

HRB Post-doctoral Internship Programme 2021-2022 – Round 2

Call for Applications

Key Dates & Times	
Application Opening Date	01 April 2022
Application Closing Date	22 April 2022 @ 13.00

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1 Overview

The HRB Post-doctoral Internship Programme aims to provide early career researchers with a recent PhD or MSc the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of working in a state agency, alongside experienced research management professionals. The internship will run for 24 months.

Successful applicants to this Programme, referred to as post-doctoral interns, will be awarded a 'non-research grant'. Post-doctoral Interns will be the grant holders of these grants and will be employees of the Host Institution. Their regular place of work will be at the HRB. To apply to this Programme applicants must have the support of a HRB approved Host Institution (HI) and an institutional sponsor. The sponsor must be an independent investigator at the HI and must be authorised to set up and manage grants (acting as Principal Investigator). The Host Institution will administer the award.

The Internship award will support the salary of the post-doctoral interns and an overheads contribution to the HI.

2 Introduction

The Health Research Board (HRB) is a statutory agency under the aegis of the Department of Health. As the lead agency in Ireland responsible for supporting and funding health research, generating health information and promoting the use of evidence in policy and practice, we are motivated and inspired by our vision – for better health through excellent research, data and evidence. The Health Research Board's (HRB) mission is to support research that improves people's health, promotes evidence-informed care and creates solutions to societal challenges. An overview of the HRB's objectives and activities may be found in *The HRB Strategy 2021-2025, Health research - making an impact*, (<https://www.hrb.ie/strategy-2025/>).

We implement this through these core areas:

- **Research Funding:** We fund key infrastructure, excellent researchers from clinical and academic disciplines and inspiring projects across health and social sciences.
- **Information Systems:** We manage four national health information systems that provide high-quality, timely and relevant data for policy, service planning and research in the areas of disability, mental health and alcohol and other drugs.
- **Evidence Generation:** We promote and support evidence synthesis and knowledge translation activities, in order to assist policymakers, service planners and providers in making evidence-based decisions.
- **Regulated and Ethical Framework:** The HRB hosts the Secretariat for the Health Research Declaration Committee (HRCDC)¹ and the National Office for Research Ethics Committees (NREC)², which support and enable health research within a regulated and ethical framework.

Full details of our work and responsibilities may be found on our website (<http://www.hrb.ie>).

¹ www.hrcdc.ie

² www.nrecoffice.ie

One of the key strategic actions of the HRB strategy is to build the capacity of academic researchers and health and social care practitioners to respond to current and emerging health research needs. This includes building capacity in health research practice and management in the areas covered by the different functions of the HRB, and this aim is supported by the HRB Post-doctoral Internship Programme.

Post-doctoral academic and health and care practitioners wishing to propose a research project in an academic or healthcare-based environment are advised to refer to the Applying Research into Policy and Practice Postdoctoral Internships (ARPP)³ and Clinician Scientist Postdoctoral Internships (CSF)⁴, respectively.

3 Key changes

- Applicants will have the opportunity to select their preferred rotations in the cover letter and we will accommodate them as far as practical, guaranteeing at least one of the two preferred rotations.
- The following eligibility criterion has been removed
Applicants must have been working in Ireland for 12 months prior to the deadline for applications.
- There are two options as starting date of the internship, 06 June or early September 2022.

4 Aim

The aim of the HRB Post-doctoral Internship Programme is to provide researchers with a PhD or MSc the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of working in a state agency, alongside experienced research management professionals. It also creates the opportunity for networking with a range of stakeholders.

The Programme is targeted to early-stage researchers with a higher degree in health sciences, social care or social sciences in a health-related area who are interested in pursuing a career in areas such as health analytics, research coordination and research management, health policy, public administration, or regulated and ethical frameworks. The Programme will also benefit individuals who are thinking about making a transition from academia into public administration or the private sector as it will provide them with a broad range of knowledge and skills.

