UCC Futures Scholars (GoI)

2027 PhD Call Document

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Key Dates for the 2027 Call:

Call Open: 2 November 2026
Application deadline: 17:00 (Irish time) 11 December 2026
Interview dates (if shortlisted): 9-10 February 2027 AHSS-leaning panel / 11-12 February 2027 STEM-leaning panel
Call outcome: End of February 2027
Award start date: 01 October 2027

Terms of Reference

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of this document, it is provided for information purposes only and as a guide to expected developments. It is not intended, and should not be relied upon, as any form of warranty, representation, undertaking, contractual, or other commitment binding in law upon University College Cork ("UCC"), Taighde Éireann I Research Ireland ("Research Ireland"), the Government of Ireland, or any of their respective servants or agents within the context of this call. The Research Ireland Grant Conditions (including the General Terms and Conditions and Letters of Offer), together with any other applicable UCC research, innovation, and finance policies, shall govern the administration of UCC Futures Scholars (GoI) Grants and awards and shall take precedence over any contrary provision contained in this policy or in any other oral, written, or recorded statement. All submissions to this Call Document will be treated in confidence, and no information contained therein will be communicated to any third party without the written permission of the applicant except insofar as is specifically required for the consideration and evaluation of the proposal or as may be required under law, including the Research and Innovation Act 2024 and the Freedom of Information Acts 1997, (Amendment) 2023 and 2014.

1. Empower programme background

Research Ireland is the national research and innovation funding agency established on 1 August 2024 through the integration of Science Foundation Ireland and the Irish Research Council. Operating under the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Research Ireland works in partnership with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and other national agencies, including the Higher Education Authority (HEA), IDA Ireland, and Enterprise Ireland.

The **Empower Programme** is a strategic funding initiative developed by Research Ireland to provide a recurring, predictable, and flexible mechanism through which Irish Higher Education Institutions ("HEIs") can advance their institutional research and innovation priorities. Alongside other strategic investments that support research excellence and institutional capacity, the Empower Programme focuses on enabling the recruitment and development of doctoral students across all disciplines and research types, from fundamental, curiosity-driven research to applied and translational research. Through sustained investment in research talent, Empower enables institutions to strengthen research excellence, build capability, and deliver on their strategic objectives.

The programme has four core objectives:

- **Develop excellent research talent across all disciplines** by creating a sustainable pipeline of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers and strengthening Ireland's long-term research and innovation capacity.
- **Strengthen institutional research and innovation capability** through strategic investment in research talent, research environments, and institutional priorities.
- **Enhance researcher development and research culture** by providing high-quality supervision, training, mentorship, and inclusive research environments that support excellence and responsible research practices.
- **Build a resilient, innovative, and connected research ecosystem** through coordinated institutional investment that enhances collaboration, sustainability, and impact.

Within this context, University College Cork ("UCC") has established the **UCC Futures Scholars Programme (GoI), supported through Research Ireland Empower,** as the University's mechanism for advancing the doctoral research talent objectives of the Empower initiative. Successful applicants funded through this programme will be recognised as Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship holders.

The programme supports the delivery of the **UCC Strategic Plan 2023-2028** and the **UCC Research and Innovation Strategy** through the UCC Futures Framework. The UCC Futures Scholars Programme (GoI) will support the recruitment of outstanding doctoral researchers across the full disciplinary spectrum, while building a sustainable pipeline of research talent that contributes to UCC's strategic research priorities and future research leadership capacity.

1.1 About UCC Futures Framework

The UCC Futures Framework is UCC's strategic initiative for research and innovation. Since 2023, this creative, inclusive and transformative interdisciplinary platform has focused on prioritisation and deliberate investment in areas of critical research and innovation leadership. UCC Futures comprises ten institution-wide thematic areas, five Futures Strategic Research Centres (FSRC) and is enabled by a suite of Core Research Facilities. Each thematic area and FSRC houses a critical mass of expertise within defined strategic themes, in an environment that enhances disciplinary strength and excellence. These UCC Futures Areas are as follows:

- Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics
- Children
- Collective Social Futures
- Food, Microbiome and Health
- Future Ageing and Brain Science
- Future Humanities Institute
- Future Medicines
- Future Pharmaceuticals
- Quantum and Photonics
- Sustainability Institute

Complemented by FSRCs as follows:

- Cancer Research @ UCC
- Future of Health
- Future of Networks, Systems & Cybersecurity (NASC)
- Future of Sustainable Fermentation (SUSFERM)
- Future of Work & the Economy

The UCC Futures Thematic Areas and FSRCs, together with the Tyndall National Institute as a key UCC-affiliated research centre, provide the strategic foundation for the UCC Futures Scholars Programme. While the programme is anchored within these established research ecosystems, it also recognises the strength of excellent research

activity across the wider University, including that led by Principal Investigators (PIs) whose research is not aligned with these structures. Through this approach, the programme will align doctoral recruitment and researcher development with UCC's priority areas of research excellence, ensuring that investment in PhD talent contributes directly to the University's long-term research and innovation strategy.

The UCC Futures Scholars Programme (GoI) will build upon the UCC Futures Framework by strengthening the pipeline of doctoral researchers within and across these strategic research areas. By supporting outstanding PhD candidates in undertaking research aligned with UCC Futures priorities, the programme will enhance research capacity, foster interdisciplinary collaboration, and contribute to the development of future research leaders. The UCC Futures Framework provides the institutional platform through which research excellence is translated into equitable, sustainable and just outcomes for Ireland and the wider global community.

2. Purpose of this Call Document

This Call Document sets out the eligibility criteria, application requirements, and submission procedures for the UCC Futures Scholars Programme (GoI) for the pilot 2027 PhD intake. The document is intended to support applicants in preparing and submitting a competitive application and provides an overview of the assessment and review process. Applicants and Lead Supervisors should read all programme documentation carefully before submitting an application, including this Call Document and any other documentation made available by the Doctoral Institute in the context of this call.

The administration of the programme will be governed by the applicable Research Ireland Grant Conditions, including the General Terms and Conditions and the specific Letters of Offer issued by UCC, together with all relevant UCC research, innovation, governance, and financial policies. UCC reserves the right to amend this Call Document or any associated programme documentation at any stage.

3. Programme Overview

The **UCC Futures Scholars Programme (GoI)** is UCC's flagship institutional doctoral scholarship programme, supported through the Research Ireland Empower programme. It provides a strategic mechanism through which the University can recruit outstanding doctoral researchers, strengthen research capacity across all disciplines, and develop the next generation of research leaders. The programme is managed by the

UCC Doctoral Institute and delivered through a university-wide partnership involving the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation (OVPRI), Colleges, Schools, Research Institutes, and professional services teams across UCC. Successful applicants funded through this programme will be recognised as Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship holders.

The programme reflects UCC's commitment to building a sustainable and diverse doctoral research talent pipeline aligned with the University's Research & Innovation Strategy and the UCC Futures Framework. Through targeted investment in doctoral research, it supports areas of established and emerging research strength, enhances supervisory capacity, fosters interdisciplinary collaboration, and contributes to an excellent and inclusive research culture.

Applications are invited from suitably qualified candidates proposing full-time PhD research in any discipline. The programme supports both fundamental and applied research and welcomes ambitious, innovative, and PhD researcher-led projects that advance knowledge while contributing to UCC's strategic research priorities.

Key features of the programme include:

- Prestigious doctoral scholarships awarded on a competitive basis in the name of the applicant.
- The opportunity for PhD scholars to lead and shape their own research project, supported by an academic supervisory team at UCC.
- An objective and transparent selection process informed by independent expert peer review.
- Funding opportunities across all disciplines and research areas.
- Support for investigator-led, bottom-up research aligned with UCC's strategic research and innovation priorities.

The UCC Futures Scholars Programme (GoI) builds upon the legacy and principles of the highly successful **Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Programme**, which for many years represented the national benchmark for doctoral funding excellence in Ireland. That programme was recognised for supporting outstanding researchers with the potential to become future leaders in academia, industry, public policy, and society.

