



## Polasaí agus Nósanna Imeachta / Policies and Procedures

Code	QA071
Title	Strategic Recruitment Scheme for Research Leaders
Date	April 2021
Approved By	UMT, Standing & Strategic Planning Committee

### 1. Policy Statement

A core objective of University of Galway Research Strategy is to “recruit, retain and reward excellent academic staff who have a proven track record in delivering measurable research outputs”. In pursuing this objective, the University recognises the need to develop recruitment practices which facilitate an agile response to opportunities, in an increasingly competitive research environment.

### 2. Existing Scheme to recruit senior researchers at University of Galway

#### 2.1 SFI Research Professorship Scheme

Since its launch in 2003, the SFI Research Professorship Programme has sought to support national strategic priorities by assisting research bodies in the recruitment of world-leading researchers for Professorial Chairs, or similar research leadership positions in targeted scientific areas. In response to the scheme, University of Galway established a recruitment initiative to attract applicants to the SFI Research Professorship Programme. This flagship recruitment programme is open to research leaders of international standing, at various career stages, in the following University of Galway priority thematic areas:

1. Medical Devices
2. Biomedical Discovery and Translation
3. Data Analytics, Digital, ICT
4. Environment, Marine and Energy

A permanent open call for SFI Research Professors is open on the University of Galway website with applicants encouraged to submit an Expression of Interest Form.

Applicants to the SFI Research Professorship scheme undergo a rigorous multi-stage international peer review assessment process.



SFI has target of 30% of its awards to be held by female investigators by the end of 2020 and eligible Research Bodies must adhere to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) Athena SWAN Bronze and Silver Award timelines to be eligible to host SFI awards. In addition, SFI has recently become a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment (DORA), and as such aligns its review and evaluation processes with DORA principles.

Successful SFI Research Professorship applicants are automatically awarded a permanent Established Professorship post on their appointment to University of Galway. Following approval by Údarás na hOllscoile in October 2016, with a further update in October 2018, the University agreed to recognise the comprehensive selection and recruitment process involved in the SFI Research Professorship Programme, including internal assessment and external peer review by SFI reviewers, as sufficiently robust and thorough to meet the requirements of a standard recruitment campaign for an Established Professor at University of Galway, and therefore a further competition is not required to make appointments at Established Professorial grades.

This ability to award a tenured position linked to a prestigious external research award following a competitive peer reviewed process is currently limited to the SFI Research Professorship Programme.

It is now proposed to add the following international awards\* to this fast-track recruitment scheme:

- SFI Future Research Leaders Award
- ERC Advanced and Consolidator Awards
- Wellcome Trust Principal Research Fellowships

\*UMT may review the list of Awards periodically to ensure their ongoing relevance.

## **2.2 SFI Future Research Leaders Award**

The President of Ireland Future Research Leaders Programme is a recruitment-driven programme designed to attract to Ireland outstanding new and emerging research leaders in all areas of SFI's legal remit, where candidates may have academic- and/or industry-relevant backgrounds with a focus on research excellence with impact. Candidates are expected to address current gaps in leadership, methodologies and skill sets in specific discipline areas. Candidates may also be recruited to complement and strengthen ongoing activities e.g. SFI Research Centres, or as part of Research Body succession planning for areas which will require leadership in coming years. In addition, candidates who have already demonstrated excellence through other competitive international funding programmes (e.g., through European Research Council schemes) are particularly sought through this call.

The call is open to applicants based outside of Ireland as well as those recently recruited from abroad (i.e., within two years of the Expression of Interest deadline). Applicants are expected to have demonstrated research excellence, independence, maturity and leadership by having several important publications without the participation of their PhD supervisor and should have secured independent research funding and accumulated supervisory experience. It is also expected that the applicant will be of international standing as demonstrated



by various indicators of scientific maturity, such as peer review experience, invited keynote talks, international collaboration, conference and workshop organisation, amongst others.

The Assessment process consists of a two-stage submission process encompassing a three-stage review. Applicants who are successful at the Expression of Interest stage will be invited to submit a full proposal. Applicants whose full proposal receives excellent reviews will be invited for interview. Interviews will comprise a presentation followed by a question-and-answer session, which will be undertaken by an international review panel.

