

# SCIENCE FOUNDATION IRELAND & IRISH RESEARCH COUNCIL



## SFI-IRC Pathway Programme 2021

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### Call for Submission of Proposals

#### Key Dates

<b>Call launch:</b>	23 <sup>rd</sup> April 2021
<b>Research Body nomination of candidates:</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> May 2021 13.00 Dublin local time
<b>Full proposal deadline:</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> June 2021, 13:00 Dublin local time

*Call document updated on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021*

#### 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 Science Foundation Ireland, the Irish Research Council, the Government of Ireland, or any of their respective servants or agents. SFI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants shall govern the administration of SFI grants and awards to the exclusion of this and any other oral, written, or recorded statement. IRC Terms and Conditions of Research Grants shall govern the administration of IRC grants and awards to the exclusion of this and any other oral, written, or recorded statement.

All responses to this Call for Submission of Proposals will be treated in confidence and no information contained therein will be communicated to any third party without the written permission of the applicant except insofar as is specifically required for the consideration and evaluation of the proposal or as may be required under law, including the Industrial Development (Science Foundation Ireland) Act, 2003, the Industrial Development (Science Foundation Ireland) (Amendment) Act 2013 and the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003.

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## 1 Introduction

The “Our Shared Future” Programme for Government sets a vision for Ireland “to be a global leader in research and innovation across the art, humanities, social sciences and STEM”. Part of that vision includes a commitment to develop career pathways for early career researchers with starting grant funding rounds to be issued on an annual basis from each of our funding institutions.

Science Foundation Ireland funds excellent and impactful research and talent and shapes the future of Ireland through anticipating what’s next and widening engagement and collaboration. SFI’s 2025 strategy [Shaping Our Future](#)<sup>1</sup> sets out the vision that Ireland will be a global innovation leader in scientific and engineering research for the advancement of Ireland’s economy and society. The strategy has two ambitions: Delivering Today and Preparing for Tomorrow. As part of Delivering Today, SFI aims to foster diverse **Top Talent** by building, attracting, and retaining the academic and research talent that powers Ireland’s innovation society.

The [Irish Research Council Strategic Plan 2020-2024](#) sets out its mission to support excellence in research talent, knowledge and engagement by, *inter alia*, funding excellent discovery and enterprise research across all disciplines; and supporting exceptional individual researchers and their development. The strategic plan commits the IRC to continuing to make a significant contribution to Ireland’s education, research and skills needs by growing the pipeline of exceptional researchers across all disciplines and career stages.

Through collaboration, the SFI and the IRC also aim to contribute to a **cohesive ecosystem** which is embedded in the fabric of society and realises the potential of research with and for all of Ireland’s people.

To support these collective goals, SFI and the IRC are pleased to launch the **SFI-IRC Pathway programme** which will support talented post-doctoral researchers from all research disciplines to develop their track record and transition to become independent research leaders. These grants will enable post-doctoral researchers to conduct independent research for a four-year period and will provide funding for a postgraduate student who will be primarily supervised by the applicant.

### Objectives of the SFI-IRC Pathway programme

- To enable talented post-doctoral researchers to develop their track record and establish themselves as independent investigators, with the support of their research body.
- To provide a mechanism for Irish Higher Education Institutions to retain excellent early career researchers from all disciplines and support their development towards becoming research leaders of the future.
- To fund excellent research with potential impact across all disciplines.
- To contribute to further development of the Higher Education system through knowledge creation, training and skill development.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sfi.ie/strategy/shaping-our-future/>

- To support early career researchers in securing non-Exchequer funding and develop their network through the European Research Area.
- To increase the representation of female researchers in the higher education sector and promote alignment with international policies including research assessment, Open Science and equality, diversity and inclusion.
- To contribute to a cohesive research ecosystem in Ireland and support SFI & IRC in achieving their strategic objectives, as described in the strategic plan for each agency.

The SFI-IRC Pathway programme will be run under one banner through the SFI Grants and Awards management system, SESAME. The programme will have 2 streams, determined by the primary research discipline. The programme stream will determine the primary expertise of the reviewer pool and applicants should apply to either the **Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics-led (STEM-led)** or **Arts, Humanities or Social Sciences-led (AHSS-led)** stream of the programme. Interdisciplinary proposals are welcomed, and consideration will be given to ensure an appropriate panel of reviewers. SFI and the IRC reserve the right to move the application to another stream if appropriate.

Research Bodies will be permitted to put forward a maximum of **16 candidates to the STEM-led stream** and a maximum of **8 candidates to the AHSS-led stream**. SFI and the IRC are aware of the need to address gender imbalance in academia and are supportive of the **Athena SWAN<sup>2</sup>** initiative which is endorsed by Irish Research Bodies. In recognition of this, **a maximum of eight applications to the STEM-led stream, out of the 16 permitted from each eligible research body, can be from male candidates**. Similarly, **a maximum of four applications to the AHSS-led stream, out of the 8 permitted from each eligible research body, can be from male candidates**. See Section 3.1 and FAQs for further details. Upon submission to SFI all applications will be treated equally regardless of the gender of the applicant.

Research bodies are expected to plan for the integration of the awardees into established staff positions beyond the duration of this award.

#### Gender Strategy

As described in the Gender Strategy of each agency, SFI<sup>3</sup> and the IRC<sup>4</sup> are committed to increasing the number of grants held by female researchers. Towards achieving this goal, the SFI-IRC Pathway programme will encourage eligible research bodies to seek applications from excellent female researchers. To this end **each research body may nominate a maximum of eight applications (out of a possible 16) to the STEM-led stream and a maximum of four applications (out of a possible 8) to the AHSS-led stream, from male candidates**. Upon submission to SFI all applications will be treated equally regardless of the gender of the applicant.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.sfi.ie/resources/SFI-Gender-Strategy-2016-2020.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [https://research.ie/assets/uploads/2013/01/irish\\_research\\_council\\_gender\\_action\\_plan\\_2013\\_-2020.pdf](https://research.ie/assets/uploads/2013/01/irish_research_council_gender_action_plan_2013_-2020.pdf)

Female candidates are strongly encouraged to apply to this funding call. Details on SFI's data on application submission and success rates by gender can be found on the SFI website.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, SFI and the IRC also aim to increase awareness of the sex and gender dimension in research, by requesting that researchers demonstrate that they have considered any potential biological sex and/or socio-cultural gender aspects in their proposed research programme.

SFI and the IRC are signatories to the San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment (DORA),<sup>6</sup> and as such are aligning their review and evaluation processes with DORA principles. To this end, all types of research output are recognised, and the agencies are committed to assessing the quality and impact of research through means other than journal impact factors. In the spirit of supporting open research SFI<sup>7,8</sup> and the IRC<sup>9</sup> also consider a commitment to making data and other types of research, open and accessible.

## 2 Programme Details

### 2.1 Funding

The SFI-IRC Pathway programme provides up to €425,000 total direct costs over a 4-year term. The budget requested should include the applicant's salary, to which the funding agency will contribute over the duration of the award, the fees and stipend of the PhD student and costs for materials and consumables, equipment, and travel (see Section 3.8 for more details).

### 2.2 Programme Remit

The programme welcomes research proposals from any discipline within STEM or AHSS. Applications of an interdisciplinary nature which draw together insights and approaches from one or more research disciplines will also be welcomed.

Applicants will **not** be asked to select a National Research Prioritisation area but will be required to select a primary and secondary research area relevant to their research discipline. These will assist SFI and the IRC in identifying appropriate reviewers.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/gender/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://sfdora.org/read/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.coalition-s.org/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.sfi.ie/research-news/news/open-access-policy/>

<sup>9</sup> [https://research.ie/assets/uploads/2017/05/irc\\_open\\_access\\_policy\\_final\\_1.pdf](https://research.ie/assets/uploads/2017/05/irc_open_access_policy_final_1.pdf)

### 2.3 State aid and SFI Grant funding

As per SFI's Grant Conditions (inclusive of SFI's General Terms & Conditions<sup>10</sup>, Letters of Offer and SFI Policy documents<sup>11</sup>), all SFI funding granted is subject to, and must be compliant with, State aid legislation based on Article 107(1) of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).<sup>12</sup>

Namely, research activities undertaken as part of a Grant awarded under the SFI-IRC Pathway programme, and agreed to subject to SFI's Grant Conditions, must be "non-economic" in nature and be designed to ensure that any funding received does not, directly or indirectly, give rise to the granting of State aid.

Where an application for funding involves an industry collaborator, recipients of Grant funding under the SFI-IRC Pathway programme are required to demonstrate compliance with the conditions of "effective collaboration" and the conditions relating to the allocation between the parties of the results and/or intellectual property rights arising from the collaboration as per the Framework for State aid for research, development and innovation (2014/C 198/01) (the "Framework")<sup>13</sup>. Where a proposed programme of research activities involves a collaboration with an industry party or "undertaking"<sup>14</sup>, for all or part of the term of the Grant, applicants must complete an "Industry Collaboration Form" (ICF). The ICF is to assist applicants in defining the relationship with the relevant industry partners in order to comply with the conditions of "effective collaboration".

SFI require that the ICF is completed and returned to SFI on or before the date that the Collaborative Research (or Intellectual Property Rights) Agreement has been 'agreed' with, or signed by, the relevant partner(s).

### 2.4 Definitions of Applicant, Mentor and Collaborator

#### 2.4.2 Applicant

The applicant must have held a PhD or equivalent qualification<sup>15</sup> for at least two years at proposal submission (e.g., **those who graduated in 2019 or before may be eligible to apply**).

The applicant will be responsible for the research direction of the research programme, the supervision of the PhD student and the submission of reports to SFI or IRC as appropriate. **The applicant has primary responsibility for carrying out the research within the funding limits awarded and in accordance with the terms and conditions of the funding agency<sup>16</sup>. The applicant will serve**

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/>

<sup>12</sup> [Commission Notice on the notion of State aid as referred to in Article 107\(1\) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union TABLE OF CONTENTS \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627(01)&from=EN)

<sup>13</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627(01)&from=EN)

<sup>14</sup> The concept of an "undertaking" under EU competition law rules is an entity that is engaged in an "economic activity" regardless of its legal status or the way that it is financed. An activity is economic in nature when it involves offering goods or services on a market.

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/PHD-equivalence-policy\\_September\\_2018.pdf](https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/PHD-equivalence-policy_September_2018.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> [SFI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants](#) will apply to awards funded by SFI and [IRC Terms and Conditions](#) will apply to awards funded by IRC

as the primary point of contact on the grant during the review process and, if successful, during the course of the grant.

### 2.4.3 Mentor

The mentor will be an established researcher within the research body who will give advice and provide laboratory space (where applicable) and related infrastructure to both the applicant and the PhD student. The mentor will also take the role of co-supervisor for the PhD student; however, it is the applicant who will act as the primary supervisor. The mentor does not play a supervisory or presiding role to the applicant but acts as an advisor and host. The mentor will work with the applicant to ensure that all fiduciary and ethical approval aspects, where relevant, of the award are managed successfully.

### 2.4.4 Collaborators

An **Academic** Collaborator is an individual working in an academic institution who is committed to providing a valuable intellectual and/or technical contribution to the proposed research. As appropriate, Academic Collaborator(s) based in an eligible research body within the Republic of Ireland may receive funding through the grant (see the budget section for details), but the funding allocated should reflect the supporting role that such Collaborator(s) are expected to play in the research programme. CVs **must** be provided for Academic Collaborators.

