

Emerging Clinician Scientist Awards (ECSA) 2024

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

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1 General

1.1 How do I apply for the Emerging Clinician Scientist Awards for Health?

All applications must be made using the HRB online Grant E-Management System GEMS
<https://grants.hrb.ie>.

1.2 Have there been any changes to the last round of the ECSA scheme?

Please reference Section 3 “*Summary of Revisions for ECSA 2024*” in the ECSA 2024 Guidance Notes.

2 Eligibility of Lead Applicant

2.1 Can a Lead Applicant submit more than one application?

No, only one application per Lead Applicant will be considered in this round.

2.2 I am a Health and Social Care practitioner working in Northern Ireland. Can I apply?

No. This scheme is not open to HIs located in Northern Ireland.

2.3 I have just completed my PhD. Can I apply to this scheme?

There is no minimum amount of postdoctoral experience required for eligibility. However, some postdoctoral experience is required and Lead Applicants must demonstrate how they are consolidating and progressing their research skills and knowledge after their doctoral studies to demonstrate they are ready to transition to independent investigators; information on this will be requested in the application form.

For health and social care practitioners who have yet to gain postdoctoral research experience the HRB also offer the [HRB Postdoctoral Fellowships - Clinician Scientist Fellowships \(CSF\) scheme](#). It supports this cohort in consolidating and progressing their research knowledge, expertise, and skills. The next round of the scheme is expected to launch in 2024. Please consult with HRB staff if you are not sure which scheme best fits your research career stage.

2.4 I have considerable research experience but no PhD, am I eligible to apply?

Lead Applicants must have either a PhD or HRB PhD equivalency to be eligible to apply for an Emerging Clinician Scientist Award. Please see Section 6 of the ECSA 2024 Guidance Notes and <https://www.hrb.ie/funding/funding-schemes/before-you-apply/hrb-phd-equivalency> for further details.

2.5 I have completed my PhD before my medical (or other) degree. Is there any maximum limit of year from the PhD that would exclude me from applying?

No, there is no limit.

2.6 Is there a maximum number of years post clinical registration as eligibility criterion?

No, there is not.

2.7 I am currently working abroad. Can I apply to the scheme?

Yes, once you have the support from the Host Institution who will recognise you upon receipt of the HRB Award as independent investigator and member of the academic staff and will provide you with an employment contract for the duration of the award. Also, you must demonstrate that you have made arrangements or are in the process of making arrangements to work in the Irish Health or Social Care services or in private clinical practice providing inclusive care to the public (e.g. participation in the General Medical Services Scheme) in Ireland.

2.8 I already have a joint academic position. Can I apply to the scheme in order to protect clinical time for research?

Yes, but the scheme will not buy out any research time already protected in your current position.

2.9 I have a combined academic and clinical post. Is there a certain percentage of time that applicants should be working clinically in order to be eligible to apply?

Lead Applicants must maintain at least 0.2 FTE working in clinical practice or social care delivery during the award.

2.10 I have a joint academic appointment with 0.5 FTE clinical and 0.5 FTE academic, can I apply to protect the clinical time?

Yes, but Lead Applicants must continue to be involved in a minimum of 0.2 FTE clinical practice or social care delivery alongside a minimum 0.5 FTE research protected time for the ECSA project.

2.11 Can I apply for more than 0.5 FTE protected time?

No, you cannot. While Lead Applicants may spend more than 0.5 FTE working on research, including time spent working on the ECSA project, the HRB will only fund salary related costs up to a maximum of 0.5 FTE.

2.12 If someone has a faculty position at an early career stage, does a faculty position automatically make someone ineligible?

No, we do not specify what type of position or level. The importance is the suitability of the lead applicant to this scheme and the particular career stage and the type of time you are requesting to be protected during the award.

2.13 I already have a joint academic appointment with 0.2 FTE private clinical practice and 0.8 FTE academic, can I apply to protect the 0.5 FTE of the academic time?

Yes, you are eligible to apply. However, the ECSA will not buy out any research time you already have.

2.14 I am currently on a research-only contract with small percentage of time dedicated to clinical practice, can I apply?