The UCC Futures Scholars Programme (GoI) adopts the same commitment to excellence, research quality, and researcher development. Through a rigorous and competitive assessment process, the programme seeks to identify and support

doctoral candidates who demonstrate exceptional potential to contribute to research, innovation, and societal impact in line with UCC Research & Innovation strategy.

4. What We Offer

The UCC Futures Scholars Programme (GoI) provides competitive doctoral scholarships to support outstanding candidates undertaking full-time doctoral research at UCC across all disciplines.

Scholarships are available to both new entrants on eligible structured doctoral programmes and, for the pilot 2027 call only, applicants who registered for the first year of their doctoral degree on or after 01 September 2026. The duration of funding ranges from three to four years, depending on the applicant's stage of study at the time of application. Further details on eligibility are provided in Section 7.

The value of the scholarship comprises the following budget items:

- An **annual stipend of €25,000**.
- A contribution towards **tuition fees of up to €5,750** per annum. UCC will waive any non-EU fee component not covered by the scholarship award[1].
- A contribution of **at least €5,000 per annum** will be provided towards **eligible direct research costs** associated with the project. Eligible direct research costs may include research consumables, specialist training, conference attendance, fieldwork, travel, and other approved research-related expenses, in accordance with the Research Ireland Grant Conditions (including the General Terms and Conditions and Letters of Offer) and all applicable UCC research post-award management policies.

  Subject to funding availability, awardees may apply for **additional eligible direct research costs** beyond the annual allocation where justified by the needs of the research project. Applications for additional funding will be considered by the UCC Futures Scholars Board, administered by the Doctoral Institute, in accordance with an approved application, review, and governance process.

The scholarship grant must be accepted in full, including all three budget headings listed above. Applicants are not permitted to apply for or accept funding for only one or

[1] Please note that the awardee will be liable of the annual postgraduate research student capitation fees. More details here: https://www.ucc.ie/en/financeoffice/fees/schedules/capitationfee202627/

two of the budget headings. Partial acceptance of the grant is not allowed under any circumstances.

5. Duration of the Scholarship

The duration of a UCC Futures Scholars Programme (GoI) award is determined by the applicant's stage of doctoral study at the time of application.

5.1 New Entrants

Applicants who have not yet commenced the doctoral programme for which funding is sought are eligible to apply for up to four years of funding, subject to successful registration and continued progression in accordance with UCC regulations.

5.2 Current First-Year Doctoral Candidates

Applicants who have already commenced their doctoral programme may apply, provided they have registered for the first year of their doctoral degree on or after 01 September 2026.

For the pilot 2027 intake, applicants must have first registered for the first year of their doctoral programme between **01 September 2026 and 31 August 2027**, consistent with UCC doctoral registration regulations. Eligible applicants within this category may receive **up to three years of funding**. Applicants whose first registration date precedes **01 September 2026** are not eligible unless an approved leave of absence applies.

5.3 Leave of Absence Provisions

Applicants who have taken an approved leave of absence may be eligible where, after accounting for the leave period, they remain within their first year of doctoral registration at the award start date on 01 October 2027

Eligible leave categories include those recognised under the **UCC Policy on Leave of Absence for Postgraduate Research Students**, including medical leave, family illness or bereavement, maternity, paternity or adoptive leave, or other approved exceptional circumstances.

Applicants should not submit medical records or personal health information as part of their application. Evidence of approved leave will be verified through official UCC records where required.

6. Structure of the PhD Scholarship

The UCC Futures Scholars Programme (GoI) operates under the following conditions:

- **Full-time registration:** All scholarship holders must be registered on a full-time basis for the duration of the award.
- **Location:** Award holders are expected to be primarily based at UCC for the duration of their studies, subject to approved research-related travel, placements, or mobility activities.
- **Start date:** All successful applicants are required to commence their scholarship on 01 October 2027. Applicants must ensure that any academic, eligibility, registration, immigration, or other compliance requirements necessary to support their commencement are satisfied in advance of this registration period. The Doctoral Institute will provide successful applicants with the relevant information and guidance required to support the timely completion of these requirements in accordance with UCC policy.
- **Restriction on full-time employment:** Award holders may not be employed on a full-time basis by UCC, another research organisation, or any other organisation, company, or undertaking during the tenure of the scholarship.