Collaborators in industry, public bodies, civil society / non-governmental organisations and other entities can be included in the application where relevant. CVs should be provided and failure to do so may disadvantage an application during the review process. Each collaborator must provide a letter of support with the grant application and this must clearly outline the role of that collaborator in the programme of research proposed. Applicants who have included an industry collaborator should consider whether they are required to complete an Industry Collaboration Form, as described in Section 2.3.

The role of any Collaborators must also be referenced in the main body of the research proposal (for example: Will the Collaborators be supplying samples, data, etc.? Will the Collaborators be providing training in techniques or the use of equipment? Will the Collaborators directly participate in specific projects? Will Collaborators be acting in a purely advisory capacity?). Please see Section 3.10 for details on letters of support and Section 2.3 on State Aid and SFI Grant funding where an Industry collaborator is involved.

## 2.5 Applicant profile

The SFI-IRC Pathway programme is targeted towards talented post-doctoral researchers who are poised to transition to an independent research career. As such, the applicant should demonstrate a proven record of internationally recognised research accomplishments appropriate to their research field and career stage. Reviewers will be asked to consider the applicant's track record in the context of an applicant's research-active years. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Publications in major international peer-reviewed journals;
- Research monograph(s) and any translations thereof;
- Other forms of peer-reviewed recognition of achievement;
- Publication of datasets, software, code;
- Innovation and commercialisation activities (e.g. patents, licenses, novel assays and reagents);

- Participation in consortia;
- Invited presentations to internationally established conferences; and/or
- International advanced schools.

## 2.6 Applicant requirements

SFI-IRC Pathway grants are intended to be the primary source of funding for the award holders and as such the expected time commitment to the research supported through this award should represent the majority of the time of the award holder. SFI and the IRC understand that award holders will actively seek further funding for their research. It is expected that award holders will dedicate almost all of their time to the SFI-IRC Pathway programme in the first year. In cases where further funding has been obtained, the expectation of the lead agency is that the awardee's commitment to the SFI-IRC Pathway grant should never drop below 50%. The lead agency must be notified of any other awards won by the applicant and, where necessary, reserves the right to approve any expected changes to the applicant's time commitments. **SFI and the IRC will also not allow award holders of SFI-IRC Pathway grants to apply to any SFI or IRC programmes during the first 12 months of the award, unless specifically indicated in the relevant call documentation that it is permissible to do so<sup>17</sup>.** Potential applicants are advised to contact the relevant funder in advance of submission to ensure eligibility.

## 2.7 Eligibility Criteria of Applicant

All eligible applicants to the SFI-IRC Pathway programme 2021 call must meet the following eligibility criteria:

**Applicants currently under active review by SFI or the IRC as either Principal Investigator (PI) or co-Principal Investigator (co-PI) under certain programmes are not entitled to apply to the SFI-IRC Pathway Programme. These programmes include, but are not limited to: IRC COALESCE, SFI Frontiers for the Future, SFI Research Centres and Spokes programmes. Please contact [pathway@sfi.ie](mailto:pathway@sfi.ie) in advance of applying to confirm your eligibility for this call where you are currently under review for another SFI or IRC programme.**

**In addition, researchers who have been confirmed as independent investigators by a research body (e.g., Funded Investigators in SFI Research Centres) are not eligible to apply.**

**Where an applicant fails to meet the eligibility criteria outlined above, the application will be deemed ineligible and will not be accepted for review. Where uncertain, potential applicants are advised to contact SFI in advance of submission to ensure eligibility.**

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<sup>17</sup> Award holders participation as a proposed supervisor in an application to Irish Research Council postgraduate programmes (GOI, EPS, EBP) will be permitted.

### 2.7.2 PhD duration

The applicant must have held a PhD or equivalent<sup>18</sup> qualification for at least two years at proposal submission.

- The official date of a PhD is defined as the year that the degree was conferred (i.e., the year printed on the official PhD certificate). The number of years is determined by calendar year (e.g., only individuals with an official date of 2019 or earlier are eligible to apply to the SFI-IRC Pathway programme 2021 Call)

### 2.7.3 Funding History

The applicant must not hold, or have held, a significant peer-reviewed, independent research grant, or award of a similar career stage. Personal awards, including student, postdoctoral or individual fellowships, travel awards, and bursaries are permissible. Further details are available in the FAQ.

### 2.7.4 Employment History

The applicants must not have previously held, or currently be employed on, a faculty contract of more than 24 months in duration. Persons who have held a series of short-term faculty contracts where the total contract duration is no more than 36 months are eligible to apply to this programme<sup>19</sup>. Where the applicant has held or holds a faculty contract, details must be provided in the Research Body Letter of Support.

### 2.7.5 Mentor

The applicant must have an identified mentor, who will give advice, co-supervise the PhD student and provide access to laboratory space (where relevant) and related infrastructure for the duration of the award.

### 2.7.6 Research Body Requirements

The research body must confirm that the applicant meets the above criteria prior to the submission of a candidate list and must also provide assurance that the space and infrastructure to carry out the proposed research are available for the duration of the award. Please see Section 3.10 for more information.

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<sup>18</sup> [http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/PHD-equivalence-policy\\_September\\_2018.pdf](http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/PHD-equivalence-policy_September_2018.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Researchers already holding a faculty position may be eligible to apply to other programmes of the agencies, e.g. the SFI Frontiers for the Future programme or the IRC Laureate awards. Interested parties should visit the SFI or IRC websites or contact their institution's Research Office for more details.

SFI<sup>20</sup> and the IRC have stringent requirements for the reporting by awardees on the grants that they make. Failure to satisfactorily complete reporting requirements on current or historic awards may result in an applicant being deemed ineligible for the SFI-IRC Pathway programme.

## 2.8 Eligibility of Research Body

The Research Body of the Lead Applicant is the body responsible for the overall financial and administrative co-ordination of research programmes supported by funding from SFI or the IRC. A list of Eligible Research Bodies is available on the SFI<sup>21</sup> and IRC<sup>22</sup> websites.

## 3 Application Procedure

### 3.1 Nomination of Candidates by Research Bodies

The research offices of potential host research bodies will be expected to instigate a procedure to select candidates for this call. Those wishing to apply to the SFI-IRC Pathway programme 2021 call should first contact their intended host research body, informing the Research Office about their identity and credentials, the identity of their chosen mentor, and an outline of their intended research plan. Research Bodies are asked to ensure consistent support is provided to applicants on drafting their proposals, particularly in areas such as impact.

In selecting excellent candidates, research bodies should consider the evaluation criteria described in the call document and may consider the strategic vision of the research body, in particular, its plans for the retention and development of internationally competitive faculty and research leaders.

Eligible research bodies may nominate a maximum of **16 candidates to the STEM-led stream** and a maximum of **8 candidates to the AHSS-led stream**. Nominated candidates will then be invited to submit a Full Proposal. **No more than eight of the 16 STEM-led, and four of the 8 AHSS-led candidates may be male candidates**. See FAQs for further details.

Eligible research bodies should submit the names and genders of their approved candidates, provisional titles, primary/secondary research areas, keywords and abstracts for their applications. Should a nominated candidate withdraw from the process prior to the full proposal deadline, the research body may nominate a replacement. The maximum numbers with respect to gender must be maintained, SFI must be notified of the change and the full proposal must be submitted to SFI in advance of the full proposal deadline. Any proposals submitted by applicants not featuring in this document, or replacements accepted by SFI and the IRC, **will be deemed ineligible and not reviewed**.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://research.ie/funding/eligible-higher-education-institutions-and-research-performing-organisations/>

To provide useful information and assist SFI and the IRC with future calls, research offices will also be asked to submit aggregated details of **all** applications they received, including the primary and secondary research areas and gender of the applicant, along with a description of the selection process that was undertaken in order to select their nominated candidates. Consideration should be given to the suitability of the candidates, research body strategy, and strategic talent management.

**Please note that Research Bodies must provide the agencies with their list of approved applicants by 13:00 on the 28<sup>th</sup> May 2021. The document should be sent by email to [pathway@sfi.ie](mailto:pathway@sfi.ie), and may nominate a maximum of 16 STEM-led and 8 AHSS-led applications. No more than eight of the 16 STEM-led, and four of the 8 AHSS-led, nominated applications may be male candidates. If the nominated list breaches the prescribed limits for either stream, all applications from that institution, under the infringed stream, will be deemed ineligible.**

Following successful selection of candidates by the associated host research body, approved candidates will be required to submit a proposal. Full details of the information required are provided in the following section. **Proposals must be submitted to SFI online through SESAME by the Research Office of the applicant's research body before the call deadline.**

**Only applicants that submit a proposal in the format described above, and before the deadline of 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021 at 13:00, will be eligible.**

**Only proposals submitted by applicants approved in advance by their research body will be eligible for this call. Any other submitted proposals will be returned without review.**

### 3.2 Submission

**Proposals will only be accepted through SESAME, SFI's grants and awards management system.**

The SFI-IRC Pathway programme is the subject of a Data Sharing Agreement, and therefore by submitting an application to the SFI-IRC Pathway Programme an applicant is accepting that SFI has the right to share information (including the application and any post-award reports submitted to SFI) with the IRC, on a confidential basis, without the need to obtain any further consents from such applicants.

Access to SESAME is controlled by staff at the Research Office of your host Research Body. Please follow your internal organisational process to request this access. Once you have been registered by your research office, **you will receive an email** containing the following:

1. Username
2. Password
3. SFI PIN number
4. SESAME website address

Your **username** and **password** are needed to log in to SESAME. This PIN number is also stored in your **contact profile** on SESAME.

SESAME is accessed using the internet; no additional software needs to be installed. You can access SESAME online from any location. SESAME supports Internet Explorer, Chrome and Firefox. With Mac we recommend that you use either Firefox or Chrome. The configuration of some browsers and internet infrastructure (popup blockers, firewalls, etc.) can restrict an individual's access to the

internet and as a result, to the SESAME system. If you are having any such difficulties, please contact your organisation's internal IT support team.

The SESAME system is accessed here: <https://grants.sfi.ie>

Please see the SESAME Researcher User Guide<sup>23</sup> for more detailed information.

Once submitted by the host research body to SFI through SESAME, **an application cannot be withdrawn and subsequently modified for resubmission in the same call, regardless of the date of submission.**

**Proposals must be submitted online through SESAME to SFI by the Research Office of the Applicant's research body by 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021 at 13:00 Dublin local time.**

#### **Proposal submission requirements:**

- **All text in uploaded PDFs** should be provided in Calibri font or similar, with minimum font size of 11, and at least single-line spacing as well as a minimum margin size of 2.5cm. Text in diagrams may be in any clearly legible font.
- Uploads in SESAME must be submitted in **Adobe or Microsoft PDF format only**. 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.
- The number of pages in uploads must not exceed the specifications for any given section. **Applications that do not comply with these requirements will be deemed ineligible and will be returned without review.**
- Appendices or other unsolicited documentation are not permitted. **Applications that include such unsolicited documentation will be returned without review.**
- File sizes of attachments should be **less than 5MB**.
- Hyperlinks and URLs are only allowed when specifically noted in call documents or SESAME guidance/instructions. The use of hyperlinks is typically limited to citing information already in the public domain which is non-critical to the evaluation of the proposal. Hyperlinks and URLs may not be used to provide additional information, which would be necessary for application review, and as a means of circumventing page limits. Reviewers are not obligated to view linked sites and are cautioned that they should not directly access a website (unless the link to the site was specifically requested in application instructions). When allowed, you must reference the actual URL text so it appears on the page, for example in brackets or in a footnote, rather than embedding the URL in a specific word or phrase.
- Applicants must complete all mandatory SESAME profile fields (marked in red) before submitting an application. It is not possible to submit an application without this information.

