

Irish Research Council Postdoctoral Fellowship 2025 Guidance Notes

IRC Postdoctoral Fellowship 2025 Guidance Notes

UCD Supports



For resources to develop your proposal please visit the writing support pages on the [UCD Research Portal](#) under **UCD Research Proposal Writing Supports - Guidelines, Tips and Templates**. Many of the links in this document also go to these specific supports., in addition this document can be found on [this page](#) and through [RMS Profiles](#). These files are also available on the Shared Drive for those outside of UCD. For access to UCD's support resources contact UCD research (proposalsupport@ucd.ie) As email volumes to our office are high, please ensure you have first checked if your query is answered within the call guidelines and our provided resources for this call before submitting a query to us.

Eligibility

- Applicants are required to complete and pass an eligibility quiz on the online application system prior to accessing an application form. Further information outlining what deems an application eligible or ineligible is contained in section 7 and 8 of the [call document](#). Before beginning this quiz also review the eligibility quiz requirements within the Indicative Application Form. **PLEASE NOTE:** If you do not meet the eligibility criteria, you will be deemed ineligible to apply and the system will prevent you from accessing the application form. The Council will not reset Eligibility Quiz or Applications. Any errors will render you ineligible.
- Applicants must have been awarded (or certified as fulfilling the requirements of) a PhD in the 5-year period before **May 31st 2025**. Extension of this eligibility requirement in certain circumstances is dealt with in section 7.2.2 - 7.2.4 of the call document.
- Applicants must have at least 1 peer-reviewed research publication or equivalent research output or be able to provide samples of written research work.
- Applicants may not hold or have held a previous GOI Fellowship.
- Applicants may only have applied once previously.
- There is no age limit for applicants to be eligible.
- Applications will only be accepted in either the Irish or English language.

- Applicants cannot be a permanent member of staff in an Irish or International HEI.
- Applicants must be affiliated with an eligible Irish higher education institution or research performing organisation.
- Applicants must not have been employed as a Postdoctoral Researcher for more than 5 years as of the 31 May 2025.
- Proposed research must not deal with any of the following prohibited research activity areas:
 - human cloning for reproductive purposes.
 - modification of the genetics of human beings that could make such changes heritable (with exception to research relating to cancer treatment of the gonads, which may be funded)
 - creation of human embryos solely for the purpose of research or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer.

Applicants must not have had two previous unsuccessful applications to the relevant programme, including to strategic partner themes. This applies regardless of whether the applicant has changed their host institution or research topic since a previous submission.

Deadlines Summary

Deadline	
16:00 (Irish time) 03 October 2024	FAQ deadline
16:00 (Irish time) 10 October 2024	Applicant deadline 16.00
16:00 (Irish time) 17 October 2024	Supervisor/Mentor deadline
16:00 (Irish time) 24 October 2024	UCD Research & Innovation institutional endorsement deadline

All applications and references are to be submitted via the IRC SmartSimple system.

The system is known to be very slow on deadline days. Please aim to submit the day before the deadline at the very latest. **IRC will not accept late applications or references under any circumstances.**

SmartSimple System

Host Organisation, Mentor: Select UCD as your Host Organisation to access mentor lists. Select mentor from the “mentor list”, not any other list. If they are not present on the “mentor list”, contact us through proposalsupport@ucd.ie: provide applicants name and email, mentors name, title, email, contact number and school/college to have them added. You should not add an academic mentor to your application without their prior approval.

Budget: There is no budget breakdown required for this application.

Mentor Support: It is your responsibility to ensure that your mentor submits the reference. Without a mentor reference your application will be ineligible and will not progress to the evaluation phase.

****Eligibility Quiz:** The Mentor name and email address you enter in the eligibility quiz must be the same as the mentor selected in the application. Applications with a discrepancy in the name of the academic mentor detailed in the 'Eligibility Quiz' will be deemed ineligible**

*****It is your responsibility to select your mentor from the **Mentor list**. Your mentor may be on both the Mentor and doctoral Supervisor lists. If you select from the wrong list, your application will be deemed ineligible. *****

Referee Support: You are no longer required to nominate two referees with this application.

