

SFI SCIENCE POLICY RESEARCH PROGRAMME 2023 FAQs

Last updated 31 August 2023

This document will be updated as questions arise. You are advised to refer to the latest version on the [SFI website](#)

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Updates

21 July 2023	Updated following Q&A session in the webinar on 19 July 2023. Questions added: 3i, 5f, 6c, 7f, 7g, 12a-d
27 July 2023	New Section (11) added for Topic related questions. Question added: 11a added.
7 August 2023	Further clarification provided for q2g in relation to qualifying as established vs postdoctoral researcher
31 August 2023	Q5a updated to clarify salary permissible for Postdoctoral applicants

1 CALL DOCUMENTATION CLARIFICATIONS / CORRECTIONS

- *Appendix II, section 8 Impact Statement correction: there is a max page limit of 3 pages for the impact statement (call document states as 2 pages). The Call document was updated on 10 July 2023.*
- *Appendix II, sections 6 and 19 updated to clarify CV and letter of support requirements for non-academic collaborators (if included). This is now detailed in Q3f and Q3h below. The Call document was updated on 10 July 2023.*
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2 APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Applicant eligibility requirements are outlined in section 2.7 of the SFI Science Policy Research 2023 Call document. This section deals with related queries.

Q2a Can current SFI grant holders apply to the SFI Science Policy Research Programme?

Yes. Applicants who hold existing SFI awards or who are under review under a current SFI call are **not restricted** from applying to the SFI Science Policy Research Programme.

All individuals managing other/multiple SFI grants must provide justification and rationale for how they would manage two or more major SFI grants under the heading: “Management of More Than One Major SFI Award” as part of the information concerning scientific overlap (see Appendix II section 5 of the call document for further details).

Q2b If I am a Post-Doctoral Fellow or a Research Fellow, am I eligible to apply to the SFI Science Policy Research Programme?

Postdoctoral researchers (or equivalent) are eligible to apply to this call, provided they meet all eligibility requirements for postdoctoral research applicants outlined in section 2.7 of the Call document.

A Research Fellow may apply as an “established researcher” if they meet the relevant eligibility requirements. If they do not meet the eligibility requirements of an established researcher applicant but meet those of a postdoctoral researcher applicant, they may apply as a postdoctoral researcher and must include a mentor with their application.

Q2c Are Academic staff on contracts of indefinite duration eligible to apply to the Science Policy Research Programme?

Yes. As stated in Section 2.7.1 of the call document, applicants to the programme must be:

A member of the academic staff of an eligible Research Body (permanent or with a contract that covers the period of the grant); or

A contract researcher with a contract that covers the period of the grant and will have an office and research space at the host Research Body for which he/she will be fully responsible for at least the duration of the SFI grant; or

An individual who will be recognised by the Research Body upon receipt of the SFI grant as a member of the academic staff or as a contract researcher as defined above. The applicant does not necessarily need to be employed by the Research Body at the time of proposal submission.

A letter of support from the Research Body of an applicant should detail the employment status of the applicant, including how the applicant meets the eligibility criteria for this call as detailed in Appendix II section 11 of the call document.

Q2d I have a contract with an SFI eligible research body, but it does not extend to the duration of the award I am proposing. Am I eligible to apply to the Science Policy Research call?

You do not require a contract that covers the duration of your proposed award at submission, but in the host research body letter of support the host research body must clearly state that a contract of sufficient duration will be provided to the applicant in the event of the application's success.

Q2e I do not hold a PhD, but do hold a different professional degree. Am I eligible to apply to the Science Policy Research Programme?

An Applicant without a PhD must refer to SFI's PhD equivalence policy to establish if they are eligible to apply under this criterion (<https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/>).

Q2f I am the corresponding author on a number of publications where I am not listed as first or last author. Is being listed as corresponding author enough to prove senior authorship for the Science Policy Research Programme?

For the purposes of eligibility for the Science Policy Research Programme, being listed as corresponding is not sufficient as evidence of senior authorship. Senior authorship is defined in section 2.7.3.1 of the Call document.

Q2g I meet the eligibility requirement of an Established Researcher. Can I apply as a Postdoctoral Researcher?

In general, no, individuals who meet the eligibility requirement for established researchers can typically only apply as established researchers. However, we recognise that there may be situations where someone can technically meet the requirements for Established Researchers but are, in practice, postdoctoral researchers or early career stage academics on fixed term contracts. In this case, we may allow you to apply as a postdoctoral researcher.