**Applications not adhering to these requirements, or with incomplete content, will be deemed ineligible and will not be accepted for review, regardless of the date of submission.**

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/award-management-system/>

**It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that eligible proposals are received by SFI before the deadline indicated. In order to safeguard against ineligibility, applicants are reminded to adhere rigorously to the guidelines in the call documentation and to review the proposal document prior to submission in SESAME.**

**Please note that proposal eligibility checks will be completed by SFI and IRC staff.**

**Applications cannot be withdrawn and subsequently modified for re-submission in the same call.**

### 3.3 ORCID ID

ORCID<sup>24</sup> provides a unique identifier for all researchers, which can then be linked to their different research works across different platforms. There are a number of benefits to creating an ORCID iD, which include the following:

- ORCID allows you to pull information from different platforms, creating a centralised reference to your different works (e.g., publications, patents, awards) in one location using a single sign in.
- Your ORCID iD is a unique identifier, which distinguishes you from other researchers with a similar name.
- Using the ORCID iD helps to make your research works more visible to funders and publishers. You are able to build a complete picture of your research in one location.

As part of the integration of SESAME with ORCID, it is possible for researchers to import publication data from ORCID directly into their SESAME Research Profile. Applicants are **required** to link their SESAME Research Profiles to an ORCID iD **before an application can be submitted**.

### 3.4 Proposal Summary

Please populate the following required proposal sections on SESAME, as outlined below.

- **Proposal Title (max. 30 words)**  
The Research Proposal title should clearly convey the nature of the research to be undertaken and should not contain confidential details, given that the titles of funded proposals are published by SFI and the IRC.
- **Duration of Grant Requested**  
All SFI-IRC Pathway grants are supported for a period of 48 months.
- **Total Funding Request (in €)**  
This figure will be populated from the requested budget submitted.
- **Resubmission Statement**  
Applicants must declare whether a new submission relates to a previous unsuccessful application to any SFI or IRC scheme. If the application is a resubmission, a statement

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<sup>24</sup> <http://orcid.org/>

referencing the previous application and explaining the differences must be provided and must make reference to reviewer comments where relevant. This statement will assist SFI and IRC Staff in the assessment of the eligibility of a revised application and will not be shared with reviewers. See SFI's Resubmission policy for further details.<sup>25</sup>

- **Research Area (Primary)**  
Applicants should select a primary research area from the drop-down menu, which best describes the proposed research. This will assist SFI and the IRC in identifying appropriate reviewers.
- **Research Area (Secondary)**  
Applicants should select a secondary research area from the drop-down menu, which in combination with the primary research area already selected, best describes the proposed research. This will assist SFI and the IRC in identifying appropriate reviewers.
- **Alignment to programme remit (max 250 words)**  
Applicants should describe how the application is within the programme remit as described in section 2.2.

### 3.5 Lead Applicant Details

- **Location of Applicant at time of Submission**  
Applicants must insert the country in which they are employed at the time of submission.
- **Time Commitment to Grant**  
Indicate the Lead Applicant's time commitment to the proposed research project as a percentage of their total working time. See Section 2.6 for SFI and the IRC's expectations concerning the time commitment required).
- **Lead Applicant DORA-compliant CV (Upload)**  
A CV of the Lead Applicant, using the template provided in the Downloads section of the SFI-IRC Pathway programme website,<sup>26</sup> must be completed and uploaded. **(upload; max. 5 pages). Please click on "Save Draft" after upload.** The current template allows for the provision of additional information such as periods of leave from research if relevant. **Also, reference to metrics such as journal impact factor, h-index and total number of publications are not permitted.**

**Failure to use this template or deviating from the instructions in the template may result in an application being deemed ineligible.**

- **Personal Statement (max. 500 words)**  
Provide a personal statement about your research career to date, how you intend to build your independent research career and how this award would help you to achieve that.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/pathway/>

- **Supervisory Experience**

Provide summary information on supervisory experience to date for the Lead Applicant.

- **Research Funding History**

- The Lead Applicant must provide a report on expired, current and pending funding. Funding details may be added from the applicant's existing SESAME profile or can be created in this section.
- The applicant should include details of any financial support pending, or received over the previous ten years. This should include competitive research funding received from funding agencies (international and national), charities, industry, etc.
- The applicant must include details of any financial support currently provided, or currently being sought. Applicants must detail the total funding allocated to the grant and **the amount of this funding that is allocated to the Applicant. SFI and the IRC will not support research currently being funded through another source.**
- For each current and pending grant listed, the applicant should provide a brief description of the research. Applicants must also indicate their time commitment to these other projects, as a percentage of their total working time.
- For pending grants, please include the expected decision date in the description box.
- Please complete the requested details for each expired, current, or pending financial support. Fields coloured red are mandatory. Certain field labels are underlined and contain further information concerning the details that are required; hover the mouse pointer over these labels to view this information.
- If the applicant is a Collaborator on a research project, the grant should not be included here; only awards where the applicant is either the Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator should be listed.
- The portion of research funding claimed in an applicant's name must be an accurate and fair reflection of their responsibility in the projects listed and will be verifiable as such. SFI and the IRC may conduct audits to verify such claims and reserves the right to reject proposals where the above principle of proportionality is not observed.
- This section of the proposal will be reviewed as part of the applicant's track record.

Research funding may be added directly to the application or added from the applicant's profile (see the SESAME Researcher User Guide).<sup>27</sup> If this section is left blank it will indicate that the applicant has NO expired, current or pending funding.

Please ensure that research funding added to the profile of the Lead Applicant has been included in the application via SESAME.

The applicant must complete the textbox detailing potential overlap between current and pending funding and the proposed research in this application. For each current and pending grant listed above, the applicant must clearly indicate any overlap with this application, based on the methodologies being employed and the stated objectives of the funded project(s).

### 3.6 Collaborator and Mentor Details

- **Addition of Collaborators**

Applicants can include Collaborators as part of their SFI-IRC Pathway programme application. It is expected that the number of collaborators is kept to a **minimum** and that their role within the research programme is **clearly defined**. Include the name, contact information and other requested details of Collaborator(s), if any. Please see Section 2.4 for further information on the role of Collaborators. Once details regarding the name and institution of the Collaborator have been added and saved, which is achieved by clicking on the "Save Draft" button at the bottom of the application form, it will be possible to upload the Collaborator CV (**maximum of two pages**) by clicking on the appropriate button. Please see Section 2.3 on State Aid and SFI Grant funding where an Industry collaborator is involved.

CVs (max. 2 pages) must be uploaded for all Academic Collaborators. CVs may also be provided for other Collaborators, where relevant. Where a non-academic collaborator has been included, failure to provide a supporting CV may disadvantage an application during the review process. The use of a template is not mandatory for Collaborator CVs, however we recommend that the DORA-compliant Collaborator CV template available on the programme webpage is used.<sup>28</sup> **We recommend to not include references to metrics such as journal impact factor, h-index and total number of publications in the Collaborator CV.**

Collaborator letters of support **must** be provided– further details are provided in Section 3.10 of this document.

- **Addition of a mentor**

Information about the mentor must be included in this section. Clicking on the "Add" button will open a form into which details about the mentor should be completed. Ensure that "Mentor" is selected in the 'Collaborator Type' drop-down menu. Only one mentor may be assigned in the proposal. Once details regarding the name and institution of the mentor have been added and saved, which is

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/award-management-system/>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/pathway/>

achieved by clicking on the “Save Draft” button at the bottom of the application form, it will be possible to upload the mentor’s CV (**maximum of two pages**) by clicking on the appropriate button.

CVs (max. 2 pages) for Mentors must be uploaded. The use of a template is not mandatory for Collaborator CVs, however we suggest that the DORA-compliant Collaborator CV template available on the programme webpage is used.<sup>28</sup>

Mentor letters of support must be provided at proposal stage – further details are provided in Section 3.10 of this document.

### 3.7 Main Body of Proposal

The following outlines the SFI-IRC Pathway programme proposal requirements.

- **Keywords (max. 15)**

These should be descriptors that best characterise the proposed research.

- **Abstract (max. 200 words)**

This should be a succinct and accurate summary of the proposed work when separated from the application.

- **Lay Abstract (max. 100 words)**

This should be a succinct and accurate summary in lay, non-technical language of the proposed work when separated from the application.

- **Ethical Issues**

- **Use of Animals**

Applicants must indicate whether animals are to be involved in any of the research planned. Further details can be found on the SFI Ethical Policies webpage.<sup>29</sup>

- **Research Involving Human Participants, Biological Material or Identifiable Data**

Applicants must complete the questionnaire indicating whether their research programme will involve human participants, human biological material or the use of identifiable (or potentially identifiable) human data. Further details can be found on the SFI Ethical Policies webpage.<sup>29</sup> Clinical trials and investigations requiring approval by the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) will not be permitted through the SFI-IRC Pathway programme.

- **Sex and Gender Dimension in Research Statement (max. 1000 words)**

In line with international best practice and aligned with the Gender Strategy of both SFI<sup>30</sup> and the IRC<sup>31</sup>, all applicants must complete a statement articulating the consideration of biological sex and/or social gender variables in their research programme. Applicants must consider how the sex and/or gender dimension impacts your research. Please consult the Guidance for Applicants on Ethical and

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/ethical-and-scientific-issues/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.sfi.ie/resources/SFI-Gender-Strategy-2016-2020.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> <https://research.ie/assets/uploads/2018/08/04108-IRC-Gender-flyer-proof03-single.pdf>

Scientific Issues<sup>30</sup> for resources on how to address the sex and/or gender dimension of research in your grant.

**Do not** include information on how you have addressed gender equality, diversity and inclusion in your research team/environment; this should be addressed in Section 1B of your CV, should you choose to highlight.

To complete this section, please consider the following questions:

1. Is sex as a biological variable taken into account in the research design, methods, analysis and interpretation, and/or dissemination of findings?
2. Is gender as a socio-cultural factor taken into account in the research design, methods, analysis and interpretation, and/or dissemination of findings?

If the answer is yes, please describe how sex and/or gender considerations will be integrated into your research proposal. If no, please explain why sex and/or gender are not applicable to your research proposal.

- **Research Programme (upload; max. 8 pages)**

Applicants are requested to **provide sufficient detail** for peer reviewers to comment on the quality of the proposed ideas. It should be noted that a lack of appropriate and sufficient detail within the research programme is a recurring issue raised by reviewers.

The following points should be considered when describing the proposed research:

- Describe clearly and concisely **the specific aims and objectives** of the proposal. These aims should be coherent, well-planned and should be linked with real deliverables.
- Explain the **background** and **significance** of the problem – does the study address an important research problem? How and why the proposed work is important for the field. What is the current state of the art in the area? Describe and explain how the proposed work, if successful, will advance the state of the art. The background section should reference the state of the art in this research field.
- Are the concepts described **novel**? Ensure that the novelty of the approach is clearly explained, again with reference to the state of the art.
- The **methodology** of the proposed programme should be well developed, and how this proposed methodology advances the current state of the art should be described in detail. Is the proposed approach (including the competencies and activities of the team members) feasible and realistic?

