

2023 SEAI Fellowship Programme

Frequently Asked Questions - January 2024



2023 SEAI Fellowship Programme - Frequently Asked Questions

This document collates responses to questions submitted during the live 2023 SEAI Fellowship Pilot Programme Information Webinar held on the 17th of January 2024, as well as responses to other frequently asked questions submitted directly to SEAI.

If you have a question that has not been addressed below, please contact energyresearch@seai.ie.

Please also refer to the detailed guidance and programme documentation available at:

<https://www.seai.ie/grants/research-funding/research-fellowship/>

Query topics

| | |
|--|---|
| General Application Queries | 3 |
| 1. Webinar | 3 |
| 2. Project start dates | 3 |
| 3. Fellowship Project Duration | 3 |
| 4. Fellowship Suitability | 3 |
| 5. What support is available in SEAI for fellowships in terms of remote working / flexibility? | 3 |
| 6. Applications | 3 |
| 7. Evaluation and Interview | 4 |
| 8. Support for applicants | 4 |
| 9. General Fellowship queries | 4 |
| 10. Submitting your application via PEP | 5 |
| 11. Intellectual Property and Data Management Queries | 5 |
| 12. Fellowship Topic Related Queries | 5 |
| 13. Supporting Documentation and Letters of Support | 7 |
| Applicant Eligibility Queries | 8 |
| 14. Third level educational bodies | 8 |
| 15. Fellowship Eligibility | 8 |
| 16. Applicants from outside the Republic of Ireland | 8 |
| 17. Applicant eligibility / Visa requirements | 9 |
| Financial/ Budgetary Queries | 9 |
| 18. Overheads | 9 |
| 19. Budget | 9 |
| 20. Support for Travel Costs / Expenses | 9 |
| 21. Reimbursement process | 9 |

General Application Queries

1. Webinar

Q: Is the webinar (Jan 17th 2024) recorded?

A: The webinar is available to view at the following [link](#).

2. Project start dates

Q: What is the projected start date for the Fellowship?

A: Successful applicants to the 2023 SEAI Fellowship Programme are expected to start from Q3 2024. Project start dates are individual and are not uniform across all successful applicants. Individual start dates are agreed and set only when contracts are issued to successful applicants.

Further updates on overall application timelines will be provided throughout the Call process.

We do not anticipate any start dates to be earlier than Q3 2024.

3. Fellowship Project Duration

Q: What is the maximum duration of a proposed fellowship project under this Call?

A: Fellowships will be 2 years' duration, with longer durations considered in exceptional circumstances if well-justified in the application.

4. Fellowship Suitability

Q: Is a DORA CV required?

A: The application form gathers all information required for the application and Section 2 follows the structure of a narrative CV. The application form also requests a statement of Motivation - providing a statement to demonstrate interest in and suitability for the proposed Fellowship. This may include an outline of professional experience, how the Fellowship would enhance their career development and personal motivation for the submitted Fellowship proposal.

Q: Is prior experience of completing research projects important?

A: Under Section 2 of the application form applicants have the opportunity to provide details of previous SEAI or other RD&D Funding (if applicable). Details of the evaluation criteria can be found on [Page 7 of the call document](#).

5. What support is available in SEAI for fellowships in terms of remote working / flexibility?

Q: What sort of remote working or flexibility would be possible for Fellowships in SEAI?

Q: Are the fellowships based in the Dublin office or could they be based in one of the regional offices - Dundalk, Cork, Sligo?

Q: Is it possible to work from a 3rd level institute remotely with regular monthly visit to SEAI?

A: SEAI is currently operating a hybrid working model, and it is expected that fellows would be based in the SEAI office at least two days per week in 2024, however this is subject to change. It is anticipated that fellows would be based at SEAI Head Offices, which are located at 3 Park Place, Dublin 2. Other SEAI office locations may be considered on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the SEAI Fellowship supervisor and SEAI.

Q: If there is a significant research aspect proposed for the fellowship, would this allow more time to be spent in the Uni host?

A: Since these are research fellowships, it is expected that all applications would have a significant research aspect. If more time is needed in the university host to conduct specific elements of the proposed research, this should be outlined with supporting information in the application.

6. Applications

Q: Can a fellow apply to multiple fellowship topics?

A: Yes, applications will be accepted to multiple topics. However, as it would not be possible to undertake more than one project in tandem, preference would need to be specified **in the motivation statement of the application** ('Motivation to undertake fellowship' section, page 3 of the Application Form) should more than one application be shortlisted.