PLEASE Note: It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that their academic mentor completes their reference form through the online system by the relevant deadline (see 2025 [Call Guide](#)) Any application which does not have all the required participant forms, i.e. an academic mentor form, completed in full and submitted via the online system by the relevant deadline will be deemed ineligible. These forms will not be accepted by email, in hardcopy or by any other means.

Please generate a PDF version of your application and check it thoroughly before submission.

General Tips on the proposal

Familiarize yourself with IRC documents (application form, terms and conditions, guide to applicants etc.) before you begin.

- Be clear, concise, use consistent terminology.
- Write for a broad scientific audience.
- Grab the assessor's attention present key information as soon as possible and stress the innovativeness of the work.
- Have clearly identifiable aims and objectives.
- Demonstrate feasible projects.

When drafting your application, you should:

- Determine your eligibility.
- Write with the assessment criteria and IRC's goals (see Guide for Applicants) in mind. The IRC will assess quality and impact of research using DORA principles.
- Keep in mind that evaluators can only assess what is written in the application and they will not have time to read between the lines to figure out what you are trying to say or do.
- Develop a narrative and edit your application. This part of the process is time consuming, and you should produce several drafts.
- Ensure that you stay within the word counts. Make sure every sentence is relevant to the question asked. Be aware of the overall structure of the application form when preparing individual sections. Avoid unnecessary overlap but be aware that some repetition may be required to answer each section fully.
- Ask multiple people to read through your application. If possible, include a specialist, non-specialist and someone who can edit/proof-read.
- Plan to submit in advance of the deadline as the system will be heavily subscribed on the final day.

Remember:

- **Work with your mentor to develop your research ideas and proposal**
- Past successful applicants may be willing to help or make their applications available.

Eligibility Quiz

Before you are permitted to begin your application, the IRC requires that you affirm you meet each of the eligibility criteria. Additionally, you must enter your project title, abstract and your mentor's name and email address. **If you make a mistake here, you will not be able to continue!**

Academic Qualifications: Other Education (300 words max)

The IRC states: Please include any additional information relevant to your academic background (e.g. training courses, please provide name, location and dates etc.).

UCD Research offers the following tips:

- Include details about any workshops/skills training programmes you attended during your doctoral research.
- Include details about any Postgraduate- credit modules you completed during your doctoral research.

Academic Qualifications: Research Achievements (500 words max)

The IRC states: Please describe your research achievements since beginning a career as a researcher (including PhD and post-PhD, if applicable). Please bear in mind this could be read by non-specialists, as well as peers, and should be written to communicate with them effectively.

UCD Research offers the following tips:

- Demonstrate your excellence in the research area, describe research findings
- Highlight any high impact publications in prestigious journals.
- Highlight any international recognition that you have received, e.g. invited lectures, associated editorships etc.
- Outline any honours or awards you have received.
- Consider including research funding obtained, student supervisory experience.
- Detail any previous inter-sectoral and or international mobility or experience.
- Highlight how you have demonstrated a tendency towards creative thinking and leadership
- Highlight any experience in giving presentations to a non-scientific audience.
- Include a summary of your publications, detailing the total number of publications, number of senior author publications, and citations. You are not required to give a list of publications here. This can be added later in the application.
- To see anonymised samples of research achievement sections from successful applications, please refer to the **UCD Pen Picture IRC GOI PG&PD** document.

Proposed Research

Project Title

- Ensure the title accurately describes the subject you are writing about
- Use a title which will catch the reader's attention – highlight the uniqueness/innovativeness of your project

Keywords describing proposed research

- Use key words effectively to allow the IRC to locate the most appropriate assessors for your application. The keywords should drill down to your specific research area.

- Do not use keywords only loosely related to your project
- See further instructions on how to select keywords in our [supporting document](#) available on the [UCD Research Portal](#).

