

Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Programme 2020

The Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Programme is an established national initiative, funded by the Department of Education and Skills and managed by the Council.

The Council is the largest provider of individual postgraduate scholarships in Ireland. Including awards made in collaboration with enterprise ([Enterprise Partnership Scheme](#); [Employment-Based Postgraduate Programme](#)), the Council typically makes an investment in 280 new postgraduate scholarships every year.

In 2018, the Council invested in a total of 1,193 postgraduate scholars, with over 5,000 individual scholarships for excellent research awarded to date.

An established, national initiative

The Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Programme is unique in the Irish research landscape and complements other channels for funded postgraduate education. Among its features are:

- individual, prestigious awards for excellent research in the name of the applicant;
- an objective selection process using international, independent expert peer review;
- funding across all disciplines, from archaeology to zoology;
- with the exception of those funded by our strategic funding partners, awards for bottom-up, non-directed research.

The programme provides outstanding scholars with the opportunity to direct their own research project at the early-career stage, working with a supervisor, in their chosen area of interest.

Pioneering proposals addressing new and emerging fields of research or those introducing creative, innovative approaches are welcomed. Proposals of an interdisciplinary nature are also encouraged as it is recognised that advancing fundamental understanding is achieved by integrating information, techniques, tools and perspectives from two or more disciplines.

Strategic funding partners

The Council makes an investment in 200 new postgraduate scholars under the Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Programme each year. These awards are made equally across the disciplines of science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) and arts, humanities and social science (AHSS).

In addition, the Council offers a number of individual scholarships in partnership with government departments or agencies. These partnerships promote the development of new research talent in areas linked with the missions of these departments and agencies.



The Council is pleased to be working with the following strategic funding partners for the 2020 programme:

- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Irish Aid Division);
- Environmental Protection Agency;

Further information on the focus of the partner-funded scholarships is provided within the 2020 call documentation.

Highly competitive

The Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarships Programme is highly competitive, with an average success rate of 18% over the last five years. The programme is globally recognised and attracts many applications from international students who wish to undertake excellent research in the Irish higher education and research system. The programme has enjoyed excellent gender balance across both STEM and AHSS streams.

Successful applicants who become scholars under the programme are recognised as demonstrating world-class potential as future research leaders.

Springboard to future research and career success

Alumni of the Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Programme go on to pursue successful careers in a diverse range of research endeavours. Significant numbers of alumni progress to postdoctoral roles and ultimately academic positions in research-performing institutions, both in Ireland and abroad. Success in national and international research funding opportunities is synonymous with Council alumni.

In 2016, an analysis conducted by the Council found that 77% of European Research Council Starting Grant awardees in Ireland under Horizon 2020 were Council alumni or supervisors. For the same period, 67% of all European Research Council awardees in Ireland were Council alumni or supervisors.

In addition, alumni of the programme are typically successful in securing major awards from national funders such as Science Foundation Ireland, the Health Research Board and indeed the Council itself as part of their career development.

The Council's early-career alumni pursue careers both inside and outside academia. The programme cultivates research talent for enterprise, public policy, the public sector and civil society, reflecting the needs for expertise and high-level skills across the economy, society and culture.

The Council encourages public engagement by its funded researchers and supports this through a variety of mechanisms, including the #LoveIrishResearch campaign and specific initiatives such as its partnership with RTÉ Brainstorm.



Future proofing Ireland's needs for high-level knowledge and skills

The Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Programme supports the achievement of a number of public policy objectives for research and innovation. The core objective of [Innovation 2020](#), Ireland's strategy for science, technology, research and development, is to become a global innovation leader.

Ireland's higher education and research system is key to achieving the above goal by promoting and delivering a sustainable and prosperous future for the country. A strong, broadly-balanced ecosystem is best placed to successfully contribute to addressing complex societal challenges, both national and global. Such challenges increasingly require an interdisciplinary approach, necessitating the need for investment in diverse research ideas and talent over the long-term.

Supporting the development of individual researchers across the spectrum of disciplines and fields is essential to a high-performing education system. The Council is doing this by:

- developing the academic talent needed for Irish higher education institutions to compete at the highest level;
- retaining our brightest minds and attracting exceptional early-career researchers to Ireland;
- future-proofing Ireland's international reputation and laying the foundation for future success in European research funding; and
- inspiring future research activity at the frontiers of knowledge.

The skills developed by the Council's scholars — intellectual curiosity, self-directed working, resilience in the face of inevitable setbacks — are highly prized by employers while research outputs in the form of invention and innovation support Ireland as a strong competitor for investment.

