

Acting as an Assessor for the IRCSET Postdoctoral Fellowships Scheme – what’s involved?

Eligibility to Act as an Assessor

To avoid Conflicts of Interest, an Assessor for the Postdoctoral Fellowships Scheme may only be an individual who is based at an organisation *outside of the Republic of Ireland*. An individual who is based at an organisation *within the Republic of Ireland* **cannot** act as Assessor for this Scheme.

Background

Since 2001, the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology (IRCSET) has offered Postdoctoral Fellowships to talented early-career researchers wishing to pursue a programme of postdoctoral research. Presently, the Council offers two types of Fellowships:

INSPIRE: IRCSET-Marie Curie International Mobility Fellowships in Science Engineering and Technology

- Fellowships consisting of an 18 month period at a host laboratory outside of Ireland, followed by a 12-month reintegration period at an Irish host laboratory
- Co-funded by the European Commission FP7 Marie Curie Actions
- Applicants must either hold a PhD, or have four years of equivalent full-time research experience.
- They must be within 5 “academic years” from the award of PhD or equivalent and must currently be resident in Ireland.

EMPOWER: Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellowships in Science, Engineering and Technology

- 2-year Fellowships based at an Irish host laboratory
- Applicants must either hold a PhD or be studying for one
- They must be within 3 “academic years” from the award of PhD
- No Irish-residency requirements

Timescale

Both Fellowships are offered via an annual Call, which opens in October each year. The applications and assessments for both Fellowship types are carried out in parallel.

	Months	Time period
Call accepts applications	Oct/Nov	7 weeks
Assessment Stage 1 – online remote assessment	Nov/Dec/Jan	12 weeks
Assessment Stage 1 – assessment panel meetings	Jan/Feb	5 weeks
Results announced	Mar	1 week
Overall time from Call open to announcement of	25 weeks	

results		
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Assessment Panels

For the purposes of the assessment, applications are divided into 8 disciplinary assessment panels:

- Biological Sciences A
- Biological Sciences B
- Chemistry
- Computer Science
- Earth and Environmental Sciences
- Engineering
- Mathematics
- Physics

You will be asked to participate in one assessment panel only.

Assessment Stage 1 – Online Remote Assessment

As an assessor you are provided with a login to the Online Application System (OLS), where the applications you have been assigned will be waiting for you. You will receive no more than 15 applications to assess (the average amount assigned per assessor is 10). Each application is read and assessed by at least two assessors from its respective panel.

Each application contains brief details of the applicant's educational background, work experience, research outputs, and supporting statements from two referees and the proposed research mentor for the fellowship. In addition, each application contains a 2-page description of the proposed research project, a 1-page research achievement statement and a 1-page Training and Career Development Plan. Each application will be approximately 10 pages long, and we estimate that each assessment will take about 1 hour to complete.

You are asked to complete an Assessors Form for each application using the Online Application System, and are invited to provide a score for each application. After completion of all sections of the Form, the Assessors Forms will be collated through the Online Application System. Your completed assessment forms allow IRCSET to provide detailed and comprehensive feedback to all applicants; therefore the assessment comments must provide constructive criticism. All the contents – except your name –

will be available to the applicant after the call results have been announced. You will have approximately 3 weeks to complete all of your assigned assessments.

To assist you, prior to the start of stage 1 of the assessment process, IRCSET will provide you with a 'Guideline for Assessors' document, containing information about IRCSET, about the funding scheme and about the assessment criteria.

Assessment Stage 2 – Assessment Panel Meetings

After the online remote evaluations have taken place, 8 assessment panel meetings will be convened – one for each discipline. If you agree to participate in stage 1, you may be invited to participate in the panel meeting for your discipline. The panel meetings are held in Dublin, and generally last 1 to 2 days, depending on the number of applications to be discussed. You only attend the panel meeting for your discipline; there is no overall meeting of all assessors. A chairperson is appointed for each panel meeting from among the assessors, usually someone who has attended an IRCSET panel meeting before and has performed his/her duties exceptionally well. The IRCSET Scientific Officer sits in on the meeting, but does not participate, other than to take notes of the assessor discussion and act as rapporteur.

During the panel meeting, all applications received within your discipline will be reviewed and discussed in further detail. You will be asked to provide your opinion on those applications that you have assessed and also to contribute to the debate about all applications received. The overall result required from the meeting is a ranking list for these applications.

Remuneration

For participation in Assessment Stage 1 (remote online assessment), IRCSET will pay a Provisional Education Support Fee, based on the number of completed assessments:

- 1-5 assessments = €250
- 6-10 assessments = €400
- 11-15 assessments = €560

For participation in Assessment Stage 2 (assessment panel meeting), IRCSET will pay all reasonable expenses relating to attendance at the panel meeting in Dublin, including accommodation, travel and food. In addition, a Provisional Education Support Fee of €250 per day is offered for your attendance.

Conflicts of Interest Policy

The Council's Rules on Conflicts of Interest are:

Actual conflicts of interest:

The Assessor must not be:

- involved in the preparation of an application that has been submitted

- stand to benefit directly should the application be funded (e.g. a potential scientist in charge of a application)
- have a close relationship with any person representing a host organisation
- have a close relationship with the applicant

If any of these statements hold true, the Assessor will be disqualified from reviewing this application.

Potential conflicts of interest:

The Assessor must not be:

- involved in a contract or research collaboration with a host organisation
- working at the same host institution as in the application but in a different research group

If any of these statements hold true, the Assessor will be disqualified from reviewing this application and must excuse his/her self from the room when the application in question is discussed at the assessment committee meeting.

Assessors will be informed of the Conflicts of Interest Policy in the following ways:

- In the 'Guidelines for Assessors' document
- Requirement to sign the 'Declaration by Assessor' at the end of the Assessment form on the OLS (checkbox): "I declare that to my knowledge I do not have any connection with the proposal, or any interest in its success or otherwise that could influence my impartiality. I will not disclose any information concerning this proposal or any matter relating to it".
- At the beginning of the assessment panel meetings