Lay abstract (300 words max)

IRC states: provide a lay abstract for your proposed research. This will be used to inform a non-specialist audience

- Define your research area.
- Clearly state your hypothesis/overarching aim of your research.
- Emphasise the uniqueness/innovativeness of your project.
- Briefly state how you are going to go about conducting the research.
- Include a sentence on the reach, impact and outcomes.

Details of your proposed research (750 words)

This should be written by the applicant after consulting with the proposed Mentor(s)

The IRC states: Description to include, for example, aims, objectives and central research questions.

- Define your research area.
- State your aims/objectives comprehensively and clearly (generally 3-5). Provide these as a bullet-point list at the start of the section
- Highlight the uniqueness/innovativeness of your project.

Research design and methodologies (750 words max)

The IRC states: these should be described in sufficient detail to demonstrate your thorough understanding of the research topic.

- Seek advice from your Mentor.
- Describe the research methodological approach that you are going to take to undertake this research project.
- Be comprehensive - outline a methodology for all of your objectives however brief.
- Detail the Study design – sampling strategy, justification of sample size, survey techniques, resources to be accessed, statistical analysis etc.
- Detail the interactions between individual sub-projects.
- Detail the feasibility of the research approach.
- Seek advice and input from an experienced research design and statistics expert.
- Describe any novel technology/methodology and or novel applications of current technology/methodology.

Research schedule (500 words)

The IRC states: to include (a) milestones and deliverables for completion of the proposed fellowship, (b) risks that might endanger reaching these deliverables and (c) the contingency plans to be put in place in order to mitigate these risks.

- Break the project down into specific work packages, if appropriate, with specific milestones and deliverables, including a separate work package on Project Management.
- If work packages do not make sense in your area, you can consider using breakdown by years/quarters etc.

- Detail the timetable for completing each work package / experiment – be realistic!
- Schedule each work package, by outlining how long each one will take, when it will be carried out within your Fellowship period, in what location (if relevant) and if certain work packages can run simultaneously. Save space here by offering an overview of the timetable in this section and including a more detailed breakdown of the timeframe on the Gantt chart requested (example Gantt on page 8).
- Allow time for the acquisition of required skills, etc.
- Include the planned schedule of meetings between yourself and your Mentor.
- Outline the steps that you will take to ensure that the project adheres to the project plan and timetable.
- Detail the risk associated with your proposed approach and outline a possible contingency plan or alternative approach, should this be required.
- See UCD's [‘Project Management’](#) document for additional tips to write this section.

Description of the relationship of the project to existing research in this area (750 words)

The IRC states: Suggest how the project will make a new contribution to knowledge. Do not provide bibliographical lists or footnotes here. A few relevant references should be cited, however. Please provide DOI-IDs if applicable.

UCD Research offers the following tips:

- Outline the originality of the proposed research in terms of hypotheses/research questions addressed, novel technology/methodology and/or novel applications of current technology/methodology.
- What are the potential outcomes and how do they relate to state-of-the-art in the research area?
- Outline the potential for the creation of new knowledge or advancement of knowledge. Detail evidence of its benefit to the area covered by the research.
- What impact will they have on advancing the research subject area?
- Particularly mention if this research area has been relatively understudied.
- Describe the Interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral aspects, where relevant.

Description of any specialist knowledge/data/access to specialist equipment/facilities required to undertake the project (500 words)

The IRC states: (e.g. language competence, technical skills, use of specialist software, etc.). Describe plans for acquiring this knowledge/data if it is not already in place. Describe how data required for this project will be accessed.

UCD Research offers the following tips:

- Detail the unique skills and expertise that you possess that will enable you to undertake the project.
- Describe any training you need in order to complete the project and develop your career.
- Detail the structured training courses provided in UCD and specify which ones you will undertake. See [UCD People and Organisation Development](#) and [UCD Research Skills and Career Development](#) Ensure that you relate these back to your Description of Work and Methodology sections.
- Detail where any pre-existing data is currently located, and how you will request and gain access to this data.