The HRB will not buy out established research time through this scheme and Lead applicants who already have more than 0.2 FTE protected time dedicated to research are ineligible to apply to this round of the ECSA scheme. Health and social care professionals, who are currently engaged in research only or research and other academic activities but not involved in delivering patient or social care are not eligible to apply to this scheme and should enquire about the HRB 'Emerging Investigator Awards 2024' scheme. That particular scheme is part of the research career path dedicated to academic-based health and social care researchers. If you are not sure which scheme is more suitable for you to please contact the HRB.

However, If you are currently in this type of research-based contract but you will change to a more clinical or social care based position prior to take the award, you are eligible to apply. You must demonstrate at application stage that you have made arrangements or are in the process of making arrangements to work in the Irish Health or Social Care services or in private clinical practice proving inclusive care to the public (e.g. participation in the General Medical Services Scheme).

2.15 Is there a specific type of faculty position which will make me ineligible?

No, we do not specify this in the eligibility criteria. Please read carefully "Lead Applicant Suitability" in Section 6.2.1 of the ECSA 2024 Guidance Notes and contact the HRB for additional clarity.

2.16 Does a Lead Applicant need to have last author publications?

There is no minimum number of publications required for eligibility. However, Lead Applicants must be able to demonstrate their contribution to scientific knowledge and the potential to become an independent investigator by describing up to five research outputs that are most relevant to this application. It is expected that Lead Applicants would have several peer-reviewed publications and other research outputs.

2.17 If the Lead Applicant is currently supervising other researchers, are they eligible to apply?

Lead Applicants are **ineligible** to apply if they are supervising **Postdoctoral researchers or PhD/Clinical fellows/Masters by research who are supported through an award secured by the Lead applicant as PI.**

Additionally, where a Lead Applicant has acted or is acting as the past, or present, primary supervisor or sponsor of an early career scholarship or fellowship (e.g. PhD, postdoctoral researcher) awarded to another individual, they are ineligible to apply.

Supervision of researchers outside of the two criteria outlined above will not render a Lead Applicant ineligible. Where an applicant has secured a relatively small award in their own name which has supported, for example, research assistants for a limited period of time this would not render them ineligible as this does not constitute them having built their own research team as PI.

2.18 I have received a peer-reviewed research grant, am I eligible to apply?

A Lead Applicant is **ineligible** if they have received an award in Ireland or abroad targeting the career stage of transitioning towards research independence or other peer review research grants **which support research staff.**

Fellowships, scholarships and/or peer reviewed research grants secured by the Lead Applicant as PI, **which do not support research staff**, will **not** render the Lead Applicant ineligible.

2.19 If I am eligible at the time of application submission but my situation changes before the final outcome will my application be withdrawn?

No. Eligibility applies to the ECSA pre-application stage submission date only. Basically, if you are eligible at the submission date then your application is eligible for the whole process. Should your situation change after 23 November 2023 but before the end of the ECSA 2024 review process you should let the HRB know, however, your application will not be withdrawn.

3 Mentors, Co-Applicants, and Collaborators

Please note that full information on the Mentors and Co-Applicants are required at pre-application stage. Collaborator information is not required at pre-application stage and as such collaborator information is not requested in the ECSA Pre-application form, however you are advised to start identifying key collaborators early in the process.

3.1 Can my current supervisor be one of my mentors?

The Scientific Mentor should not be the current supervisor of the Lead Applicant and should not be based in the same institution as the Lead Applicant. This is to facilitate an appropriate balance between the supporting and guiding role of the Scientific Mentor, and the independence to be achieved by the Lead Applicant in terms of the mentorship arrangements.

Your Host Institution Mentor should typically not be your current supervisor.

3.2 Does my mentor have to be a health and care practitioner?

Not necessarily. The mentor can be either a health and social care practitioner with joint faculty position or an academic investigator. You should choose the most suitable individual to guide you during your award in terms of your research, career milestones and overall vision beyond the award.

3.3 Can either of the Mentors also be a Co-Applicant?

No, neither mentor can be designated as a Co-Applicant on the project.