It is important to note that, where an individual applies as a postdoctoral researcher, they must meet the requirements for a postdoctoral researcher and include a mentor with their application. It is also expected that their role on the proposed research will effectively be as a postdoctoral researcher and will, therefore, take up most of their time. For individuals already on fixed-term contracts with teaching loads, the usual salary request for the postdoctoral researcher may be used to buy-out the teaching load on a pro-rata basis.

3 APPLICANT, MENTOR & COLLABORATORS

The roles of applicant, mentor and collaborators are defined in section 2.5 of the Call document. This section deals with related questions.

Q3a Under the Science Policy Research Programme what is the definition of an “established researcher”?

For the Science Policy Research Programme, an established researcher is defined as someone who meets the eligibility requirements in sections 2.7.1 and 2.7.3 of the Call document. The mentor of a postdoctoral researcher is required to be an “established researcher” and, therefore, must meet the same requirements as an established researcher applicant.

Q3b Can a researcher in a Research Body outside the Republic of Ireland be an Applicant, Mentor or Collaborator on a Science Policy Research Programme grant?

Researchers in Research Bodies outside the Republic of Ireland can be an Applicant provided they are in the process of moving to an SFI eligible research body inside the Republic of Ireland. In this case, the host research body’s letter of support at proposal submission must clearly state that a contract of sufficient duration will be provided to the applicant in the event of the application’s success. If a Joint Appointment is proposed, the applicant and host research body must contact SFI at sciencepolicyresearch@sfi.ie in advance of submission to detail this appointment.

Mentors must be based in the host research body of the postdoctoral researcher applicant and, therefore, cannot be based outside the Republic of Ireland.

Researchers from outside of the Republic of Ireland may be listed as Collaborators on applications to Science Policy Research Programme.

Q3c Is it possible for Collaborators on the SFI Science Policy Research Programme to receive funding from the grant?

We expect that most of the budget will be required for team member costs. However, Academic Collaborators and mentors based in an SFI Eligible Research Body are eligible to receive funding through the Science Policy Research Programme grant. The funding allocated should reflect the supporting role that such Collaborator(s) are expected to play in the research programme. Clear indication should be given where funding is apportioned to Collaborators. Please note that Collaborators outside the Republic of Ireland or those not located within eligible Research Bodies in the Republic of Ireland are not eligible to receive funding through the Science Policy Research Programme.

In exceptional cases, a project may require the use of facilities or services not available in Ireland. Funding for such a request may be considered, subject to a detailed justification for the funding being provided upon application.

Q3d In a Science Policy Research Programme application, is it ok to request funds to support a team member who will be based in the lab of a named Academic Collaborator on the proposal?

No. The applicant must be the primary supervisor of any staff hired. However, while academic collaborators may not be a primary supervisor of research staff enrolled on a grant, they may act as short-term 'local supervisors' if these team members conduct a portion of their research activities in a different institution to the Applicant. Please see section 2. of the call document for more details.

Q3e How many applicants, collaborators and mentors are allowed on a Science Policy Research Proposal?

There is only one applicant allowed on a Science Policy Research proposal. No co-applicants are permitted.

There is no limit on the number of Collaborators. However, applicants must make sure that the role of any listed Collaborator fits the description available in the call document. Inclusion of a collaborator is not mandatory.

An application from a postdoctoral applicant must include ONE and only one mentor. Applications from established researchers cannot include a mentor.

Q3f What CVs must be submitted as part of an Science Policy Research application and must I use the template provided?

CVs must be submitted for the applicant, the mentor (for postdoctoral applicants) and academic collaborators. CVs may be provided for non-academic collaborators; If an application includes a non-academic collaborator, failure to provide a supporting CV may disadvantage an application during the review process.

The relevant Narrative CV templates provided on the Science Policy Research site **MUST** be used for the applicant and mentor, where relevant.

The use of a template is not mandatory for Collaborator CVs; however, we recommend that the Collaborator Narrative CV template is used.

No other CVs should be submitted.

Q3g Can an individual be a collaborator / mentor on multiple SFI Science Policy Research Programme applications?

Yes, an individual may be named as a collaborator or mentor on more than one proposal to the Science Policy Research Programme 2023 call. A collaborator or mentor on a proposal may also be an applicant on only one other application.

Q3h If I have a non-academic collaborator, must they provide a Letter of Support?