- Specify the equipment and facilities that will be available to you in UCD and any agreements that might be in place for the use/allocation of time to these resources. Most [School](#) websites will contain more specific information of these facilities/equipment.
- If you will develop new research skills (new technique/method for example), be specific about who/when will train you (your mentor/postdoc in the lab/collaborators elsewhere)
- Detail the [IT Resources](#) and [Library](#) resources and collections that are available.

The IRC requires that you upload a GANTT chart at this point to illustrate the project timelines, milestones & deliverables. The system will only accept PDF files for upload.

- Gantt Chart is a visual representation of the schedule you already provided. The chart must match the text.
- Keep in mind that the applications may not be printed in colour.
- Planned conferences, presentations, publications, training activities etc should all be present in Gantt chart

Example Gantt chart:

MONTH	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Work Package 1																								
<i>Deliverables & Milestones</i>																								
<i>Training</i>																								
<i>Public Engagement/Dissemination</i>																								
Work Package 2																								
<i>Deliverables & Milestones</i>																								
<i>Training</i>																								
<i>Public Engagement/Dissemination</i>																								
Work Package 3																								
<i>Deliverables & Milestones</i>																								
<i>Training</i>																								
<i>Public Engagement/Dissemination</i>																								
Work Package 4																								
<i>Deliverables & Milestones</i>																								
<i>Training</i>																								
<i>Public Engagement/Dissemination</i>																								

There are lots of templates online, but it does not need to be complicated. You can simply draw a table in word or use excel. The units of time can be 3 months instead of single months.

Dissemination and knowledge exchange (500 words)

IRC states: including, but not limited to, publications, conference papers, poster presentations, reports and outreach activities

UCD Research offers the following tips:

- Register an ORCID ID to connect your research activities.
- Outline the target audiences, dissemination media and publicity involved.
- Examples of audiences: Relevant user groups (patients, consumers, farmers etc), scientific community, government (local authorities, policymakers, decision-makers), professionals and practitioners, community groups, software developers, SMEs, media, general public

- Examples of dissemination channels: peer review publications, scientific conference papers and presentations, reports, public lectures, workshops, seminars, symposia, summer schools, consultation groups, focus groups, attendance at exhibitions/fairs, digital (websites, blogs, website discussion forums, wiki-style contributions, social networking sites, Facebook, Twitter, Soundcloud, YouTube), media.
- Make publication and data (where appropriate) available through an Open Access repository / archive.
- Refer to the [UCD supports on research impact](#).
- Dissemination to the scientific community might involve publications, conferences, poster presentations, reports, etc.
- Outreach activities might utilise the press, broadcast media, internet etc.
- Describe the approach to be taken regarding any Intellectual Property that may arise. The Knowledge Transfer Office for UCD, within UCD Research & Innovation, assists with the management/exploitation of any intellectual property arising.
- For more info see our document on [Dissemination and Communication](#).

Justification and demonstration of significant development (500 words)

For the one-year fellowship, it is only necessary to demonstrate the progression of the project from your doctoral research.

For the two-year fellowship, it is important to emphasise the way in which your proposal differs from your doctoral research. You should:

- Outline the originality of the proposed research and highlight any clear departures from your doctoral project – new focus, methodological approaches etc.
- Outline the potential for the creation of new or advancement of knowledge.

Please provide details of any proposed research trips of more than 4 weeks duration which you believe will be necessary (300 words)

UCD Research offers the following tips:

Research trips can greatly enhance your research project and training and career develop. Include any planned trips to other HEIs, labs, archives, libraries, etc. as appropriate. Relate this back to specialist knowledge section and project schedule section.

Please outline your reasons for choosing the proposed Higher Education Institution (400 words)

UCD Research offers the following tips:

- This is your opportunity to demonstrate the excellence of your proposed research environment and how this environment will impact on your research and career development – something which is central to a successful application.
- Detail how does the project fit with existing research in your school/college? Refer to [UCD Research & Innovation website](#) (breakdown by college/school). You should include details of any major [programmes/centres/institutes that](#) are relevant to your research project. Consider how your research aligns with [UCD's Strategic Research Priorities](#). This will highlight to the evaluators that there is a critical mass of researchers already located within UCD in your research area, that your proposed research project will be located within one of these Centres and will benefit from the knowledge and experience already available here.
- How does the project fit into the work carried out in your school/college? You should include details of any that are relevant to your research project. This will highlight to the evaluators that there is a critical mass of researchers already located within UCD in your research area,

that your proposed research project will be located within one of these Centres and will benefit from the knowledge and experience already available here. [UCD Description](#) – a general description of UCD, also including UCD’s track record in research funding. may a