3.4 Is the Scientific Mentor required to approve my application before I can submit it?

Yes, in addition to approving their own participation on the application and completing the Mentor section, the Scientific Mentor also needs to approve the application prior to submission.

3.5 Can a Co-Applicant receive payment for their role on the project?

For the purposes of this scheme a Researcher Co-Applicant cannot receive salary through the award if they are in a salaried role. Researcher Co-Applicants not in a salaried role may draw salary from the award where this is highly justified in terms of the requirements from the programme of research. Knowledge user and PPI contributor Co-Applicants can request their own salary, depending on their role and percentage of time dedicated to the research for the duration of the award.

3.6 Can a Co-Applicant receive funding through the award?

Where justified, a Co-Applicant may receive funding for items such as running costs and personnel.

3.7 How many Co-Applicants can I have?

The minimum number of Co-Applicants you can have is one, with a maximum of five.

3.8 What is the difference between Co-Applicants and Collaborators?

A Co-Applicant has a well-defined, critical, and substantial role in the conduct and steering of the proposed research. Each Co-Applicant must confirm their participation and is invited to view the application form online. An official Collaborator is an individual or an organisation who will have an integral and discrete role in delivering the research activities. Named collaborators provide specific contributions (either direct or indirect) to the project activities.

The Lead Applicant is best placed to determine whether a contributor should be a named Co-Applicant or a Collaborator on the award. Please reference Section 6.4 and Section 6.5 of the ECSA 2024 Guidance Notes for more information on Co-Applicants and Collaborators.

3.9 Can a Co-Applicant/Collaborator be from outside Ireland?

Yes, Co-Applicants and/or Collaborators from outside Ireland are welcome where the nature of the research makes this necessary.

3.10 Do the Co-Applicants have to approve my application before I can submit it?

No, Co-Applicants need to approve their participation on the application and complete their own section in the form.

3.11 Will the HRB pay for visits to and from Co-Applicants/Collaborators?

Yes, visits to and from Co-Applicants/Collaborators where justified may be included in the application budget under running costs.

3.12 Is a Collaborator agreement form needed?

No collaborator information (or form) is required at Pre-application stage. At full application stage you are required to submit a signed collaboration agreement form for each collaborator included in the proposal. These forms must be uploaded and submitted with the full application.

3.13 Can a Collaborator be from private enterprise?

Yes, a collaborator may be from private enterprise. Collaborators from private enterprise are encouraged where they add value to the project for example in terms of access to expertise, technologies and/or reagents. The HRB does not have the capacity to broker these arrangements. The terms of the collaboration should be determined early, and relevant agreements must be in place prior to the beginning of the research programme. Consideration should be given to issues such as relative responsibilities, governance arrangements, intellectual property rights, reporting and access to data and samples.

3.14 Can a Collaborator receive payment for their role in the project?

Yes, collaborators are eligible to receive funding from the award when properly detailed and justified in the application.

4 Scope

Please carefully read Section 4 and Appendix II of the ECSA 2024 Guidance Notes.

4.1 I'm not sure if my application fits with the scope of the call.

Guidance and details of the research areas covered can be found in Appendix II. If, after reading this, you are still unsure if your proposal is in scope for the scheme, please contact the HRB for further guidance.

4.2 What is 'actionable knowledge'?

Actionable knowledge is research evidence which will inform healthcare practice and/or policy. The HRB aims to enhance the capability of researchers to conduct research across the continuum from knowledge creation to knowledge translation and implementation into policy and practice.

4.3 Can an assessment of an intervention be proposed as part of the ECSA project?

No – initial testing of an intervention can be included as a small part of a project but cannot be the main bulk of the proposed research. Trialling of interventions has a dedicated HRB funding stream (Definitive Interventions and Feasibility awards (DIFA)) and, as such, other HRB awards do not support clinical trials or assessment of interventions.

5 Funding and duration

Please note no budget details are required at Pre-application stage. Further detail on the budget will be provided at full application stage.