7. Evaluation and Interview

Q: Who would be involved in the technical evaluations and interview process?

A: Evaluators from panels of experts both within SEAI and external organisations will conduct the technical evaluations and participate in interviews.

8. Support for applicants

Q: Is there a support contact for a project team who would like to receive assistance with an application?

Can we discuss the fellowship project idea with SEAI to see its fit before we start building the project proposal?

A: If you have any queries on the application process or the programme, please do not hesitate to contact us at energyresearch@seai.ie. SEAI are running topic clinics in January 2024, with a link to register from the SEAI Fellowship webpage. For full details of the call, please download the 2023 SEAI Fellowship Call Document, and Application Form available from our website: <https://www.seai.ie/grants/research-funding/research-fellowship/>.

Q: I have never done this before and conscious of Feb 12 deadline, any broad idea of how long timewise it might take to complete the actual form/how detailed is the form?

A: Please review the Application Form, Call Document and associated links as soon as possible, these are all available to download from our website: <https://www.seai.ie/grants/research-funding/research-fellowship/>. Guidelines on the number of pages per section are outlined within the application form.

9. General Fellowship queries

Q: Would you consider a part-time fellowship position to allow the fellow work on other projects that are still ongoing? Could an exceptional basis for extending project timelines be based on allowing for part-time projects with a longer timeframe?

A: There is scope for the applicants to design the fellowship proposal to suit the topic and their own experience and circumstances. Applicants should justify the time and resources required for their research project and the impact they will deliver. All applications to each Fellowship topic will be evaluated and ranked, in line with the evaluation criteria detailed within the Call Document. Following evaluation, applications will be ranked and shortlisted for interview.

Q: Will the fellow need to be responsive, on an ad hoc basis, to requests for data and insights from within the SEAI during the fellowship? If so what proportion of the time would that take?

A: It is expected that fellows will spend at least 80% of their time on their research project and less than 20% time on SEAI operational work.

Q: What level of supervision will be provided within SEAI?

A: Each fellow will have an assigned supervisor within SEAI who will provide support and guidance throughout the fellowship.

Q: What is the success rate of this call?

A: SEAI do not routinely share information in relation to success rates.

Q: Can the successful applicants, while holding this fellowship, apply for other calls (from SFI, IRC, and SEAI)?

A: SEAI do not have any restrictions in relation to applying for research funding while holding an SEAI Fellowship. Full terms and conditions are provided in the contracts issued to successful applicants

10. Submitting your application via PEP

Q: I work in the research office of a university; can Research Officers be given access to the PEP application system to track fellowship applications?

A: It is not possible for Research Officers to be provided access to the PEP portal to track applications. We recommend that applicants engage with their Research Office within their sponsor 3rd level educational body during the application process, in advance of submitting the application within PEP.

Q: When will the PEP application portal open for applications, and will technical support be available if there are any issues?

A: The PEP portal is now open. If you require technical support, please contact energyresearch@seai.ie, however please note that we cannot guarantee availability of support very close to the application deadline, therefore we recommend applicants familiarise themselves with the PEP portal well before the application deadline.

11. Intellectual Property and Data Management Queries

Q: Can you clarify how IP will be managed in the projects funded under this call? Given that the fellows will be employed by a university but working in SEAI, who will own that data and the IP generated during the project?

Q: I am hoping you can provide me with information around any Data Management contractual post-award arrangements that SEAI will have for awardees (and Sponsor Organisations). Given that potential awardees will be employees of the third level institution (Sponsor Organisation) but working from/based in (and funded by) the SEAI.

A: Should a fellowship application proceed to award stage, management of IP, data management, along with other contractual obligations, will be clarified within the contracts issued alongside the letter of offer.

12. Fellowship Topic Related Queries

As this is a competitive call, SEAI cannot provide feedback on draft proposals. For more information on the Fellowship Topics, please register for the Topic Clinics.

For full details of the call, please download the 2023 SEAI Fellowship Call Document, and Application Form available from our website: <https://www.seai.ie/grants/research-funding/research-fellowship/>

If you have any queries on the application process or the programme, please do not hesitate to contact us at energyresearch@seai.ie.

Q: Topic 3 was removed. Does that mean projects for this topic will be rejected?

A: Yes, unfortunately SEAI are not in a position to offer a SEAI fellowship on this topic this year. However, applicants that were considering applying to this topic could consider submitting an Academic Fellowship Application under the open strand in this year's SEAI RDD Call which will open in Q1 2024.