The application should also include:

- **Appropriate timelines, milestones** and **expected outputs** for the proposed research (e.g., a Gantt chart), and the **roles of the Applicant, PhD student** and **Collaborators** in the work programme need to be clearly described.
- Relevant **preliminary data**, if available, which may either take the form of (a) supporting reference(s) from the applicants' previous research, or (b) a summary of results where the data has yet to be published. In the latter case, this should be included within the research programme as evidence that the applicant has a track record in the field of the proposed research.

- **References (upload; max. 1 page)**  
 Appropriate references and citations for the proposed research must be provided in a separate PDF document. A one-page limit is permitted for uploaded references.
- **Impact Statement (upload; max. 2 pages)**

Each year the Irish Government spends in the region of €750M on research, training and development. As with all public spending, it is necessary to demonstrate and articulate the potential impact and benefits of research. Impact embraces the diverse ways in which research-related knowledge and skills benefit individuals, organisations and nations and can be described as the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to the society and economy<sup>32</sup> and higher education.

The Impact Statement should articulate the planned and potential impact of the proposed research. SFI and the IRC recognise that depending on the nature of the research, the impacts may be short-term, medium-term or longer-term. In many cases impact is unforeseen; as such, it is not possible to predict all impacts at the time of submission. Applicants are advised, however, to make full use of the space provided to make a strong, unambiguous, and **realistic** plan outlining the **pathway** to impact with appropriate plans, milestones and deliverables.

The Impact Statement should be written primarily in lay, non-technical language, it should be as specific and comprehensive as possible. It should describe the *potential* benefits of the proposed research including (but not limited to) societal, economic, cultural, knowledge, political, health, technological, environmental and educational impacts by answering the following overarching questions:

- **Who will benefit from this research and how?**
- **How will you engage with relevant beneficiaries and stakeholders?**
- **What plans will you put in place to increase the chances of impact from the proposed research?**
- **Over what timeframe might the benefits from your research be realised?**
- **How will the impact be demonstrated (what evidence will you collect)?**

In critically appraising various possible impacts, the following points should also be considered:

- Are there potential beneficiaries / stakeholders within the public sector, private sector, third-level sector or any others (e.g., professional or practitioner groups, charities or patient groups)?
- Are there potential international beneficiaries or collaborations with international organisations?
- How will the proposed research impact on the education, training and career of Ireland's students and research team members? Will there be infrastructural benefits for further research and education (e.g., facilities and instrumentation)? Applicants should note that all Pathway programmes will offer training opportunities of some degree, therefore it is

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/award-management/research-impact/>

important to highlight the **added value** that will be provided from the training provided under your award.

- How will the proposed research impact on society, culture and the quality of life for Ireland's citizens?
- How will the potential impacts of your research be best realised?
- If applicable, how will collaborators increase the likelihood of potential impacts?
- What benchmarks or metrics can be applied to clearly demonstrate in the future that the various impacts outlined in the Impact Statement are both realistic and achievable?

The statement should consider some or all of the above to give confidence to reviewers that clear thought and realistic ambition have been employed to assess the likely or potential longer-term benefits of the research, including and going beyond the training aspects for both the applicant and the associated PhD student.

Applicants should briefly outline previous indicators of impact to provide reviewers with confidence that the potential impacts described can be realised. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Advances to the state of knowledge within a field
- Training and development of others, including wider curricular/teaching and learning benefits
- Stakeholder/external interest in their past or current work
- Collaborative projects
- Documented changes to public policy, guidelines or services
- Improvements in public health / welfare / quality of life
- Changes to behaviours or opinions
- Enhancing culture and creativity
- Operational or organisational change (e.g. processes & procedures)
- Non-exchequer funding obtained
- Problems / challenges solved or new insights gained

For more information and guidance on how to successfully articulate impact, detailed information including a webinar on research impact is available on the [SFI website](#)<sup>33</sup> and applicants are encouraged to refer to this information in advance of preparing their Impact Statement.

### 3.8 Budget

The costs eligible for grant support under the SFI-IRC Pathway programme are those costs that can, uniquely and unambiguously, be identified with the proposed research programme. Applicants must give details of all relevant costs, including staff, equipment, materials and consumables and travel. Ensure that the final total provided includes all costs. All awards are made directly to the applicant's

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<sup>33</sup> <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/award-management/research-impact/>

research body. Please also refer to the [SFI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants](#) and also the [SFI Grant Budget Policy](#) (GBP: Version July 2016)<sup>34</sup>.

SFI-IRC Pathway grants are funded to a maximum value of **€425,000** direct costs for a period of four years. In addition to direct costs, SFI and the IRC also make an indirect or overhead contribution to the host research body, which is reflected as a percentage of the direct costs (excluding equipment). Overheads are payable as a contribution to the research body for the indirect costs of hosting research programmes funded by SFI or the IRC and are intended to enable the research body to develop internationally competitive research infrastructure and support services. General overheads should not be included in the requested budget.

**See notes for completion of the budget table in the [SESAME Researcher User Guide](#). A link is also provided with information to assist with completion.**

- **Staff**

The budget requested should include the applicant's salary, to which SFI or the IRC will contribute over the duration of the award. The maximum contribution to the applicant's salary each year must be set at a point on the Experienced Postdoctoral Researcher scale (Level 2B) of the [SFI Grants Team Member Budgeting Scale](#).<sup>35</sup> Applicants are permitted to start at any point within Level 2B (that is, either at Point 1, Point 2, Point 3 or Point 4, but not at an intermediate value between these points), and may move up to a higher point in following years, as desired. Similarly, it is permissible to remain at the same point over consecutive years; reductions in salary contributions over consecutive years are not expected. Note that at no stage in the lifetime of the award may the salary contribution be greater than Point 4 of the Experienced Postdoctoral Researcher scale (Level 2B). Regardless of how the salary contributions are planned, it is important to explain the reasoning for the chosen plan in the budget justification (see Section 3.10). Please see the SFI [Grant Application Budget Policy](#) for full details, and note that the applicant's salary contribution includes PRSI at 11.05%.

The requested budget should cover the fees and stipend of the PhD student (in line with the SFI [Grant Application Budget Policy](#)).

It is important to note that researchers funded by SFI or the IRC are employees of the research body. The lead agency makes a *contribution* to the overall staff budget for the programme. Please refer to guidance above and the salary scales provided as part of the [Grant Application Budget Policy](#) with regard to the funding of applicant's salary (noting that the 'Cost to Grant' figures) and PhD fees and stipends<sup>35</sup>. Salaries for Collaborators are not permitted.

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<sup>34</sup> [http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/SFI-Grant-Budget-Policy\\_2016\\_July.pdf](http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/SFI-Grant-Budget-Policy_2016_July.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/SFI-Team-Member-Salary-Scales.pdf>

- **Equipment**

As applicants will have an identified mentor, who will provide laboratory space and necessary equipment to both the applicant and the PhD student (where relevant), it is not expected that applicants will require significant items of equipment in their budget request. Therefore, requests for equipment in proposals should be very carefully considered, and full justification should be provided. Small equipment of a value of **less than €2,000** should be included in the materials and consumables section. The exception to this is costs associated with computers/laptops, which must be listed in the equipment section regardless of cost.

- **Materials and Consumables**

An outline of all materials and consumables that will be used in the research programme should be provided.

Access charges may be sought for use of infrastructure where SFI pre-approved access charge plans are in place. Note that these may include, with SFI approval, access to facilities and services not available to the applicant, such as the costs associated with accessing international databases or commissioning specific experiments in national facilities (e.g., Tyndall NAP, CRANN etc.).

Access charge requests must be included as a separate line item in the budget and where relevant must include the grant code and name of the relevant infrastructure to be used. A rationale for the amount of use proposed must be provided in the budget justification.

- **Travel**

Only travel costs for journeys directly related to the progress of the research programme may be requested as a direct cost on the research grant. The applicant should outline the details of travel expenses directly related to, for example, conferences, collaboration on the research programme, or learning special research techniques. Where possible, please supply the conference name and location. In the case of working visits, the rates sought for subsistence and other allowances may be no more than those which the research body's permanent staff may claim.

### **3.9 Budget Justification**

The applicant must upload a Budget Justification as a PDF document. This is achieved by clicking on the "Upload" button in the application form and adding the appropriate file. Justification for requested salary, stipend, fees, equipment, consumables and travel should be provided in **no more than two pages**. Only eligible research bodies will be entitled to receive direct funding through the award and all funding will be administered through the applicant's research body. If funding is sought for overseas services, this should be clearly justified and the rationale for not carrying out this activity in Ireland must be explained. As noted in Section 3.8, the applicant's salary contribution over the lifetime of the proposed award should be well justified.

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 Programme.

### 3.10 Letters of Support

The following letters of support **must** be included:

- A letter of support from the **mentor** outlining the support offered to the applicant, commitment to the co-supervision of the PhD student, and the availability of laboratory space (where relevant) and infrastructure available to the applicant and student is required. The letter should include a statement outlining the applicant's potential to become an independent investigator and their ability to lead a research programme.
- A letter of support from the **host research body**. In recognition of the career stage of the applicant and to demonstrate the commitment of the research body, the proposal must include one letter of support from the Vice President for Research (or equivalent organisational official) of the nominating research body. The letter should be on headed paper and should:
  - a) Describe the research body's support for the candidate's career & professional development (e.g., teaching, professional development, training, etc.).
  - b) Outline the measures that will be taken to ensure that the candidate is not overburdened with teaching commitments in the early part of their appointment and should describe the candidate's maximum teaching commitment, if successful.
  - c) Contain a brief description of the institutional policy regarding the management of conflicts of interest (see Section 6.1 for details).
  - d) Provide a brief description of the Department's/School's/Institution's research/academic strategy and describe how the candidate will be integrated into this strategy.
  - e) Describe the support and facilities (both building and equipment) which the department/research body will provide for the applicant and PhD student. This could include, but is not limited to, commitments for instrumentation, laboratory facilities and research support.
  - f) Confirm that for the duration of the award, a successful candidate will be eligible to apply and compete for any and all permanent faculty positions which arise within this institution appropriate to their field of research.
  - g) Confirmation of the date of award of the PhD degree.
  - h) Confirmation that the candidate has not previously held or is currently employed on a faculty contract of **24 months or more in duration**, or a series of short-term contracts where the total duration exceeds 36 months. Where the candidate has been employed on a faculty contract, details should be provided in the Research Body Letter of Support.
- **Collaborator letter of support.**
  - Letters from Academic Collaborators should provide full details of the intended intellectual and/or technical input to the proposal. In addition, Academic Collaborators seeking funds through the award must describe how these funds will be utilised.
  - Letters from other collaborators including Industry, public bodies, civil society / non-governmental organisations and other entities 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. Similarly, letters of support from

International Academic Collaborators should provide details of any cash and/or in-kind contributions.

- Letters of support that do not originate from officially listed Collaborators will be removed from the proposal, as will letters from listed Collaborators that merely provide theoretical or general support without specifically describing a meaningful and impactful contribution to the proposal.