5.1 How much salary can I request?

Salary-related costs can be requested as follows:

1. A **maximum of 0.5 FTE** of the salary-related costs of the locum replacement for the Lead Applicant if buying out clinical or social care time and/or academic non-research time. This salary should be at the point on the relevant scale for replacing the Lead Applicant directly. This salary should be negotiated with the Health Service employer (for service delivery) and/or the academic employer (for academic time) at full application stage and justification for this salary amount must be provided.

or

2. A **maximum 0.5 FTE** of the salary related costs of the Lead applicant, as agreed with the Host Institution, if based in private clinical or social care practice providing inclusive care to the public as outlined in the ECSA 2024 Guidance Notes. This salary should be negotiated with the Host Institution at full application stage and should be in line with the equivalent Host Institution academic scale for independent clinical/social care investigators and justification for this level of salary must be provided.

5.2 How much can I apply for?

Research related costs are capped at a maximum value of **€300K**. Research related costs do not include the salary and salary related costs of the Lead Applicant. The overhead contribution to the HI will be calculated by the HRB at award stage.

5.3 Can research staff or PhD students be hired under ECSA funding?

Yes, research staff can be requested in line with the resourcing requirements of the project. A PhD candidate can be supported under an ECSA award. Any PhDs supported on an ECSA award must be registered in the Higher Institution in the Republic of Ireland where they will be based. PhD fees are capped at a maximum of €5,500. Please see Section 6.6 of the ECSA 2024 Guidance Notes for further information on including PhD candidates in your application

5.4 How much is reasonable to request for research dissemination?

Dissemination and knowledge exchange activities are capped at a **maximum of €15K** unless clearly justified by outreach or similar activities.

5.5 Should I include the overhead contribution in the budget?

No, the overhead contribution to the HI is an indirect cost associated with the award. The HRB will calculate the overhead contribution to the HI and include it in the budget at award stage, prior to contracting.

5.6 What is the duration of ECSA awards?

ECSA awards are 48 calendar months in duration.

6 Supporting Documentation

6.1 Is there any additional documentation which should be uploaded with my Pre-application form?

Yes. At Pre-application stage a HI letter of support confirming the Lead applicant is not recognised by the HI as an independent researcher is required. This letter should be on headed paper and signed by the Dean of Research or an equivalent appropriate designate. The HI designate approving the application for submission to the HRB is an appropriate signatory of the Letter of Support at Pre-application stage.

7 Submission

7.1 What is the GEMS submission process?

Prior to final submission to the HRB, all applications must first be reviewed and approved within GEMS by the signatory approver at the research office (or equivalent) at the Host Institution. It is critical therefore that Lead Applicants leave sufficient time in the process for the Research Office (or equivalent) in their nominated Host Institution to review, seek clarifications and approve applications prior to the final submission date and time. This may involve being aware of and complying with any internal Host Institution deadlines for review and approval, distinct from the HRB deadline.

7.2 What is the closing date for submission of Pre-applications?

All Pre-applications must be submitted to the HRB using HRB GEMS by **Thursday, 23 November 2023 at 13:00**.

7.3 How will I know that my application has been successfully submitted?

Once the HI endorses your application it will be automatically submitted to the HRB to be considered for funding. A grant application reference number will be assigned to the application and you will receive a confirmation email.

7.4 I have submitted my application but have just realised I have amendments to make; can I amend the application?

No, once you have submitted your application, you cannot edit or un-submit it.

8 Pre-application Review

8.1 Would a career break or a period of statutory leave put me at a disadvantage in terms of the review?

No. The Lead Applicant and Research Team are assessed on their research outputs in terms of their time spent in active research. Therefore, adjustments will be made when assessing the outputs of applicants who have had periods of research inactivity due to, for example, statutory leave.

8.2 When will I know if I was shortlisted to submit a Full application?

A Review Panel will meet to discuss all eligible applications in mid-January 2024. We plan to notify applicants of the outcome the following week. If shortlisted, your full application form will be available to populate, within your GEMS account, at that time.

8.3 Will I receive feedback from the panel?

Yes, all applicants will receive brief feedback on the Pre-application panel discussion.