Applicants who are completing another degree programme at the time of application must have met all requirements for the award of that qualification before registering for the doctoral programme.

The expected start date for all awards is **1 October 2027**. Applicants who are unable to commence their scholarship on this date may have their award withdrawn and reallocated to a reserve-listed applicant. The UCC Futures Scholarship Board will review the status of all successful applicants in advance of the commencement date and will determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether an award should be retained, withdrawn, or reallocated, taking account of programme requirements, funding availability, and the individual circumstances of the applicant.

Applicants and Lead Supervisors will be notified in writing of any decision affecting the status of an award and any resulting implications for funding or commencement.

7. Eligibility Criteria

7.1 Eligibility of the Applicant (PhD Scholar)

For the purposes of this call, the **Applicant** is the individual seeking funding under the **UCC Futures Scholars Programme (GoI)** and who, if successful, will undertake the proposed doctoral research project. The Applicant is the named candidate for the scholarship and is responsible for preparing the application, with support from the Lead Supervisor, and for providing all information and documentation required to enable the Lead Supervisor to submit the application.

Throughout this call document, the terms Applicant, doctoral candidate, PhD candidate, scholar, and awardee (where an award has been made) may be used interchangeably, as appropriate.

Applicants of **all nationalities** are eligible to apply. There is **no age limit** for Applicants. All applications will be evaluated through the same assessment process, with funding decisions based on excellence and strategic alignment, irrespective of nationality, age, background, identity, or personal circumstances of the Applicant.

An Applicant may submit **one application only** under this call. The programme is open to:

- Applicants seeking to commence an eligible doctoral programme at UCC; and
- Applicants who have completed no more than the first year of an eligible doctoral programme, subject to the provisions outlined in Section 5.

Applicants must meet the entry requirements for the relevant doctoral programme at UCC :

- Satisfy the minimum **English language requirements** set out in line with the **UCC Postgraduate English Language Entry Requirements** policy.
- Hold, or expect to obtain, a **First Class Honours or Upper Second Class Honours degree** (1.1 or 2.1), or a **Master's degree** (or international **equivalent** in line with UCC guidelines).
- Where an Applicant is completing a qualification at the time of application, all requirements for the award of that qualification must be satisfied no later than 30 September 2027, enabling registration on the doctoral programme from 01 October 2027.
- Have identified an eligible UCC Lead Supervisor who agrees to support the application and submit it on their behalf.

Applicants must provide accurate, complete, and verifiable information in relation to all qualifications, academic achievements, and other information included in their application. Applicants must be able to provide satisfactory documentary evidence to support all information provided, including official academic transcripts, evidence of English language proficiency (where applicable), and any other documentation required under this Call.

Successful applicants will be required to submit all required supporting documentation through the institutional admissions platform (UCC Apply). To facilitate timely admission, registration, and onboarding processes, all required documentation must be submitted no later than 01 April 2027.

Failure to provide the required documentation by this deadline, or the submission of information that is inaccurate, misleading, false, or incapable of verification, may result in the application being deemed ineligible, the withdrawal of an offer of funding, delayed registration, or the termination of an award.

Applicants are **not eligible** if they:

- Hold or have previously held a Research Ireland doctoral scholarship or any other doctoral scholarship.
- Already hold a doctoral degree.
- Submit more than one application to this call.
- Are permanent staff members of a Higher Education Institution or research-performing organisation.

As part of the online application process, Applicants are required to disclose any applications submitted, or intended for submission, to Research Ireland or any other national or international funding programme for the same or a substantially similar research project.

Scholarship holders may hold additional travel bursaries, equipment grants, or other minor awards, subject to approval by UCC and, where applicable, Research Ireland. Such funding must not duplicate support already provided through the scholarship or interfere with the objectives of the award. An awardee may not hold this scholarship simultaneously with another major doctoral scholarship or award that provides equivalent stipend and/or fee support for the same period of study. Any additional funding must be declared to the **Doctoral Institute**, which will assess the circumstances in consultation with the UCC Futures Scholars Board and determine whether any conditions or restrictions apply.