- See the [UCD Services](#) for details of the many institutional support units that are available in UCD to assist with the implementation and management of the grant. This section should include details of the support units and how they will be able to assist with the management of your research project. For example, UCD HR - assistance with obtaining visas; Research Ethics Office – Ethical approval; UCD Research & Innovation – Intellectual Property protection and exploitation; IT Services – IT resources and support; CSTA-R provision of statistical support.
- [UCD Research Skills & Career Development](#) provides Post-doctoral Researchers with access to training and development opportunities across four core competency areas.

Please outline your reasons for choosing the proposed academic mentor (400 words)

The IRC states: This should be written by the applicant after consulting with the proposed Mentor(s) and Host Organisation(s)

- Outline a summary of the research expertise and experience of your Mentor, their research group and School/Centre where located. Detail a list of research projects, including the amount of funding, number and impact of publications and other research outputs in the proposed research area. You need to provide clear, hard evidence of the expertise of your Mentor.
- Briefly list the major relevant publications of your Mentor.
- Include your Mentor’s record in supervising postdoctoral fellows (projects/funded posts).
- Name the collaborators who are associated with your Mentor, especially if they are leaders in the research field.
- Outline the current compliment of Post Docs in the research group.
- Outline how you and your Mentor complement each other, in your research experience and knowledge.
- Consider asking leaders in the field to act as informal advisors/consultants for your project. Include details of this arrangement if they agree.
- How will they advance the broadening of your skill set and career prospects?
- Why is your chosen Mentor particularly suited to you?

Description of modifications made to this proposal if the proposal has been previously submitted but was unsuccessful under an Irish Research Council scheme. (400 words)

- Reflect on feedback you received on your last application to IRC.
- If you accept the feedback as accurate and helpful to further your research outline how you have incorporated this into the current version of the proposal.
- NB – assessors do not have access to your previous application.

Career Training and Development Plan (Max. 2 pages)

The IRC states: The Irish Research Council places great importance on the education and skills development of early-stage researchers. Successful researchers demonstrate strategic thinking not only in research project design, but also in career planning and professional development. On that basis, every applicant is required to upload a Career Training and Development Plan as part of the application.

UCD Research offers the following tips:

- This is an opportunity to demonstrate the excellent and broad set of skills you will acquire during your research and the subsequent development of your career prospects.
- Detail the skills to be acquired and developed – referring back to the ‘Description of Specialist Knowledge’ section
- Provide a clear training plan that accounts for all the skills that need to be developed and describe the elements to be undertaken. These links will prove useful:
 - [Research and Professional Development Planning](#) are available from the UCD [Research Skills and Career Development](#) centre.
 - [Research Integrity Training](#) is an online course available to UCD staff.
 - [The Vitae Career Framework for Researcher Development \(CFRD\)](#) is also helpful to identify skills that you may want to develop.
- The [UCD Careers Network](#) have good resources on career development.
- Describe how the training undertaken will benefit you.
- How will undertaking the postdoctoral fellowship enhance your long-term career prospects?
 - Will you gain teaching/tutorial experience? Will you gain supervisory experience (e.g. student projects, summer projects)? Note that the total of hours allowed for these activities are restricted by the IRC Terms and Conditions.
 - Will the project provide opportunities to collaborate with researchers outside UCD?
 - How will the fellowship help you expand your networks and enhance career prospects?
 - If you are coming from outside Ireland, does this scholarship represent an international mobility for you?
- Will skills developed be transferable to a career outside academia (project management, leadership, outreach, intersectoral, intercultural)?
 - Will the project give you an insight into the commercial aspects of research?
 - Outline any industry involvement in the project or Industrial collaborators of the research group / Supervisor if relevant.
 - Will completing the degree enhance your inter-sectoral mobility? ‘Intersectoral mobility’, means being mobile to a sector outside academia. This not only relates to private industry, but also to the private not-for-profit sector as well as the public and government sectors. You may want to read the European Commission [‘Intersectoral mobility and knowledge transfer’](#) report.