Letters of support may be a maximum of two pages; extraneous pages will be removed from the letter and the proposal. Letters of support may not be included from other bodies and individuals who are not Collaborators. Unsolicited letters of support will deem an application ineligible.

### 3.11 Applicant Agreement to Terms and Conditions

It should be noted that submission of an application represents agreement from the applicant to the [SFI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants](#). The applicant must tick the box to confirm that such agreement is in place. Applications that fail to comply with the above terms and conditions, or with requirements outlined in this call document, will not be eligible and will be withdrawn without review.

Science Foundation Ireland Grant General Terms and Conditions shall govern the administration of SFI grants and awards to the exclusion of this and any other oral, written, or recorded statement. Similarly awards funded by the Irish Research Council will be governed by their general [Terms and Conditions](#).

### 3.12 Submission to Research Office

Once all sections of the application form have been completed, applicants must submit their proposal to their Research Office by clicking on the “Submit for RO Review” button. Following submission, it will not be possible to edit the proposal while its status is given as “*Full Proposal - Pending RO Approval*”. The Research Office may require applicants to make revisions to their proposals before they submit the application to SFI; a notification will be sent to applicants where such revisions are mandated, and the status of the proposal in SESAME will revert to “*Full Proposal – In Preparation*”, thus allowing the required revisions to be made.

A PDF of the proposal is available in SESAME and should be reviewed prior to submission to enable validation of an application. The responsibility for verifying that the proposal is ready for submission lies with the Applicant(s) in this regard.

**It is the responsibility of applicants to ensure that their Research Office has successfully submitted their proposal to SFI before the stated deadline of 13:00 on the 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021. After the submission deadline, applications will not be accepted by SESAME. Therefore they will not be accepted by SFI or the IRC.**

**Please contact the Research Office well in advance in order to become familiar with any internal Research Body submission deadlines.**

Applicants will receive a notification from SESAME periodically when the status of their proposal changes. Alternatively, if you wish to track the status of your proposal (e.g., when the proposal is pending Research Office approval or under review with SFI or the IRC), this information will be displayed in SESAME.

### 3.13 Research Body Approval

It should be noted that submission of an application represents an agreement to SFI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants. Submission must only be made by an authorised research body representative. In particular, the research body is approving:

- The eligibility of the applicant.
- That the requested budget including salaries/stipends, equipment, consumables and travel is in line with accepted institutional guidelines.
- The availability of infrastructure within the institution as outlined by the applicant in the research proposal.
- That the proposed research programme has not been funded by other sources.
- That relevant ethical approval has been or will be sought and must be granted prior to the award commencing.
- That the relevant licences will be in place at the time of award.
- That the details provided in relation to research funding history (i.e., current, pending or expired grants, as detailed in the application) are valid and accurate.
- That the details provided in relation to previous employment history are valid and accurate.
- That permission from all team members and collaborators has been obtained, such that SFI may receive their personal information, and may process such data for the purpose of peer review.

For SFI-IRC Pathway programme applications, the research body is also approving:

- The suitability and willingness of the mentor to host the applicant.
- That the research body is responsible for supporting the applicant and PhD student, if successful in the application.
- That, if successful, the applicants will have a contract of employment in place that accounts for 100% of the applicant's time and covers the duration of the requested Grant.

**Submission of an application through SESAME serves as the research body's endorsement of the eligibility of the applicant as well as approval of the budget requested, the infrastructure to be provided by the research body, and furthermore, confirms the validity and accuracy of the details provided in relation to the current, pending and expired grants as detailed in the application and in relation to the applicant's year of PhD.**

### 3.14 Deadlines

Applicants selected by their intended research body must ensure that their proposal is submitted to SFI no later than the **25<sup>th</sup> of June 2021 at 13:00** by their Research Office. **Applications cannot be submitted through SESAME after this deadline.**

## 3.15 Proposal Checklist

PROPOSAL CHECKLIST		
SECTION	DESCRIPTION	REQUIREMENTS
Proposal Summary	Title	Up to 30 words
	Duration of Award Requested	48 months
Resubmission	Resubmission statement (if relevant).	Max. 1000 words
Research Alignment	Research area (Primary and Secondary)	Select from list for each
	Alignment to programme remit	Max. 250 words
Lead Applicant details	Complete mandatory SESAME Profile information	Mandatory profile fields marked in red
	ORCID iD	Link SESAME profile to ORCID iD
	Percentage Time Commitment	Insert time commitment (%)
	DORA-Compliant CV	Max. 5 pages (use template provided)
	Personal Statement	Max. 500 words
	Supervisory Experience	Enter details
Mentor (collaborator) details	Research Funding History	Enter details
	Name/Contact details etc.	Add contact name, details etc.
Collaborator(s) details	CV (SFI and the IRC recommend using the 2-page DORA-compliant template provided) Letter of support also required (see section below)	Upload CVs (max. 2 pages)
	Name/Contact details etc.	Add contact name, details etc.
Main Body of Proposal	CV for <b>each</b> collaborator (SFI and the IRC recommend using the 2-page DORA-compliant template provided) Letters of support also required (see section below)	Upload CVs (max. 2 pages)
	Keywords	Max. 15 words
	Abstract	Max. 200 words
Ethical Issues	Lay Abstract	Max. 100 words
	Answer questions regarding ethical issues (Use of Animals, Research involving Human Participants, Biological Material or Identifiable Data)	Select relevant answers
Sex & Gender Dimension in Research	Sex & Gender Dimension in Research Statement	Max. 1000 words
Programme Documents	Research Programme	Max. 8 pages
	References	Max. 1 page
	Impact Statement	Max. 2 pages
Budget	Details of all relevant costs	Budget Table in SESAME
	Upload the budget justification	Max. 2 pages
Letter(s) of Support	Mentor	Max. 2 pages

	Host Research Body	Max. 2 pages
	Collaborator Letter of Support	Max. 2 pages
<b>Declaration</b>	Agreement to SFI Terms and Conditions	<b>Tick box to agree</b>

## 4 Review Process

SFI and the IRC are signatories to the San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment (DORA).<sup>36</sup> As such, the agencies are aligning their review and evaluation processes with DORA principles. To this end, all types of research output are recognised by SFI and the IRC and we are committed to assessing the quality and impact of research through means other than journal impact factors. The SFI-IRC Pathway programme utilises a DORA-compliant CV template to assist with compliance to DORA principles. Furthermore, in the spirit of supporting open research<sup>37,38</sup> SFI and the IRC will positively consider where there is a commitment to making data and other types of research open and accessible.

### 4.1 Proposal Review Process and Evaluation Criteria

All proposals will be assessed by international peer reviewers under the review criteria described below. These criteria will be applied at each stage of the review process.

- Quality, significance and novelty of the research plan (weight 40%)**  
 Novelty, importance, timeliness of the intended research; communication and description of the research; comprehension of the current state of the art; clearly delineated roles of the applicant and the PhD student; suitability and achievability of the programme based on the experience of the applicant; appropriate use of the available budget, the sex and gender dimension etc.
- Quality, significance and relevance of the applicant's key achievements, research track record and career development plan, considering the research discipline and commensurate with their career stage and years of research experience, taking any periods of leave into account. (weight 30%)**  
 Applicants track record and career development goals described in their personal statement. The following areas will be considered in evaluating the applicant's track record: 1) Generation of Knowledge, 2) Development of Individuals and Collaboration, 3) Supporting Broader Society & the Economy and, 4) Supporting the Research Community and higher education.
- Potential impact and value to Ireland (weight 15%)**

<sup>36</sup> <https://sfdora.org/read/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.coalition-s.org/>

<sup>38</sup> [https://research.ie/assets/uploads/2017/05/irc\\_open\\_access\\_policy\\_final\\_1.pdf](https://research.ie/assets/uploads/2017/05/irc_open_access_policy_final_1.pdf)

Appreciation of how research may be developed and exploited in the medium-to-long term; realistic and convincing evaluation of the benefits that will result from a successful project; areas and fields where impacts are likely to be made; etc.

- **Quality of institutional and mentor support and infrastructure provided (weight 15%)**  
Support for the candidate's career & professional development; necessary space and equipment in place to carry out the programme of research; assurance from the support letters that the team will be looked after appropriately, clear rationale for the applicant and mentor working together; coherent plan between applicant and mentor; confidence that the applicant will have significant independence and that it will be respected by the mentor, etc.

Weighted scores will be rounded to the nearest half point.<sup>39</sup> When ranking applications, in the event of applications receiving the same final score, ties will be decided based on the quality of the proposed research. If additional tiebreakers are required, SFI and the IRC will inform applicants what these tiebreakers are.

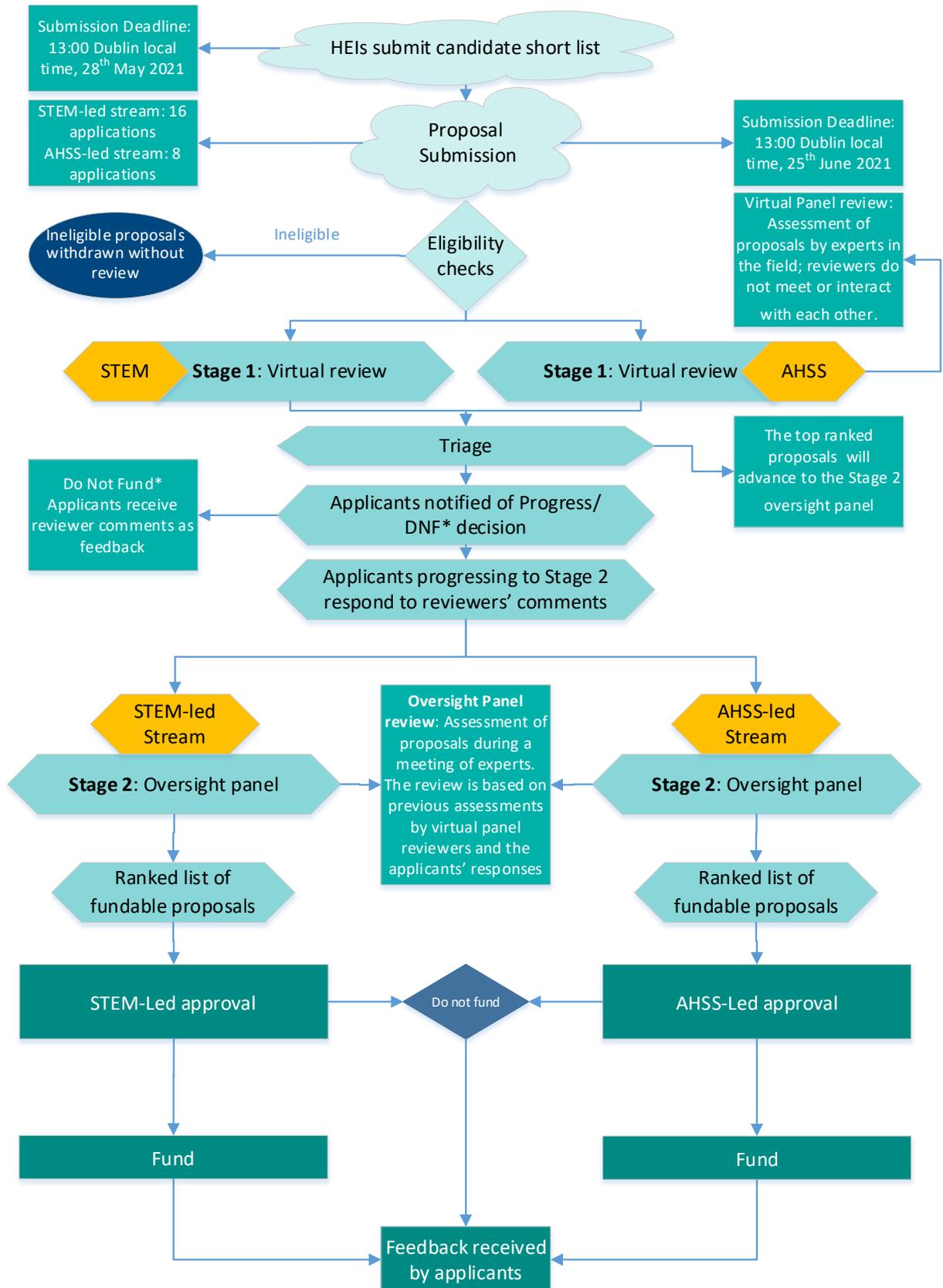
Reviewers engaged by the agencies are required to abide by the SFI Reviewer Code of Conduct.<sup>40</sup> The submission of an application to SFI shall be construed as consent by the applicant(s) to participate in the peer-review process. SFI and the IRC reserve the right to return applications without **review where they do not meet the eligibility criteria**. A schematic of the review process is provided below. Full details on the review process are provided in Appendix A.