It is now proposed that successful SFI Future Research Leader Awardees be automatically awarded a permanent tenured academic position on their appointment to University of Galway, with the University recognising the comprehensive selection and recruitment process involved in the SFI Future Leaders Programme as sufficiently robust and thorough to meet the requirements of a standard recruitment campaign for an academic post at University of Galway, and therefore a further competition is not required.

### **2.3 ERC Advanced and Consolidator Awards**

ERC Advanced Awardees are expected to be active researchers who have a track-record of significant research achievements in the last 10 years. The Principal Investigators should be exceptional leaders in terms of originality and significance of their research contributions.

ERC Consolidator Awardees are researchers with 7-12 years of experience since completion of PhD, a scientific track record showing great promise and an excellent research proposal.

Proposals are evaluated by selected international peer reviewers who assess them on the basis of excellence as the sole criterion. It will be applied to the evaluation of both the research project and the Principal Investigator in conjunction.

It is now proposed that successful ERC Advanced and Consolidator Awardees be automatically awarded a permanent tenured academic position on their appointment to University of Galway, with the University recognising the comprehensive assessment process involved in the ERC Programme as sufficiently robust and thorough to meet the requirements of a standard recruitment campaign for an academic post at University of Galway, and therefore a further competition is not required.

### **2.4 Wellcome Trust Principal Research Fellowships**

Principal Research Fellowships are the most prestigious of the Wellcome Trust's personal awards and provide long-term funding for researchers of international standing. Eligible awardees are researchers of international standing with an established track record in research at the highest level.

Proposals are assessed via a rigorous multi-stage process from preliminary application to full application, scientific review to external peer review.

It is now proposed that successful Wellcome Trust Principal Research Fellowship Awardees be automatically



awarded a permanent tenured academic position on their appointment to University of Galway, with the University recognising the comprehensive assessment process involved in the Principal Research Fellowship Programme as sufficiently robust and thorough to meet the requirements of a standard recruitment campaign for an academic post at University of Galway, and therefore a further competition is not required.

It is anticipated that the above academic appointments will normally be made at Professorial level, subject to the level of experience and attainment of the appointees, and subject to the process outlined below.

### **3. Process for recruitment**

#### **3.1 Open Advertisement**

In order to meet the recruitment requirement for open advertisement of available positions, the University will carry a permanent advertisement seeking Expressions of Interest from researchers holding the above awards or interested in applying for the above awards, on the public website.

In addition, the University will proactively engage with externally based researchers who are interested in coming to University of Galway to support their applications for the above awards.

#### **3.2 Eligibility**

The following eligibility criteria apply:

- Holders of one of the above-named awards are eligible for appointment. In the case of the SFI Research Professorship the individual cannot hold a permanent academic position at the University of Galway .
- Candidates must have a PhD.
- Candidates must meet the requirement for research experience of international standing as set out in the terms of named Research Funders.
- For researchers at other institutions, it must be possible to move the Research Award to University of Galway and candidates must have at least 3 years left on the Award.

#### **3.3 Recruitment Process**

- A permanent open advertisement targeted at eligible researchers for the above Awards will remain open on the University of Galway website. Candidates are invited to submit Expressions of Interest.
- The recruitment process will be led by the Executive Dean of College who will liaise with the candidate, the relevant Head of School, Research Institute Director (where relevant) and Vice President for Research & Innovation to assess whether the Research Award aligns with the strategic priorities of the College and the University. The Executive Dean must confirm that the College is interested in accepting



the Research Award and progressing with the appointment. The Executive Dean then nominates the individual for fast-track appointment.

- Once confirmation of the research award has been received, the Executive Dean will confirm with the Bursar the funding arrangements for the post and bring a proposal to recruit the awardee at Professorial level to the UMT Sub-Committee for Academic Planning. The Director of HR will confirm the level of the Professorial appointment.
- In the case of SFI Research Professors, if the salary required by the scheme for the duration of the award exceeds the standard professorial salary, the Secretary for Governance & Academic Affairs will prepare the request for sanction for the proposed salary under the Framework for Departures from agreed salary scales, for submission by the President's Office to the HEA.
- The Director of HR will draw up the academic contact and liaise with the candidate to conclude the recruitment process.

#### **4. Review**

This scheme will be reviewed not later than one year after the date on which it is approved.