5 Eligibility Criteria and Suitability for Applicants

Applicants must:

³ <https://www.hrb.ie/funding/funding-schemes/all-funding-schemes/grant/hrb-postdoctoral-internships-applying-research-into-policy-and-practice-arpp-2020-next-call-exp/>

⁴ <https://www.hrb.ie/funding/funding-schemes/all-funding-schemes/grant/clinician-scientist-postdoctoral-internships-csf-2020-next-call-expected-q1-2022/>

- have a PhD or MSc by the deadline for applications of the Post-doctoral Internship Programme (22 April 2022).

Or

- If not yet graduated for the higher degree, must have successfully conducted their viva voce examination by the start of the internship programme (07 June or early September 2022).

Note: Previous HRB Post-doctoral Interns are not eligible to apply.

Applicants should have a keen interest in health research and ideally will be familiar with the HRB and its core functions. Applicants should have the following skills and attributes:

- Is flexible and willing to adapt, positively contributing to the implementation of change
- Quickly gets up to speed in a complex situation, rapidly absorbing all relevant information/data (written and oral)
- Assumes personal responsibility for and delivers on agreed objectives/ goals
- Communicates in a fluent, logical, clear and convincing manner verbally and in writing
- Demonstrates high levels of initiative, taking ownership for projects and demonstrating self-sufficiency.

Applicants must be available to take up the internship from 07 June or early September 2022.

6 Details of the Internship Programme

The HRB will provide up to four internships awards in this round and the Programme will run for two years. **The award will be made as a 'non-research grant' to the chosen Host Institution**, who will administer the grant.

The Post-doctoral Intern will be the grant holder of the award and will have the title of HRB Post-doctoral Intern. They will be employees of their Host Institution.

The HRB Post-doctoral Interns **will rotate between two out of three HRB business areas** for a 12-month period each:

1. the Research Strategy and Funding Directorate;
2. the Health Information and Evidence Directorate;
3. the Secretariat for the HRCDC⁵ and the National Office for Research Ethics Committees⁶.

The applicants will have an opportunity to provide their preference on the rotations of their interest and the HRB will accommodate at least one of those preferences.

⁵ <https://hrcdc.ie/>

⁶ <http://www.nrecoffice.ie>

In each business area interns will report to a senior manager within a relevant Unit. Throughout the programme the interns will also spend 20% of their time working on communication-related projects with the HRB Communications Team.

During the programme the Post-doctoral Interns may be exposed to:

- The way funding decisions are made and the critical success factors involved in securing funding;
- How calls are developed and best practice peer review processes;
- Factors involved in grant management, monitoring and evaluation;
- The research governance and policy environment in which national and international research operates;
- How health information is collected, collated and analysed;
- The process for designing and conducting evidence synthesis and reviews;
- How evidence can be effectively used to inform policy and drive the development of new and existing services;
- How decisions are made by the Research Consent Declaration Committee;
- How research ethics opinions are delivered by the National Research Ethics Committees (NRECs).

Roles and Responsibilities of the Postdoctoral Interns

Within the **Research Strategy and Funding Directorate** Interns will work across a range of activities including but not limited to:

- Assisting with the generation of call documents for research grant schemes and the management of applications on the HRB's GEMS system;
- Responding to requests for advice and guidance from the research community;
- Participating in the delivery of peer review processes and panel meetings, and providing feedback to applicants;
- Contributing to all post award management activities including contracting, payments, progress reports and interim reviews;
- Working with stakeholder communities such in clinical researchers or data infrastructures, knowledge users such as the Department of Health or the HSE, or the public, patients and carers;
- Contributing to development and refinement of grant-related processes, systems and policies;
- Data gathering, analysis and report writing;
- Liaising with other national and international agencies on joint funding arrangements and new initiatives.

Within the **Health Information and Evidence Directorate** Post-doctoral interns may work in the National Health Information Systems or HRB Evidence Centre. Interns will work across a range of activities including but not limited to:

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- Managing the day-to-day aspects of a national health information system (i.e. maintaining a service inventory, training data providers, data collection, data coding and entry, data querying and validation and applying data standards);
- Analysing large data sets using the statistical package SPSS and writing reports and peer review articles;
- Contributing to testing and updating national health information system protocols and data management mechanisms;
- Working with policymakers or service planners to clarify their evidence needs;
- Deciding the best systematic methods to answer the research question, and agreeing these with the policy maker or service planner;
- Synthesising the research or information to answer the policymakers' question;
- Presenting to and drafting an evidence review in a clear and concise manner for policymakers or service planners.