All appeals will be conducted in accordance with SFI's appeals policy<sup>40</sup> (section 6.1).

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<sup>39</sup> SFI and the IRC reserve the right to adjust this rounding based on the number of applications received. Applicants will be made aware of any changes to the review process.

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/review/>



#### Other Review Information

The identity of international experts who conduct reviews shall remain confidential and will not be disclosed to the applicants. SFI and the IRC shall not be liable for the release of information concerning proposals to third parties by those international peer reviewers involved in the merit review process.

SFI and the IRC reserve the right to modify the review process. Applicants will be notified of any relevant modification to the review procedure. The final funding decisions are at the sole and exclusive discretion of SFI and the IRC.

Pre-award site visits, conducted by SFI staff, to examine infrastructure may take place, where appropriate. **The final funding decisions are at the sole and exclusive discretion of SFI and the IRC.**

Please note that successful applicants will be required to submit a **Data Management Plan** (see Section 6 for further guidance) along with a description of how they plan to disseminate their research and ensure that the outputs of this research programme are openly available. This must be submitted on or before the due date of the year 1 annual report.

## 5 Project/Award Management

### 5.1 Reporting Requirements

The State has made a significant investment via SFI and the IRC into research and as such, it is the responsibility of the agencies to monitor the progress and outcomes of all funding it administers. The progress reporting requirements for awards made under the SFI-IRC Pathway programme include the completion of an Annual Report which is used to monitor the progress of individual awards against the overall objectives of the SFI-IRC Pathway programme and associated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

All SFI grant holders are required to report on outputs and impacts arising from their research programme for the duration of their award and for up to five years after the award end (close) date. Therefore, awardees funded by SFI will also be required to complete SFI Research Outputs (formerly referred to as the SFI Census) and a Researcher Snapshot.

Specific reporting guidelines will be published by the agencies at a future date.

### 5.2 Progress Reviews

SFI-IRC Pathway programme may be subject to a progress review in the form of a site visit conducted by international peer reviewers during the period of the grant. These progress reviews are typically held at the midway point on the award. The review panel, which comprises two to three international subject matter experts, will be asked to review the progress and direction of the research, the quality of the team (including gender balance) and partnerships, the management of the budget and progress towards generating impact. In relation to the latter, the panel will be guided to review progress against the impact statement provided by the applicant(s) in their original proposal. Progress reviews will also involve a data provenance review, where a dataset will be reviewed in the context of experimental design, data capture, analysis, storage and curation. The research team will also be assessed on matters concerning training, mentoring and supervision. The outcome of the review will be taken into consideration in the assessment of future applications made to SFI. As stated in the Terms and

Conditions of each funder, SFI<sup>41</sup> and the IRC<sup>42</sup> reserve the right to terminate a grant if, in the reasonable opinion of relevant funder<sup>43</sup>, progress is not deemed to be satisfactory.

## 6 Relevant policies

Science Foundation Ireland Grant General Terms and Conditions<sup>41</sup> shall govern the administration of SFI grants and awards to the exclusion of this and any other oral, written, or recorded statement. Similarly awards funded by the Irish Research Council will be governed by their general Terms and Conditions<sup>42</sup>.

### 6.1 SFI's Policies and Positions

In addition to complying with SFI's Grant General Terms and Conditions, applicants are expected to be familiar and consult with SFI policies/positions and national policies where relevant. Please note that the following is a non-exclusive list, some of which may not apply to this particular programme (noted with an \*). Applicants must also be aware that SFI policies are reviewed and updated from time to time.

#### *Clinical Trials*

Research programmes that include clinical trials as part of the study (see Section 3.7) must adhere to the **SFI Clinical Trial and Clinical Investigation Policy**<sup>44</sup>, as well as with the requirements set out by the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA).

#### *Animal Usage*

Applicants intending to use animals in their research projects are obliged to comply with the **SFI Use of Animals in Research Policy**<sup>45</sup> and should also ensure that their studies are in line with the HPA's position on the use of animals in research.

#### *Research Integrity*

SFI places paramount importance on ensuring that the highest standards of research integrity underpin all aspects of the research that it supports. To this end, SFI endorses the **National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland**;<sup>46</sup> that is, all institutions and SFI award holders are expected to abide by this policy statement and the **European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity**.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/>

<sup>42</sup> <https://research.ie/assets/uploads/2017/07/IRC-PI-TCs-Final-1.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> SFI is the relevant funder for the STEM-led stream therefore SFI policies and Grant Terms & Conditions apply. The IRC is the relevant funder for the AHSS-led stream and therefore IRC policies and terms & conditions apply

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/ethical-and-scientific-issues/>

<sup>45</sup> [http://www.sfi.ie/resources/SFI-Policy-on-the-Use-of-Animals-in-Research\\_June\\_2016.pdf](http://www.sfi.ie/resources/SFI-Policy-on-the-Use-of-Animals-in-Research_June_2016.pdf)

<sup>46</sup> [https://www.iua.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/IUA\\_Research\\_Integrity\\_in\\_Ireland\\_Report\\_2019.pdf](https://www.iua.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/IUA_Research_Integrity_in_Ireland_Report_2019.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> <https://allea.org/code-of-conduct/>

### *Doctoral Education*

For postgraduate students funded by SFI, the host Research Body is expected to adopt the principles, standards and good practice for doctoral education as described in the **National Framework for Doctoral Education (2015)**,<sup>48</sup> which SFI has endorsed.

### *Intellectual Property Management*

Intellectual Property (IP) should be managed according to the policies set out in the Government publication: **Ireland's National IP Protocol 2019** and must comply with State aid Regulations.<sup>49</sup> The IP arrangements are the responsibility of the Research Body and shall reflect the collaborative nature of the project and the level of cash and in-kind commitment made by the Industry Partner.

### *Gender Strategy*

Research should fully consider potential biological sex and socio-cultural gender dimensions as key analytical and explanatory variables. As articulated in the **SFI Gender Strategy (Strand 3: Integrating Gender in Research and Innovation)**<sup>50</sup>, applicants are advised to demonstrate that they have considered any potential sex/gender aspects in their proposed research programme.

\*In the SFI Strategy 2025 Shaping Our Future<sup>51</sup> targets for 35% of SFI's funded leadership positions (PIs & Co-PIs) to be women and for research teams to be composed of at least 40% of the underrepresented genders by 2025 are set. As such, applicants should consider how these targets can be achieved at all levels of the research team.

### *Maternity Supplement*

SFI is committed to removing and mitigating any existing or perceived factors that may limit the participation of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers. SFI invites its award holders to apply for a supplemental discretionary allowance to support their SFI funded award when either an SFI Awardee or a team member, including PhD students funded on an SFI award takes a period of maternity or adoptive leave.<sup>52</sup>

### *Appeals Process*

This policy establishes procedures and responsibilities for the appeal of the declination of a proposal by SFI.<sup>53</sup>

### *State aid*

All SFI funding granted under this call will be subject to, and must be compliant with, State aid law. As such, proposals must be designed to ensure that any funding received from SFI does not, directly or indirectly, give rise to the granting of State aid. Potential applicants are referred to the guidance provided by the European Commission in Section 2 of its **2014**

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<sup>48</sup> [http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/national\\_framework\\_for\\_doctoral\\_education\\_0.pdf](http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/national_framework_for_doctoral_education_0.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/national-policies-sfi-positions/>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.sfi.ie/research-news/publications/SFI-Gender-Strategy-2016-2020.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.sfi.ie/strategy/SFI-Strategy-2025-Shaping-Our-Future.pdf>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/gender/>

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/review/>

**Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (2014/C 198/01)**<sup>54</sup> and that which has been developed by Knowledge Transfer Ireland.<sup>55</sup> If in any doubt as to the interpretation or application of this guidance, potential applicants are advised to seek independent legal advice.

#### *Child Protection*

Where relevant, applicants and Research Bodies are required to comply with the provisions of the **Children First Act 2015**,<sup>56</sup> and the **National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017**.<sup>57</sup> It is the responsibility of the Research Body to ensure that they are compliant with all applicable law.

#### *Data Protection Policy*

**The General Data Protection Regulation**<sup>58</sup> is a legal framework that sets out guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information of individuals within the European Union. Applicants are advised that they must be compliant with this regulation if they collect or process personal data.

SFI may collect, use and disclose personal data provided in the application and/or otherwise obtained under, or in connection with, the application for processing the submission, for the performance of its statutory powers and functions, and for the general activities of SFI. Further details regarding SFI's collection, use and disclosure of personal data, and the rights of individuals with respect to any personal data held by SFI, are available in the **SFI Privacy Statement**.<sup>59</sup>

During peer-review procedures, information may be sent to external experts in countries outside of the European Economic Area, including countries that are not recognised by the European Commission as having adequate data protection laws. By submitting an application to SFI, the Research Body and members of the Research Team are agreeing that they consent to the processing and transfer of personal information in this way.

During the application process or at any time thereafter, SFI may contact the Research Body, the Principal Investigator, or any member of the Research Team with regard to funding opportunities, activities or events organised by SFI or other relevant bodies, or for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation (including, but not limited to, the collection of scientific data or data relating to the application process). SFI may choose to authorise a third party to contact the Research Body, the Principal Investigator or any member of the Research Team on its behalf.

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<sup>54</sup> [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627(01)&from=EN)

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.knowledgetransferireland.com/Model-Agreements/Practical-Guides/Practical-Guide-to-State-Aid-Considerations-in-Research-Development-and-Innovation-for-RPOs-and-Industry.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/36/enacted/en/pdf>

<sup>57</sup> [http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children\\_First\\_National\\_Guidance\\_2017.pdf](http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children_First_National_Guidance_2017.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.dataprotection.ie/docs/GDPR/1623.htm>

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.sfi.ie/privacy/>

### *Conflict of Interest*

SFI recognises that applicants may have a prior relationship with an industry partner engaged in an application for funding to SFI (e.g., industry consultancy role, founder of an academic spin-out company) which may be perceived as a conflict of interest. Where a potential conflict of interest exists, SFI requires that it is disclosed by the applicant to SFI and their Research Body and that any such situations are managed by the Research Body in accordance with the principles and mandates laid out in **Ireland's National IP Protocol 2019**.<sup>60</sup>

### *Open access*

In line with the principles espoused by Plan S<sup>61</sup> and those of the National Framework on the Transition to an Open Research Environment<sup>62</sup> SFI is committed to ensuring that all publicly funded research articles are openly available. Where a research publication arises in whole or in part from SFI funded research (i.e. where one or other of the researchers concerned receives SFI funds in support of their endeavours), **SFI's Open Access policy**<sup>63</sup> should be adhered to. SFI monitors compliance with this policy through scientific and financial reporting, financial audits and its Annual Stocktake of Research Outputs.