Yes, as outlined in section 2.5.3 a letter of support is required from all collaborators, including non-academic collaborators (if relevant). Letters of Support from non-academic collaborators should

provide full details of the intended intellectual input and, where relevant, the level of financial (cash, in-kind or both) contribution to the research programme.

Q3i I am a permanent member of academic staff several years post PhD. However, I am not a postdoctoral researcher and I do not meet the criteria to apply as an established researcher. Can I apply?

If you do not meet the eligibility requirements for an established researcher, you cannot apply as an established researcher.

The postdoctoral category is not intended for individuals who are longer term members of academic staff. However, if you are a permanent member of academic staff and recently worked as a postdoctoral researcher in an area of relevance to science policy research / research on research, that would be deemed acceptable for the postdoctoral applicant category.

Postdoctoral applicants are expected to perform the role of a typical postdoctoral researcher on the grant and, therefore, devote the overwhelming majority of their time to the grant.

4 SUBMISSION

Q4a How many applications can an individual make to the SFI Science Policy Research Programme?

An individual may be an applicant on only **one** proposal to the SFI Science Policy Research Programme 2023 call. If an applicant submits more than one proposal to a call, both applications will be returned without review.

An applicant may be a collaborator or mentor on another application, provided they meet the relevant eligibility criteria for the given role as outlined in the call document.

5 SALARIES AND BUDGETS

Eligible costs are detailed in the Science Policy Research Call document on the [programme site](#) and in the [SFI Grant Budget Policy](#). This section deals with related questions.

Q5a Can the applicant, if successful, receive salary from this award?

Only postdoctoral applicants can request a salary contribution from the Science Policy Research award. The contribution must align to the SFI Team Member Salary Scales, as described more thoroughly in the [SFI Grant Budget Policy](#). Where the salary cost requested is above the Level 2A point 1 of the scale, the budget justification should confirm that the level requested is consistent with the applicant's natural progression on their institutional scale.

Established researcher applicants cannot receive salary from this award.

Q5b I have a postdoctoral researcher contract with my research body. Can I include my salary costs in the application to the Science Policy Researcher Programme?

As a postdoctoral researcher applicant, your salary is an eligible cost. Of course, this is only to the extent that it is not already funded by another source.

Q5c Are the salary requests for each year inclusive of PRSI and pension contributions?

Yes, pension contributions and PRSI (11.05%) are factored into these salary contributions. See financial policies and the revised SFI Team Member Salary Scales [here](#).

Q5d Are requests for funding to allow personnel to train at a collaborator's lab acceptable?

Reasonable requests for travel costs including accommodation, subsistence and transport to allow personnel to participate in necessary training at a collaborator's lab are acceptable. Please provide detailed cost breakdown in the budget justification.

Q5e Are requests for funding to allow collaborator travel to the lab of the Science Policy Research Programme awardee an acceptable expense?

Funding requests to bring high-calibre international collaborators to Ireland to work with researchers with the Science Policy Research Investigator to carry out research for a fixed period of time are acceptable. These collaborators must be prominent high-profile international researchers from academia. The visit must encourage further collaborations with world-class centres of research excellence and help raise international awareness and recognition of high-quality research taking place led by the Science Policy Research Investigator.

Q5f If a project is 24 months is the last 12 months funding only released on delivery of the 12 month initial findings / conclusions?

No. Under the Science Policy Research Programme, when an award is made, payment will be fully committed and profiled in line with the final approved budget and as outlined in the Letter of Offer. However, the final workplan must target delivering findings within 12 months.

6 REVIEW PROCESS

Q6a If my Science Policy Research Programme application is declined, can I submit to a future Science Policy Research Programme call?

An Applicant who submits an application to the Science Policy Research Programme 2023 call and is subsequently declined can submit an application to a future Science Policy Research call, assuming that they meet all relevant eligibility criteria for that call.

Q6b What actions are taken if an application receives reviews that vastly differ in opinion?

SFI reserves the right to assess applications with very high standard deviations or vastly deviating reviewer opinions using additional reviewers. Should additional reviewers assess an application, they will review the fairness of the existing reviews and may make a funding recommendation and/or may modify scores where an application is judged to have been treated unfairly and there is sufficient justification and rationale for doing so.

Q6c How will the postdoctoral and established researcher applicants be evaluated differently given the different career stages?