Q: Is the clinical appointment in person or online?

A: The clinics are held online.

Q: I work on structural design for hydrogen storage. Is this topic suitable for SEAI?

Q: Are there any specific areas to apply for other than energy?

A: Potential applicants should refer to the topic descriptions and ensure that their proposed research is aligned with a topic. If none of the SEAI Fellowship topics are suitable, an academic fellowship application under the open strand of the SEAI RDD Call 2024 could be a suitable alternative avenue to apply for funding. Please note SEAI only fund research that is aligned with the SEAI remit.

Applicants may wish to refer to the [National Energy Research Database](#). This database provides information on current and previous energy research projects and is intended to enable additional collaboration between companies, academic institutions, research institutes and researchers who work in the energy/low carbon technology area. It allows users to search for projects by topic, year funded, funding agency and keyword.

13. Supporting Documentation and Letters of Support

Q: Is it possible to submit Letters of Support from companies or other collaborators (that do not receive funding)? Is there any specific section to add these LOSs?

A: Unsolicited letters of support (LoS) are not permitted. However, required Letters of Support should be submitted along with your application. Required Letters of Support include Letters of Support from:

- The Academic Sponsor
- The Organisation Sponsor
- Please refer to [Section 6 of the Call Document](#) for more details or for information relating to the Fellowships LoS. A checklist is also provided in Section 6 of the Application form.

Q: Can you provide further detail as to what is required in the Organisation Sponsor 3rd Level Educational Institution Letter of Support?

A: A Letter of Support (Organisation Sponsor) should be provided for all fellowship applications from an authorised staff member in the lead institution/organisation (University/Research Institution Vice President for Research/Director of Research or equivalent) confirming the organisation's endorsement of the proposal and confirming that they will facilitate the proposed fellowship if successful.

Q: Does this mean it should state that the application meets the eligibility criteria? Should it confirm that the School will host the Fellowship?

A: The organisation letter of support does not need to state that the applicant meets the eligibility criteria. Application eligibility will be verified and assessed by SEAI at a later date. The relevant school does not need to confirm that they will host the fellowship at the application stage. Please refer to the above question for further guidance.

Q: Would a declaration such as "this university supports and endorses this application and will support the Fellowship should it be awarded" suffice?

A: Yes

Q: Can applicants apply without the initial support of an academic sponsor, i.e. can a matchmaking feature be set up ahead of submission? When you mentioned academic sponsor and identifying them now - do you mean the institution or actual person now?

A: It is up to the applicant to secure an academic sponsor who is a member of academic staff of an eligible institution and liaise with the sponsor to arrange the support of the institution in order to be an eligible application. This may take time so should be initiated as soon as possible.

Q: Can you provide further detail as to what is required in the Academic Sponsor Letter of Support?

A: In their letter of support, academic sponsors should confirm their support for the proposal and also indicate that, as academic sponsor, they are core-funded members of academic staff or have a contract that extends beyond the term of the proposed fellowship. They should also confirm that they are willing to be responsible for liaising with the HR dept of the 3rd level educational body in relation to any contractual and employment requirements, leave entitlements and other administrative duties for the Fellow within the sponsor 3rd level educational body while the Fellow is participating in the Fellowship Programme.

Q: Can the academic and organization sponsor be same?

A: No, as the academic sponsor is a member of the academic staff of the sponsor organisation. Please refer to Section 3 of the [call document](#) for a detailed description of the project roles.

Applicant Eligibility Queries

14. Third level educational bodies

Q: Could you provide a list of eligible 3rd level educational bodies for Fellowship applications?

Q: Is Teagasc an eligible sponsor organisation?

A: Please refer to the Table below which includes a list of all eligible 3rd level educational bodies. Please contact energyresearch@seai.ie if you have any queries.

| | |
|---|---|
| Atlantic Technological University | South East Technological University |
| Dublin City University | St Angela's College |
| Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology | Technological University Dublin |
| Dundalk Institute of Technology | Technological University of the Shannon |
| Mary Immaculate College | Trinity College Dublin |
| Maynooth University | University College Cork |
| Munster Technological University | University College Dublin |
| National College of Art and Design | University of Galway |
| Royal College of Surgeons Ireland, Dublin | University of Limerick |

15. Fellowship Eligibility

Q: Can an applicant in the latter stages of their PhD apply for a Fellowship?

Q: Would an individual who has submitted a PhD thesis, but who will not graduate until after submission (Autumn of 2024) be eligible to apply?