Personal Statement (500 words)

The IRC states: Please highlight any additional information that has not been provided elsewhere in the application, e.g.:

- Why have you proposed this research topic?
- Why are you particularly suited to this topic (fellowship)?
- Which of your attributes, experience and achievements to date demonstrate your capability to successfully implement the fellowship?

UCD Research offers these additional tips:

- This is your opportunity to introduce yourself to the assessors and to demonstrate that you, personally, fulfil the evaluation criteria, have given due consideration to your research topic and career development and are committed to your research.
- Offer your personal perspective on why you chose the research topic and why you chose to pursue a research degree.

- Outline your future aspirations and how the research proposed and the skills developed will help you achieve your goals.
- Include a short professional biography (including research interests, major outcomes and impacts, etc.)
- Summarise how your unique blend of skills and experience make you the ideal candidate to carry out this research project and demonstrates your ability to reach and re-enforce a position of professional maturity in research.
- Describe the activities that demonstrate your initiative, independent thinking, project management skills and leadership. Describe the potential that you have for increasing and reinforcing these qualities in carrying out this project.
- Outline any honours or awards you have received.
- If relevant, demonstrate your international mobility.

Ethical Statement (500 words)

- Liaise with your Mentor in the completion of this section.
- Research Ethics applies to all researchers who conduct research that involves human and animal subjects. Ethics can be relevant when conducting archival work.
- See [UCD Research Ethics Office](#) website for policies and guidelines.
- Demonstrate to the assessors that you and your Mentor have scrutinized your research project and are mindful of any and all ethical issues that exist now or may exist as the research develops.
- Do not write N/A in this section. If you consider Ethics not to be relevant to your proposed project, provide your rationale for this decision.
- See our supporting document on '[How to write the Ethics section](#)' on the [UCD Research Portal](#).

Sex/Gender Dimension (500 words)

- Liaise closely with your Mentor in the completion of this section.
- Discuss the biological sex and/or gender dimension of your proposal.
- Read IRC [Call Document](#) P. 11 for guidance.
- Your proposal does not have to have a biological sex and/or gender dimension, but you need to demonstrate that you have considered whether it exists or not.
- See [Gender in EU-funded research Toolkit and Training](#). This link provides discipline specific advice and suggested reading lists on this topic. Refer to the [European Commission page on Gender Equality](#) for statistics on gender equality in science.
- See our supporting document on '[Sex/Gender Dimension](#)' for further information and tips.

Data Management Plan (DMP) (300 words)

The IRC states: Please provide a data management plan which addresses the following:

- How will data be exploited and/or shared/made accessible for verification and reuse?
- How data will be curated and preserved?
- If applicable, how do you plan to make data FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable)
- If data cannot be made available, why?

UCD Research offers the following tips:

The following practical resources will help:

- [UCD Library](#) has a data management section which can assist you in preparing your plan. [Data Management Checklist](#) – not all sections will be relevant to every project. Use those that are relevant to you and this will help with the structure.
- Sample 2-page DMPs are available at https://dmponline.dcc.ac.uk/public_plans.
- Some longer DMPs (including Social Sciences & Humanities examples), which will provide a good idea of the type of content required here, are available through the links at <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/data-management-plans/guidance-examples/>.

UCD's Final Checklist

<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you worked collaboratively with your mentor to develop the application? Have you ensured their name is entered as registered on the IRC website?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you provided them with a draft of your proposal, your CV, a list of your achievements? Have you registered their details correctly?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you completed all sections of the application in full?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you stayed within the word limits?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you copied all the information into the on-line system carefully?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you demonstrated clearly that your proposal fulfils the evaluation criteria?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you sent your draft application to be read by someone else not involved in the process?