Within the **Secretariat for the HRCDC and the National Office for Research Ethics Committees**, interns will work with both teams across a range of activities including but not limited to:

- Gaining in-depth knowledge of the ethics committee reviews, the consent declaration decision-making process, Health Research Regulations, national ethics legislation and EU data protection and regulatory legislation;
- Conducting literature- and legislative-based searches as required to inform the work of the committees;
- Addressing queries from prospective applicants and the wider research community;
- Validating submitted applications and coordinating the preparation of agenda papers for committee meetings;
- Attending committee meetings and assist with minute-taking;
- Managing processes to track applications from submission to post-approval to ensure both legal and best-practice requirements complied with;
- Assisting with managing the content on the respective websites and drafting of the respective committees Annual Reports;
- Liaising with other bodies involved in the regulation of health research as required, including the Department of Health, the HPRA and Data Protection Commission.
- Assisting with education and outreach activities such as webinars and other information events to support and promote the work of the National Office and the Secretariat of the HRCDC.

Each rotation will also include **about 20 %** of the Postdoctoral interns' time to be spent with the HRB **Communications Team**. Strong communications skills are a central pillar in any career path. The ability to clearly communicate the outcomes of research can influence whether research is used to change policy or practice. Projects could include, but are not limited to:

- Supporting knowledge transfer, outreach and promotional activities;

- Co-ordinating events;
- Producing lay summaries of research projects for website or media material;
- Developing publications from writing content to design and layout to published product (with support of a design team);
- Organising and participating in sponsorship activities;
- Generating social media campaigns relating to a project.

Post-doctoral Interns will also develop key skills in teamwork, use of ICT systems, general administration and project management. In addition, they will get the opportunity to enhance their understanding of national and European research governance and policy issues in areas such as ethics, data management, public and patient involvement, research prioritisation and Open Research.

Training will be provided in house and externally at various times during the internship where the need and opportunity arises.

7 Host Institution and Institutional Sponsor

7.1 Host Institution

The Host Institution for the award must be on the HRB list of approved Host Institutions and be nominated by the Applicant. See <https://www.hrb.ie/funding/funding-schemes/before-you-apply/all-grant-policies/approval-of-host-institutions/> for a list of approved HRB Host Institutions and details of the HRB's host institution policy.

A Host Institution is a research-performing organisation that is approved by the HRB for the purpose of receiving and administering HRB grant funding and is responsible for compliance with all general and specific terms and conditions of awards.

A Host Institution must demonstrate their support for an application to the internship programme in the form of a signature from signatory approver at the research office and an Institutional Sponsor (see Appendix 2).

For successful applicants, **award will be issued to the Host Institution as a non-research grant** which provides the salary related costs for the post-doctoral intern and an overhead contribution to the Host Institution. All aspects of the Internship, including terms and conditions of employment of the intern, will be managed by the Host Institution. The Host Institution recognises that the normal place of work for the post-doctoral intern will be the HRB premises.

The Host institution will have responsibility for issuing a contract of employment to the Post-doctoral intern and will ensure that the intern is set up on payroll in a timely manner. Although this award is not a research grant, it should be set up in a similar manner to other HRB research grants.

Prospective applicants are advised to contact a Host Institution early in the process for guidance in obtaining the support for this application.

7.2 Institutional Sponsor

Each applicant must nominate an **Institutional Sponsor** for the internship programme on behalf of the Host Institution. This Sponsor should be an independent investigator, who will act as Principal Investigator solely for the purpose of set up and administration of the award. The Sponsor might be a current or previous supervisor or any other independent investigator in the Host Institution. Importantly, the Sponsor will provide administrative support to the applicant if the internship application is successful. By approving and signing the application (see Appendix 2 – Signature Form) the Sponsor agrees to fulfil the following:

- will be a contact for the applicant to ensure support at application stage;
- will ensure that the award is set up in a timely manner;
- will ensure that a staff hire request is generated for the Post-doctoral Intern;
- will ensure that a contract of employment is issued to the Post-doctoral Intern as per any staff on a grant;
- will provide support to the Post-doctoral Intern for any grant management issues (e.g. variations to the award contract) related to the award.