A: It may be possible for PhD students to apply when in the latter PhD stages. Where applicable, applicants should clearly detail expected PhD completion and graduation dates within their application. The key eligibility criteria to consider as outlined in the Call document, is that **applicants must have a PhD or equivalent experience**. SEAI defines PhD equivalent as 4 years' full time research experience after primary degree. Evidence of this will be sought before an offer is made.

Applicants will be considered by SEAI as holding a PhD qualification if they are either:

i) conferred at the time of application. The official date is defined as the day, month and year that the degree was conferred i.e., the month and year printed on the official PhD certificate

OR

ii) the applicant has been certified by the awarding university as having fulfilled all the requirements for the award of a doctoral degree, including the submission of the hardbound corrected thesis by the date of submission of their fellowship application.

Q: I can serve as the academic sponsor, and I am wondering if there is opportunity to see if any applicant is interested to work on the topic that I propose.

A: Please note that SEAI Fellowships are awarded in the name of the successful fellow. The Academic sponsor role is to take administrative responsibility for the fellow should the application be successful. There is no formal requirement for the academic sponsor to have scientific input to the fellowship, however this can take place informally if desired by both academic sponsor and fellow.

16. Applicants from outside the Republic of Ireland

Q: Is it possible for a fellowship applicant to be based outside of the Republic of Ireland?

A: The SEAI Fellowship Pilot Call is open to applications from 3rd level educational bodies based in the Republic of Ireland only.

17. Applicant eligibility / Visa requirements

Q: Is there any restriction to applicants in terms of visa requirements?

A: It is recommended to consult with the Research Office within the Organisation Sponsor 3rd level educational body for guidance.

Q: Are there any age limits for applicants?

A: No there are no age limits. Applicants should have a PhD or equivalent experience and an eligible sponsor organisation located in Republic of Ireland.

Q: Can a full-time, research active staff member of a university apply, despite not being a postdoc?

A: Yes. Please refer to the [SEAI RDD Budget policy 2023](#) for more information.

Financial/ Budgetary Queries

18. Overheads

Q: Is there an overhead eligible for this?

As part of the budget, SEAI will contribute to the indirect costs that it supports through an overhead payment calculated as 25% of Staff costs. Staff costs include salaries and relevant employer costs only.

Q: What is the percentage overhead allowance on grant applications?

A: As part of the budget, SEAI will contribute to the indirect costs of project-based research work that it supports through an overhead payment calculated by 25% of Staff costs. Grantee organisations are responsible for ensuring that the indirect costs are correctly spent in providing the central support that underpins SEAI funded research projects and programmes.

19. Budget

Q: What is the maximum budget per project?

Q: Should we include research expenses within our budget or list salary alone?

A: The maximum SEAI contribution to a Fellowship award is for two year's salary plus overheads. Please refer to the [IUA salary scales](#). Deviations from IUA scales will be considered where well justified. Applicants should liaise with their organisation's HR department to determine the correct salary level.

A: Salary plus overheads are the only eligible budget items in the application. Should the application be successful, research expenses may be requested from SEAI however this is dependent on availability of budget and agreement of management.

20. Support for Travel Costs / Expenses

Q: Can an applicant request funding to support travel costs required for aspects of their proposed fellowship project?

A: No, only salary costs are eligible to be requested within the application. Any required travel costs to support fellowship delivery would be reimbursed directly by SEAI to the Fellow, subject to prior approval from the SEAI Supervisor.

Q: What about research expenses? For example, cost of any experiments etc.? Is there a budget for that?

A: Eligible requested costs within the Fellowship application include Staff Costs (and associated overheads) only. All other expenditure including licenses, other resources and travel, will need to be justified and if deemed necessary will be covered directly by SEAI. Laptops and other office equipment will be provided by SEAI.

21. Reimbursement process

Q: Can you provide further details of how the financial claim and reimbursement policy e.g. Fellowship salary? Is the Organisation Sponsor 3rd level institution required to provide funds for a fellow upfront, with staff costings reimbursed at a later stage by SEAI?

A: Yes, the Organisation Sponsor 3rd level educational bodies pay salaries for fellowships supported by their institution. Financial claims are required to be submitted to SEAI on a biannual basis for H1 (Jan – Jun) and H2 (Jul – Dec).

A letter of support is required from an authorised staff member in the Organisation Sponsor institution (e.g. University/Research Institution Vice President for Research/Director of Research or equivalent) confirming their endorsement of the proposal and confirming their commitment to facilitating the proposed fellowship, should it be successful.