The peer reviewers will be guided to take the track record of achievement into account cognisant of their career stage. The SFI Science Policy Research programme is primarily targeted towards talented post-doctoral researchers so an amount of priority may be afforded to these applicants at decision stage.

7 CV and DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN (DMP)

Q7a Is there any guidance for how to write a Narrative CV?

Guidance for applicants on how to use the narrative CV when preparing an application, and FAQs, are [HERE](#). Questions on this guidance can be submitted to researchpolicy@sfi.ie, and any other questions can be submitted to sciencepolicyresearch@sfi.ie.

Q7b What is not allowed in the Narrative CV?

The following are not allowed in the narrative CV, and will be redacted prior to review, if included: H-index, i10-index, G-index, H(2)-index, HG-index, Q2-index, AR-index, M-quotient, M-index, Hw-index, E-index, A-index, R-index, W-index, J-index, Altmetrics, total number of publications, Impact Factors of journals published in, and hyperlinks.

Q7c Is it possible to include figures/tables in the CV template?

No – please conform to the template requirement of the DORA CV – provided in the Downloads section on the [Programme webpage](#).

Q7d How does SFI instruct reviewers to ensure the principles of DORA (San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment) are realised?

The Narrative CV provides applicants with an opportunity to describe their wider contributions to, and outputs from, research. Reviewers are instructed to review all of the information provided in this CV template when assessing, and arriving at a score for, the applicant. Furthermore, in line with DORA principles, the use of journal metrics such as impact factor and the h-index are not permitted, and reviewers are instructed to disregard this information, should they encounter it, in their overall assessment of the applicant.

Q7e What is a Data Management Plan (DMP), how do you write one, and how will it be assessed by reviewers?

A DMP is a living document that details the procedures for careful handling of data and other research outputs. A DMP follows the data through the lifecycle of the programme of research, from collection to analysis and interpretation, sharing and dissemination, and long-term storage. More details on DMPs can be found [HERE](#). Your Research Office should be able to provide details on how to complete a DMP, as your institution may have specific requirements and/or a template document. SFI guidance on creating a DMP can be found [HERE](#). The DMP will be reviewed as part of the Research Programme.

Q7f If I include disallowed information in the Narrative CV, will my application be withdrawn?

If you include disallowed information in the narrative CV, it is possible that your application will be withdrawn. However, we will first endeavour to simply redact any offending text prior to review. If such redaction renders the CV uninformative or difficult to read, your application may be withdrawn.

Q7g Will hyperlinks / URLs be redacted or lead to an application being deemed ineligible or being withdrawn?

The use of hyperlinks and URLs to provide additional information is not permitted. These prohibited links can include but are not necessarily limited to an applicant's institutional profile, ResearchGate, Google Scholar etc., which would provide additional information to that already included in the standardised narrative CV template used by all other applicants.

The hyperlinks/URLs will certainly be redacted. They may in extreme cases lead to an application being declined.

8 IMPACT

Q8a What is impact?

Please see the [Impact page](#) on the SFI website. Applicants are advised to view the [SFI Impact webinar](#) available on the SFI website in advance of preparing their Impact Statements.

9 POLICY

Q9a Why do publications from my award need to be open access? Is there any guidance on how this can be managed?

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) is committed to ensuring that all outputs arising from SFI-funded research are openly available. To this end, SFI is a signatory of [Plan S](#) and [cOAlition S](#) member, an initiative to make full and immediate Open Access to research publications a reality. In line with the principles espoused by Plan S and those of the National Framework on the Transition to an Open Research Environment arising, [SFI's Open Access policy](#) has been updated. This update will support Ireland in achieving its goal of ensuring that the outputs of all publicly-funded research are openly available.

An Open Access publishing guide can be found [HERE](#).

SFI encourages publication in high-quality, peer-reviewed journals and platforms. As such, it is expected that such journals, publication platforms and repositories comply with international standards and, in particular, those [guidelines developed by cOAlition S](#).

Please submit questions on Open Access to researchpolicy@sfi.ie

- Q9b Is the sex and/or gender statement only in relation to gender issues in your proposed research i.e. using animals of both gender if relevant etc., or, does it also refer to the gender balance of the research team etc.?**

The sex and gender dimension question directly relates to the proposed research programme and not the team conducting it. An opportunity to describe how you have addressed gender equality, diversity and inclusion in your research team/environment is provided in Section 1B (Key Achievements in the Development of Individuals and Collaborations) of your CV, should you choose to highlight it.

- Q9c How should an Applicant prepare a “Sex and/or Gender in Research” Statement, particularly if they are in a field that does not explicitly consider gender in its research?**

If you are uncertain how to construct your Sex/Gender in Research statement for your field of study, you should consult your departmental colleagues and research office for advice.

To understand the role of the Sex/Gender in Research statement in research please see [HERE](#).

SFI also provides guidance on considerations for this statement [HERE](#).

You can submit questions to diversity@sfi.ie and sciencepolicyresearch@sfi.ie.

10 SESAME

- Q10a I wish to request funding for 16 months, but the options in the drop-down menu do not allow me to do this. How should I proceed?**

The funding period for an Science Policy Research Programme 2023 award is either 12, 18 or 24 months. 16 months is not a valid funding period for this award.

- Q10b Will SESAME alert me if the required documents have not been uploaded or if fields have not been completed, as part of my submission to Science Policy Research Programme 2023?**

To check that required fields have been completed prior to submission, click “Validate”. Validation will also automatically occur when “Submit” is selected. However, it is important to note that there is no system validation on multiple upload file fields, including for example collaborator CVs and letters of support, where required. The number of documents required may vary depending on each application. There is also no system validation on the addition of funding support. You should view the PDF of your application prior to submission to allow you to verify content, print or save your application. It is the responsibility of the lead applicant to ensure that all documentation is included and that page lengths are not exceeded. Please refer to the checklist in the Science Policy Research Programme call document.

- Q10c Can you list the most common issues that researchers have identified when submitting proposals using the SESAME system?**

Failure to submit before the call deadline: In all circumstances, you should aim to submit your proposal well before the deadline to have time to solve any problems or omissions with your application. Research Officers will need ample time to review submissions. Please note that SFI will not extend deadlines for system failures that are not its own responsibility. Additionally, applications cannot be submitted after the deadline.

Issues with PDF generation: (created with open source software, page count issue, etc.) Please ensure to use unencrypted, non-password protected PDFs with the copying function disabled, developed using either Adobe or Microsoft Word PDF convertor software ONLY. Also do NOT use commas or special characters in the title of your uploaded PDF document.

Issues with PDF document titles:

Do NOT use commas or special characters in the title of your uploaded PDF document.

Password issues/resets:

If you forget your password, click on the '*Forgot password?*' link on the SESAME homepage.

Pop-ups enabled in browser:

Please ensure that popups ARE ENABLED in your browser configuration.

SESAME checks word counts and pages queries?

Yes, SESAME does perform system validation around word/page counts, but it is the responsibility of the researcher/research body to check that the correct documents are uploaded and reviewed within the full PDF prior to submission.

Browser "Back" button:

Please do NOT use the browser "back" button when navigating SESAME.

Documentation uploads:

Please ENSURE all documents are uploaded into the correct fields in the application.

Funding support from profile:

Creating new funding support details while working on the application will add those details to both the application and to the profile. If you are not adding these new funding support details direct to your application, but are instead adding them directly to your profile, please ensure that you later also attach the relevant details to the application. Please refer to the [SESAME researcher user guide](#).

11 TOPICS

Q11a Is there any restriction on the disciplinary framing of the work. For example, food systems, climate science, public health etc?

It is intended that the research programme would address the topics in a way that derives insights relevant to all disciplines. While it is acceptable to use a particular discipline as a use case, to ensure that the system level / national outcomes are addressed as specified in the topics, the research findings should be transferred to the wider research system and applicable to any discipline.

12 OTHER

Q12a When are the awards expected to start?

We expect to notify applicants and issue letters of offer in December 2023. Awards are expected to start within the first 6 months of 2024.

Q12b Should the proposal endeavour to deliver on all programme objectives?

Not directly. The proposal should address the topic in the context of the review criteria outlined.

Q12c In the case of an application submitted by an Established Researcher, do Post Doctoral Researchers need to be named in the application or could they be hired after the award is granted?

Team members do not need to be named on the application and may be hired after the award is granted.

Q12d If required, will SFI provide internal data?

SFI is open to providing relevant data to an applicant for the purpose of their research subject to availability, complexity, confidentiality and GDPR constraints. If internal SFI data will be required for the proposal, we suggest you contact us well in advance of the deadline to discuss the feasibility of providing such data (sciencepolicyresearch@sfi.ie).