Body and the applicant a written explanation of the need for more time, indicating the date when results can be expected.

Stage 3: Further Review by the CEO at the request of the Research Body

Within 30 days of notification of the appeal result, the Research Body may request Further Review by the Research Ireland CEO.

No particular format for such request is required, other than it must be in writing and signed by the President/Provost/Chief Executive Officer of the Research Body and by the applicant. The written request should set out concisely why the Research Body is still of the opinion that an error may have occurred in the initial evaluation and why it is not satisfied with the appeal result issued by the Research Ireland Director under the procedures described in Appeal Stage 2 above.

The CEO is responsible for reviewing the request for a further appeal and the record of earlier Research Ireland actions (including the original review of the proposal and the review conducted under Section 2. The CEO may personally conduct the further review or may designate another Research Ireland official who had no part in the original review, or the review conducted under Section 2, to do so. Additionally, an external third-party expert(s) may be asked to examine the case and to present a recommendation. Within 30 days after a request for further appeal is received by Research Ireland, the CEO will furnish the results of the further appeal, in writing, to the Research Body. If results cannot be furnished within 30 days, the CEO will provide the Research Body with a written explanation of the need for more time, indicating the date when the results can be expected.

Final Decision

An explanation or decision following review (as the case may be) given by:

- a) a Research Ireland Programme Manager or Director under Appeal Stage 1 (if not subject to further appeal);
- b) a Research Ireland Director under Appeal Stage 2 (if not subject to further appeal);
- c) The Research Ireland CEO under Appeal Stage 3, shall be final and binding on the parties.