### *Data Management*

Good data governance and stewardship are key components of good research practice. Science Foundation Ireland is part of an initiative for the voluntary international alignment of research data management policies.<sup>64</sup> Applicants may find it helpful to consult with this and Science Europe's framework for discipline-specific research data management if preparing a data management plan as part of their application for funding to SFI.<sup>65</sup> Applicants should review individual programme funding call requirements regarding data management plans and timelines as to when they are required to be submitted.

**Current SFI policies and positions will be reviewed on a regular basis; applicants are advised to consult the policy information in advance of submission of a proposal.**

## **6.2 IRC Policies and Positions**

In addition to complying with the IRC's general Terms and Conditions<sup>66</sup>, awardees are expected to be familiar and consult with both IRC and national policies, where relevant. Please note that the following is a non-exclusive list and that the IRC reserves the right to review and amend these policies at any time.

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<sup>60</sup> <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/national-policies-sfi-positions/>

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.coalition-s.org/principles-and-implementation/>

<sup>62</sup> <http://norf-ireland.net/>

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/open-research/SFIs-Open-Access-Policy-2019-Updated.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.scienceeurope.org/our-resources/practical-guide-to-the-international-alignment-of-research-data-management/>

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.scienceeurope.org/our-resources/guidance-document-presenting-a-framework-for-discipline-specific-research-data-management/>

<sup>66</sup> <https://research.ie/assets/uploads/2017/07/IRC-PI-TCs-Final-1.pdf>.

### *Dignity in the conduct of research*

The IRC supports a research system in which individual researchers are enabled to reach their full potential at all stages of their career. At the heart of research is people, and respect for the dignity of the person, whether a student or a member of staff, is a principle that all stakeholders have a collective responsibility to safeguard. The IRC's full statement on dignity in the conduct of research is available [here](#).

### *Research integrity*

The IRC places paramount importance on ensuring that the highest standards of research integrity underpin all aspects of the research that it supports. To this end, the IRC endorses the [National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland](#); that is, all institutions and IRC award holders are expected to abide by this policy statement and the [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#).

### *Doctoral education*

It is the IRC's ambition to ensure that the early-stage researchers it funds are equipped with the relevant disciplinary and transferrable skills to allow them to pursue diverse career paths and establish themselves as independent researchers and thinkers. The IRC's career development policy statement is available [here](#). The IRC also endorses the principles, standards and good practice for doctoral education as described in the [National Framework for Doctoral Education](#).

### *Intellectual property management*

Intellectual property should be managed according to [Ireland's National IP Protocol 2019](#) and must comply with State aid regulations. The IRC does not make any claim to intellectual property arising from the award.

### *Gender strategy*

The IRC is committed to promoting gender equality in order to guarantee the highest standards of rigour, transparency, and diversity of knowledge. The IRC was the first research funding agency in Ireland to publish a gender strategy, which aims (1) to support gender equality in research careers across all disciplines; and (2) to support the integration of sex and gender analysis into research content. The IRC's [Gender Strategy](#) seeks to provide equal outcomes to both men and women so that Ireland can attract and retain the most talented, creative and innovative researchers thereby maximising its collective research intelligence. A review of this strategy is currently underway to assess the impact of the IRC's gender-related policies and practices to date.

### *Maternity leave*

The IRC's maternity leave policy is available [here](#).

### *State aid*

All IRC funding granted under this call will be subject to, and must be compliant with, State aid law. As such, proposals must be designed to ensure that any funding received from IRC does not, directly or indirectly, give rise to the granting of State aid. Potential applicants are referred to the guidance provided by the European Commission in Section 2 of its [2014 Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation \(2014/C 198/01\)](#) and that which has been developed by [Knowledge Transfer Ireland](#). If in any doubt as to the interpretation or application of this guidance, potential applicants are advised to seek independent legal advice.

### *Child protection*

Where relevant, awardees and host institutions are required to comply with the provisions of the [Children First Act 2015](#) and the [National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017](#). It is the responsibility of the host institution to ensure that they are compliant with all applicable law.

### *Data protection notice*

The [General Data Protection Regulation](#) is a legal framework that sets out guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information of individuals within the European Union. Applicants are advised that they must be compliant with this regulation if they collect or process personal data. The IRC's [Data Protection Notice](#) sets out the basis on which any personal data we collect from you, or from others, will be used by us. During the course of our activities, the IRC will collect, store and use personal data in respect of individuals ("data subjects") participating in our funding application and award processes. We may also collect, store and use personal data on individuals who engage with us in relation to our activities. The IRC is committed to reflecting best practice in complying with data protection regulation.

### *Open access*

The IRC's Open Access Policy is available [here](#). All awardees must lodge their publications and other research outputs, resulting in whole or in part from IRC-funded research, in an open access repository and should make such publications publicly discoverable, openly accessible and re-usable as soon as is possible. The IRC is a member of the National Open Research Forum (NORF) Funders Forum and is committed to working with NORF and other stakeholders to enhance open access for all disciplines.

### *Data management*

The consideration of data management requirements at the start and, indeed, during the project ensures research integrity and reproducibility. The IRC's guide for the preparation of data management plans is available [here](#). In addition, awardees are advised to consult Science Europe's [Practical Guide to the International Alignment of Research Data Management](#) for more information on core requirements for data management plans, criteria for the selection of trustworthy repositories and guidance for researchers to comply with organisational requirements. Applicants should review individual programme funding call requirements regarding data management plans and timelines as to when they are required to be submitted.

### *Acknowledgement of funding*

Showcasing awardees and their achievements is the most effective means that a funding agency has of demonstrating the value of publicly funded investment in research. For the IRC, it is imperative that the source of funding is acknowledged in all dissemination activities to bolster the commitment to funding research activities in Ireland. The IRC's Acknowledgement of Funding Policy is available [here](#).

## **7 Further Information**

All information related to the SFI-IRC Pathway programme is available on the programme webpage:

<http://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/pathway/>

For all additional queries please contact: [pathway@sfi.ie](mailto:pathway@sfi.ie)

## Appendix A: SFI-IRC Pathway programme Review Process

The review criteria detailed in Section 4 will be applied at all stages of the review process. In addition, a weighting and scoring system will be applied.

### Score Weighting System:

Review Criteria	Weighting
Research proposal	40%
Applicant	30%
Impact	15%
Mentor / Institutional support	15%
Total	100%

Weighted scores will be rounded to the nearest half point.<sup>67</sup> When ranking applications, in the event of applications receiving the same final score, ties will be decided based on the quality of the proposed research. If additional tiebreakers are required, SFI and the IRC will inform applicants what these tiebreakers are.

### SFI-IRC Pathway programme Review process

All proposals submitted to the SFI-IRC Pathway programme will be assessed for eligibility and proposals meeting the eligibility requirements will be reviewed as outlined below.

#### Stage 1 Review

The assessment will be carried out by ‘**virtual panels**’ comprised of a large number of international reviewers; where each member of the virtual panel receives a number of proposals, typically six, to review. The panel members will exhibit a **broad range of expertise** relevant to the proposals under review. All proposals will be forwarded to a minimum of three distinguished international peer reviewers for written evaluation and rating under the review criteria outlined below. A copy of the review form is provided in the table below.

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<sup>67</sup> SFI and the IRC reserve the right to adjust this rounding based on the number of applications received. Applicants will be made aware of any changes to the review process.

<b>Review Type</b>	<b>Virtual Panel review</b>
<b>Review Questions</b>	<p><b>Question pertaining to Applicant(s)</b></p> <p>SFI and the IRC are signatories of the <a href="#">San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment (DORA)</a><sup>68</sup>. As such, the agencies are aligning their review and evaluation processes with DORA principles. To this end, all types of research output are recognised by SFI and the IRC and we are committed to assessing the quality and impact of research through means other than journal impact factors. Furthermore, in the spirit of supporting open research SFI and the IRC will positively consider where there is a commitment to making data and other types of research open and accessible. Please take these positions into account during your assessment of the DORA-compliant CV(s) submitted by the applicant(s).</p> <p>Please comment on the quality, significance and relevance of the applicant’s key achievements, research track record and career development plan, as demonstrated in the CV and personal statement, considering the research discipline and commensurate with their career stage, years of research experience and taking any periods of leave into account. Please include in your review comments how the applicant(s) has addressed each of the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Generation of Knowledge,</li> <li>2) Development of Individuals and Collaborations,</li> <li>3) Supporting Broader Society &amp; the Economy and,</li> <li>4) Supporting the Research Community.</li> </ol> <p>With your review, please also consider whether the expertise and experience of the lead applicant is appropriate given their proposed contribution to the research programme.</p> <p>There are <b>two stages</b> to the scoring of the applicant(s):</p> <p>First, please score the quality, significance and relevance of the applicant’s key achievements and research track record with regard to the individual categories in the CV(s):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Generation of Knowledge,</li> <li>2) Development of Individuals and Collaborations,</li> <li>3) Supporting Broader Society &amp; the Economy,</li> <li>4) Supporting the Research Community. Half scores are permitted.</li> </ol>

<sup>68</sup> <https://sfidora.org/read/>

- 1 = Applicant(s) not internationally competitive for this category
- 2 = Applicant(s) track record has considerable weaknesses for this category
- 3 = Applicant(s) track record lacking in one or two critical aspects for this category
- 4 = High-quality applicant(s) in nearly all respects for this category
- 5 = Outstanding applicant(s) for this category

Second, taking into account the four categories referred to above, please use your judgement to provide one overall score based on the quality, significance and relevance of the applicant's key achievements, research track record and career development plan, as demonstrated in the CV and personal statement, considering the research discipline and commensurate with their career stage, years of research experience and taking any periods of leave into account. This score will be the final score used to assess the applicant. Half scores are permitted.

- 1 = Applicant(s) not internationally competitive
- 2 = Applicant(s) track record has considerable weaknesses
- 3 = Applicant(s) track record lacking in one or two critical aspects
- 4 = High-quality applicant(s) in nearly all respects
- 5 = Outstanding applicant(s)

#### Question pertaining to Research Plan

Please comment on the quality, significance and novelty of the research plan. In your assessment, please consider points such as: novelty, importance, timeliness of the intended research; communication and description of the research; comprehension of the current state of the art; clearly delineated roles of the applicant and the PhD student; suitability and achievability of the programme based on the experience of the applicant; appropriate use of the available budget, the sex and gender dimension etc.

#### Sex and Gender Dimension in Research

**This section should not** include information on gender equality, diversity and inclusion in the research team/environment.