The Sponsor has no direct supervisory responsibility.

Prospective applicants are advised to identify a Sponsor early in the process for guidance and support during the application process.

8 Duration of Funding

Each award will have a **duration of 24 months**.

Allowable costs for an Internship Award, payable via the Host Institution, include:

- Salary and related costs (PRSI and Employer's pension contribution) at the appropriate point on the IUA's Researcher Salary Scale⁷ (Post-doctoral Researcher (PD1) Point 2 in year one and Point 3 in year two); and
- An overhead contribution (25% in accordance with HRB policy⁸ on use of research overheads for desk-based research).

9 Application process

Prior to applying for this internship programme, the applicant must:

- **Identify a Host Institution Sponsor**, who is an independent investigator, who will support the applicant for this application. Importantly, the Sponsor will provide administrative support to the applicant if the internship application is successful (see section 6.2). The Sponsor will act as Principal Investigator solely for the purpose of set up and administration of the award.

⁷ <https://www.iaa.ie/for-researchers/researcher-salary-scales-career-framework/>

⁸ <https://www.hrb.ie/funding/funding-schemes/before-you-apply/all-grant-policies/usage-of-research-overheads/>

- **Contact the research office** of the Host Institution that will host the award as they will be signing and approving the application to be submitted to the HRB.

To apply for a HRB Post-doctoral Internship, please submit:

1. a curriculum vitae
2. a cover letter, addressed to the HR Officer at the HRB.
3. a signature page form (Appendix 2): the application must have been reviewed and signed by the (1) **signatory approver at the research office** (or equivalent) and (2) **the Sponsor** in the Host Institution selected by the applicant before it is submitted to the HRB. Therefore, applicants should ensure that they give the signatory approvers sufficient time before the scheme closing date to review the application. Please note that many Host Institutions specify internal deadlines for this procedure.

Note: The CV and cover letter should emphasise relevant qualification, skills, current employment status, career plans and interests.

These documents should be submitted by email to internship@hrb.ie no later than **22 April 2022 at 13.00**.

Applications will be shortlisted by the HRB and applicants will be notified by 25 April 2022. Shortlisted candidates will be invited for interviews, which are anticipated to take place on 28 April 2022, virtually or at the HRB Office, depending on the COVID-19 government restrictions in place at that time.

10 Timelines

Key Dates and Times	
Call opens	01 April 2022
Call closes	22 April 2022 @ 13.00
Short listing for interview	25 April 2022
Interviews	28 April 2022
Outcome to candidates	04 May 2022
Start of pre-contract negotiation	04 May 2022
Contract signed by	01 June 2022
Start of Internship at HRB	07 June or early September 2022

11 Contact information

If you have any queries regarding the Postdoctoral Internship Programme please email **HRB Human resources** at internship@hrb.ie

*The HRB reserves the right to reject any application that does not meet the terms of this call.
The HRB's procedure for appealing funding decisions is available at
<http://www.hrb.ie/funding/funding-schemes/before-you-apply/relevant-policies/>.*

Appendix 1: Checklist

1. Cover Letter
2. Applicant CV
3. Signature Form: Must be signed by Vice President Research or equivalent person in Host Institution and the Host Institution Sponsor.

Appendix 2: Signature Form



HRB Post-Doctoral Internship Programme Application – Signature Form

Full name of applicant:

Signatures below confirm acceptance and agreement with HRB’s Terms and Conditions, that the Institution has read the guidelines, ensures the applicant meets the eligibility criteria, and is supportive of his/her application being considered for a HRB Post-doctoral Internship.

1. VP Research or equivalent person authorised to endorse research grant applications for the Host Institution:

I confirm that the host institution is willing to accept and administer the award, if successful.

Name (BLOCK CAPITALS):

Position/ Institution (BLOCK CAPITALS):

Signature:

Date:

Email address:

2. Host Institution Sponsor:

Name (BLOCK CAPITALS):

Signature:

Date:

Email address:

3. HRB Post-doctoral Internship Programme applicant:

Name (BLOCK CAPITALS):

Signature:

Date: