Research Ireland Curious Minds

Gold Award

curious minds Discover STEM

Primary schools nationwide are invited to apply for a Research Ireland Curious Minds Award.

The Curious Minds Gold Award will deepen your school's STEM engagement and learning. This award encourages whole school involvement and informal STEM learning, so you can impart the fun and curiosity of STEM to your students in the classroom and beyond.

How to apply for a Research Ireland Curious Minds Gold Award

- From September you can register your school's intention to apply for a Gold Award through the Curious Minds webpage, **www.curiousminds.ie**. We recommend schools register early in the school year to receive relevant updates and reminders.
- Once registered, you will receive an automated email from Research Ireland with your log-in details for our online application platform SESAME. The application form buttons will appear on your profile for you to begin working on your application.
- The Awards are fully digital, and all application forms must be completed through the online system. **Please note: Your log of evidence must be presented using the Curious Minds Log of Evidence Template this year (slideshow).**
- The online platform will enable you to upload your Curious Minds Log of Evidence slideshow (pdf or PowerPoint format) directly to the system for each step.
- Approval from your school principal is required before your application can be submitted to Research Ireland. Your principal will be emailed a link to approve your application.
- Once approved, make sure to log back in and click **'Submit'.** The closing date to submit your application is **5pm 1 May 2026.**

Providing your school's Log of Evidence

- This is evidence to demonstrate that you have completed the work you've described in the application form and provides an account of the hands-on STEM work carried out by learners in your school.
- **This year, your log of evidence must be presented using the Curious Minds Log of Evidence Template which can be downloaded from curiousminds.ie.**
- One image or video will suffice as evidence for each criteria.
- Images or videos providing evidence of each activity should be added to the Log of Evidence Template, labelled and uploaded to the online application platform SESAME in **PDF or PowerPoint** format.
- The template slides can be edited in PowerPoint or Google Slides and additional slides may be added.
- Hard copies of evidence will not be accepted.
- All evidence should represent the learners' hands-on STEM work and include clearly labelled photos/ videos/projects/ learners' written accounts (teacher write-ups and lesson plans are not accepted).

  Note: *Please check your application to ensure that your file is easily accessible and clearly labelled before submitting. We may return your application if it is not well organised, not presented in the Curious Minds Log of Evidence Template or not clearly labelled.*

Tips from Award winning schools

- Start early and plan to ensure all steps of the programme will be covered. Assign different tasks to different classes - Remember if each class meets one or two of the criteria the load is shared!
- Assign one member of staff responsibility for compiling and submitting the Log of Evidence.
- Create a folder on a shared drive for teachers to upload their work as it is completed.
- Make sure the activities are suitable and accessible to all the learners in the class.
- Keep investigations and activities relevant to the learners' everyday lives and environments.
- Take photos of each experiment as evidence for your Log of Evidence. Photos and pictures can tell as much as, or more than, long written accounts.

Taighde Éireann Research Ireland

Award criteria for Research Ireland Curious Minds Gold Award

Participation must involve most classes (more than half the classes in the school) in some aspects of the steps outlined below (e.g. STEM investigations, trips, speaker visits (virtual options accepted), attending or presenting at a science open day, in school or digitally).

STEP 1 Science

Provide evidence of the learners engaging in science activities in school or online.

One hands-on investigation from each of the four curriculum strands (four in total):

- **Living things**
- **Energy and forces**
- **Materials**
- **Environmental awareness and care**

You may come up with your own ideas, use the Curious Minds/ESERO resources on **www.curiousminds.ie** or **www.esero.ie**, or any other options that are available to you.

Two or more informal science activities from the list below:

- Participate in science events or projects run by other organisations (live or online), see examples at **www.curiousminds.ie**.
- Invite a science speaker to your school, in person or digitally. Check out Skype a Scientist.
- Virtual or in-person visit to a Research Ireland Discover Centre. Check **www.curiousminds.ie**.
- Take part in Science Week **www.scienceweek.ie**.
- Take part in Space Week **www.spaceweek.ie**.
- Show how pupils have used STEM skills in projects on environment or sustainability. (see **www.seai.ie/teaching-sustainability/primary-school** or **www.greenschoolsireland.org** for ideas).

STEP 2 Technology

Provide evidence for two or more examples of how the learners used technology as part of their schoolwork. By technology we are referring to the use of Information Communications Technologies (ICT), coding or robotics .

Examples can include:

- Record and analyse data collected e.g. a spreadsheet or graph.
- Develop a blog, website or video.
- Use electronic components to build simple circuits.
- Take part in coding and computer science projects: National Scratch Competition, Hour of Code, EU Code Week, or coding and robotics workshops offered by Research Ireland Discover Centres or other organisations e.g. Dream Space.
- Explore robotics e.g. FIRST® LEGO® League.
- Engage pupils in the use of game-based learning such as Minecraft.
- Explore renewable energy technologies e.g. use solar energy kits.

Note: *The above must be carried out by learners. The use of technology by teachers (e.g. use of PowerPoint, ICT, development of blogs or video) do not count for this step of the Award.*

STEP 3 Engineering

Provide evidence for two or more examples of how the learners investigated engineering in class or in the local area.

Examples can include:

- Design and make activities e.g. making models (exploring, planning, designing, making, evaluating). For sample activities including design a bridge, a boat, a rocket, a water pump, a catapult, see the 'classroom activities' section of **www.curiousminds.ie**.
- Digital investigations of engineering (e.g. using Google Maps, online research, and project creation) are accepted.
- Investigate and develop an understanding of how everyday items work (e.g. bicycle gears).
- Organise an event during Engineers Week or use the Engineers Week classroom pack **www.engineersweek.ie**.
- Participate in the STEPS Young Engineers Award.

STEP 4 Maths

Provide evidence for two or more examples of how the learners have applied their maths knowledge and skills in practical ways.

Examples can include:

- Children using maths skills and knowledge as part of science, technology, engineering/design and make, or other activities such as baking or gardening e.g. ordering, measuring distances, capacity, weight, recording and analysing data. Using maths operations; ratio, percentages, averages.
- Use maths to record and analyse your science investigation results where appropriate.
- Take part in Maths Week.
- Develop a maths trail around your school, or for students to carry out at home.
- Use maths in practical ways to help explore and solve real world problems.
- Take part in other maths focused activities e.g. Mathletes Challenge, Mangahigh or Maths Eyes.

STEP 5 STEM Show and Tell

Provide evidence for one or more examples of how the learners have presented and explained their STEM work to others (beyond their own class).

Examples can include:

- Evidence of students presenting their science work to others in the school or online e.g. digital showcase over Zoom with parents/grandparents/ other classes.
- Take part in a science fair (live or online) where students present and discuss their STEM projects e.g. ESB Science Blast, Junior Lego League, BT Young Scientist.
- Participate in STEM Show and Tell initiatives such as the ReelLIFE Science video competition.

Note: *Written work / displays alone are not sufficient for this step.*

Submission Deadline: **1 May 2026**. For queries please contact: **curiousminds@researchireland.ie**