- Has the applicant adequately addressed the sex and/or gender dimension/s in their proposal? Yes/No
- If the applicant **has not** included a sex and/or gender dimension/s in their research proposal, are you satisfied that they have justified this position sufficiently? If not, please explain.
- If the applicant **has** included a sex and/or gender dimension/s in their research proposal, is the design/analysis described sufficiently rigorously to test for differences between the sexes and/or genders? If not, please explain.
- If the applicant is only studying one biological sex and/or gender, has the applicant provided sufficient justification with reference to the literature, preliminary data, or other relevant consideration in their proposal?

Please rate the quality, significance and novelty of the research plan, including the Sex and Gender Statement aspects (half scores are permitted)

- 1 = Research proposed is not worthy of funding
- 2 = Research proposed has serious deficiencies

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 = Research proposed is lacking in one or more critical aspects; key issues need to be addressed</li> <li>• 4 = High-quality research programme in most respects</li> <li>• 5 = Outstanding research programme in all respects</li> </ul> <p><b>Question pertaining to Impact</b></p> <p>Please review the Impact Statement prepared by the applicant(s) and comment on the applicant's ability to demonstrate the potential impact and value to Ireland. In your assessment, please consider points such as: Appreciation of how research may be developed and exploited in the medium-to-long term; realistic and convincing evaluation of the benefits that will result from a successful research programme; areas and fields where impacts are likely to be made.</p> <p>Please rate the applicant's ability to demonstrate the potential impact and value to Ireland (half scores are permitted)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 = Very low impact potential</li> <li>• 2 = Low impact potential</li> <li>• 3 = Good impact potential</li> <li>• 4 = High impact potential</li> <li>• 5 = Outstanding impact potential</li> </ul> <p><b>Question pertaining to institutional and mentor support, and infrastructure</b></p> <p>Please review the letters of support and comment on the quality of institutional and mentor support and infrastructure provided. In your assessment, please consider points such as: support for the applicant's career development; necessary space and equipment in place to carry out the programme of research; assurance from the support letters that the team will be looked after appropriately, clear rationale for the applicant and mentor working together; coherent plan between applicant and mentor; confidence that the applicant will have significant independence and that it will be respected by the mentor, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 = Mentor and/or institutional support is not appropriate</li> <li>• 2 = Mentor and/or institutional support is weak</li> <li>• 3 = Mentor and/or institutional support is lacking in one or two critical aspects</li> <li>• 4 = Mentor and / or institutional support is high-quality</li> <li>• 5 = Mentor and / or institutional support is outstanding</li> </ul> <p><b>Question pertaining to Budget &amp; Team</b></p> <p>Is the budget appropriate/realistic given the track record of the applicant? Please comment on the appropriateness of the skills, composition of the team (including collaborators) and the appropriateness of the resources requested.</p> <p><b>Question pertaining to Ethical Issues</b></p> <p>Please comment on any ethical issues, particularly related to any aspects of the proposed research that involves animals, human participants, human biological material, or identifiable/potentially identifiable data.</p>
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### Applicant Response

Applications will be ranked following the virtual panel review. Top ranked applications that receive an overall score of 3.5 (70%) or higher will proceed to the Stage 2 oversight panel review. Applicants that receive a final score of less than 3.5 will be informed that their application was unsuccessful. Applications with a very high standard deviation or vastly deviating reviewer opinions may also be selected to progress to Stage 2. **SFI and the IRC reserve the right to increase the scoring threshold if a surplus of high-quality applications is received.**

Anonymous reviewer comments will then be made available to applicants and those applicants proceeding to Stage 2 will be afforded the opportunity to submit a **response** to the reviewers' comments. Applicants will be given a defined period of time in which to respond (advanced notice of dates and guidelines relating to the response will be indicated to applicants).

### Stage 2 Oversight Panel Review

An oversight panel involving international reviewers with generalist expertise will be convened to review the applicant response and oversee the fairness of the written reviews. Panel reviewers will receive the written reviews and scores following stage 1 along with the applicant's response to those reviews. Panel reviewers will provide a final score for each criterion and make a funding recommendation to SFI and the IRC.

Weighted scores will be rounded to the nearest half point.<sup>69</sup> The outcome of the panel meeting is a ranked list of applications in a series of bands, and within each band, the ranking will be based on the research programme score (non-weighted). If additional tiebreakers are required, SFI and the IRC will inform applicants what these tiebreakers are. SFI will fund down the ranked list from the STEM-led stream until SFI programme funding is exhausted and the IRC will fund down the ranked list from the AHSS-led stream until IRC programme funding is exhausted. Applicants will receive the panel's report as feedback.

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<sup>69</sup> SFI and the IRC reserve the right to adjust this rounding based on the number of applications received. Applicants will be made aware of any changes to the review process.

## Appendix B: Research Areas

### Primary Research Area (for selection in SESAME)

Primary STEM Research Areas (available under the STEM-led stream)	Primary AHSS Research Areas (available under the AHSS-led stream)
Agriculture	Anthropology
Astronomy	Archaeology
Biochemistry	Business and Management
Biomedicine	Celtic Studies
Chemistry	Classics
Computational and Mathematical Biology	Cultural Studies
Computer and Information Sciences	Economics
Earth and Environmental Sciences	Education
Energy	Environmental Studies
Engineering	Equality Studies
Food Science	Film Studies
Genetics and Genomics	Folklore Studies
Immunity and Infection	French
Materials Science	Geography
Mathematics	German
Microbiology	History
Molecular and Cell Biology	Irish Language Studies
Networking and Communications Systems	Italian
Neuroscience and Behaviour	Languages
Physics	Law
	Linguistics
	Literature
	Media
	Musicology
	Philosophy
	Politics
	Psychology
	Sociology
	Spanish
	Theatre Studies
	Theology

**Secondary Research Area (for selection in SESAME)**

Secondary STEM Research Areas (can be selected under either stream)	Secondary AHSS Research Areas (can be selected under either stream)
Age-Related Research	Accounting
Agriculture	Aging
Algorithms	Ancient Greek and Latin Literature and Art
Applied Mathematics	Ancient History
Artificial Intelligence	Animal Communication
Astronomy	Archaeology
Bacteriology	Archaeometry
Biochemistry	Asset Prices
Bioengineering	Banking
Bioinformatics	Behavioural Economics
Biomedicine	Childhood Studies
Biophysics	Classics
Biosensors	Cognitive and Experimental Psychology
Cancer	Colonial and Post-colonial History
Cardiovascular	Communication Networks
Cell Cycle Regulation and Apoptosis	Comparative Law
Cellular Biotechnology	Competitiveness
Chemical Engineering	Constitutions
Chemistry	Corporate Finance
Civil and Environmental Engineering	Criminology
Communication Protocols	Cultural Dimensions of Classification and Cognition
Computational and Mathematical Biology	Cultural Diversity
Computational Chemistry	Cultural Heritage
Computer and Information Sciences	Cultural History
Computer Graphics and Visualisation	Cultural Memory
Computer Vision and Image Processing	Cultural Studies
Cryptography	Democratisation
Developmental Biology	Design
Devices	Development
Diagnostics	Development and Architecture
Distributed Systems	Discourse Analysis
Drug Formulation and Delivery	Early Modern History
Earth and Environmental Sciences	Econometrics
Ecology	Economic Growth

Electronic and Electrical Engineering	Entangled Histories
Energy	Environmental Change and Society
Energy Conservation and Waste	Environmental Regulations and Climate Negotiations
Energy Storage	Epistemology and Logic
Engineering	Evolution of Mind and Cognitive Functions
Enzymes/Catalysts	Family and Fertility
Films and Coatings	Financial Markets
Financial Mathematics	Formal, Cognitive, Functional and Computational Linguistics
Food Science	Gender Studies
Gastrointestinal	Geo-information and Spatial Data Analysis
Gene Structure and Expression	Global and Transnational Governance
Gene Therapy	Global and Transnational History
Genetic Engineering	Governance Legal Studies
Genetics and Genomics	Government
Geotechnologies	Health and Society
Glasses and Ceramics	Health Promotion
Glycobiology	Historiography
Hematology	History of Art and Architecture
High Performance and Grid Computing	History of Collective Identities and Memories
Human Disease and Pathology	History of Economic Thought
Imaging and Microscopy	History of Ideas
Immunity and Infection	History of Literature
Inflammation Research	History of Music
Information Security	History of Philosophy
Information Systems and Web Science	History of Sciences and Techniques
Inorganic Chemistry	Households
Language Technologies	Human Life-span Development
Lasers and Plasmas	Human Rights
Magnetism	Identity
Materials Science	Income Distribution and Poverty
Mathematics	Industrial Organisation
Mechanical and Structural Engineering	Inequalities
Medicinal Chemistry	Information Society
Metabolism	Infrastructure
Microbial Pathogenesis	Innovation
Microbiology	Institutional Economics
Modelling and Virtual Science	Intellectual History

Models of Disease	Interethnic Relations
Molecular and Cell Biology	International Development
Molecular Evolution	International Finance
Nanoscience	International Studies
Nanotechnology	International Trade
Networking and Communications Systems	Kinship
Neurodegeneration	Labour Economics
Neurophysiology	Land Use
Neuroscience and Behaviour	Landscape Archaeology
Optics and Photonics	Language Pathologies
Organic Chemistry	Law and Economics
Parasitology	Lexicography
Patterning and Lithographic Techniques	Library and Information Studies
Pharmacology	Literary Styles
Physical Chemistry	Literary Theory and Comparative Literature
Physics	Macroeconomics
Plant Science	Marketing
Polymer Science	Media
Population Genetics	Medieval History
Protein Structure	Microeconomics
Proteomics	Migration
Pulmonary and Respiratory	Mobility, Tourism, Transportation and Logistics Spatial
Quantum Information	Modern and Contemporary History
Regenerative Biology and Stem Cells	Museums and Exhibitions
Renewables	Music and Musicology
Reproductive Biology	Myth
RNA Processing and Regulation	Neuropsychology
Semiconductors	Organisation Studies
Sensor Networks	Palaeography and Epigraphy
Sensors	Pedagogy
Signal Processing	Perception, Action, and Higher Cognitive Processes
Signal Transduction	Performing Arts
Software Engineering	Philosophy
Spectroscopy	Philosophy of Mind
Spintronics	Political Economy
Statistics	Political Science
Structural Biology	Political Systems and Institutions

Theory of Computation	Political Theory
Tissue Engineering	Population Dynamics
Toxicology	Pragmatics
Vaccines	Prehistory and Protohistory
Virology	Psycholinguistics and Neurolinguistics
Wireless Networks	Public Economics
	Quantitative Economic History
	Regional Planning
	Regional Studies
	Religious Studies
	Research and Development
	Resources and Sustainability
	Ritual
	Second Language Teaching and Learning
	Sex/Gender
	Sex/Gender History
	Social and Clinical Psychology
	Social and Economic Geography
	Social and Economic History
	Social and Industrial Ecology
	Social Geography
	Social Mobility
	Social Movements
	Social Policy
	Social Structure
	Social Studies of Science and Technology Environment
	Social Work
	Sociolinguistics
	Statistical Methods
	Symbolic Representations
	Systems and Institutions
	Teaching and Learning
	Terminology
	Textual Philology
	Theory and Methods of History
	Theory and Strategy
	Typological, Historical and Comparative Linguistics

	Urban Studies
	Violence, Conflict and Conflict Resolution
	Visual Arts
	Women's Studies
	Work and Welfare