7.2. Eligibility Criteria for the Lead Supervisor

For the purposes of this call, the **Lead Supervisor means** the UCC academic staff member, research staff member, or affiliated clinical staff member with primary responsibility for the academic supervision, oversight, and administration of the Applicant's doctoral programme. The Lead Supervisor is responsible for supporting the Applicant throughout the application process to this programme and submitting the application through the Pure system. The Lead Supervisor must be eligible to supervise doctoral students under UCC's Policy on the Supervision of Research Students.

Applications must be submitted through the designated application system in Pure by the Lead Supervisor, who will serve as the primary academic contact for the application and any subsequent award, if successful.

The Lead Supervisor must:

- Be a member of UCC academic staff, research staff, or affiliated clinical staff eligible to supervise doctoral students under the UCC Policy on the Supervision of Research Students.
- Hold a contract that extends beyond the expected completion date of the Applicant's doctoral programme, which will extend to 30 September 2031.
- Use their UCC institutional email address for all activities associated with the application and supervision of the scholarship.
- Support the Applicant in developing a competitive proposal and verifying the accuracy of information provided in the application.
- Ensure that the proposed research project and supervisory arrangements comply with all relevant UCC regulations and policies.
- Lead Supervisors must have an active personal profile in the UCC Pure platform (institutional Research Information Management System) with their affiliations correctly configured before submitting an application. Applications cannot be submitted without a valid Pure Profile. Supervisors who do not yet have a profile, should contact pure@ucc.ie as early as possible to ensure this is in place before the application deadline.

To promote broad institutional participation and maximise opportunities for outstanding doctoral candidates across the University, **each Lead Supervisor may support only one application as Lead Supervisor under this call**. Where a Lead Supervisor endorses more than one application, all associated applications to their

name will be deemed ineligible. However, there is **no restriction on the number of applications for which an individual may serve as a co-supervisor**.

Applications must be aligned with a **UCC Futures Thematic Area**, **Futures Strategic Research Centre (FSRC)**, **Tyndall National Institute**, or a **non-affiliation**. The selected affiliation must correspond to an area, research centre or structure with which the Lead Supervisor is formally affiliated. Where a Lead Supervisor holds multiple affiliations, in the Application Form they should select the affiliation that most closely aligns with the proposed research project. For award and reporting purposes, only one affiliation may be selected.

As the principal academic sponsor of the application, the Lead Supervisor plays a critical role in ensuring the quality and competitiveness of submissions to the UCC Futures Scholars Programme. Before endorsing an application, the Lead Supervisor should be satisfied that the Applicant demonstrates the academic excellence, research potential, and commitment required to successfully undertake doctoral research at UCC and to be competitive in a rigorous, excellence-based selection process.

The Lead Supervisor is also expected to provide appropriate **guidance and mentorship** during the preparation of the application form and, if the Applicant is selected for the interview, support the Applicant in presenting a clear, compelling, and competitive case for funding. This includes helping to articulate the excellence of the Applicant's academic and research profile, the originality and feasibility of the proposed research project, and its alignment with UCC's research priorities and/or the UCC Futures Framework.

Given the highly competitive nature of the programme, Lead Supervisors should **endorse only applications** that they consider to be **of a standard capable of competing successfully** for this prestigious institutional doctoral scholarship.

8. Ineligible Applications

In addition to the criteria outlined in section 7, applications will be deemed ineligible and will not be considered for funding, and any grant offer will be withdrawn if:

- The Applicant submits more than one application.
- The Lead Supervisor submits or endorses more than one application as Lead Supervisor.
- The application is submitted after the published deadline.
- The application is incomplete.

- Word limits per section in the application are exceeded.
- Additional supporting materials not requested in the call documentation are included in the Application form.
- Information provided is false, misleading, or cannot be verified.
- The proposal has been plagiarised or contains substantial unattributed material.
- The proposed research has already received funding from Research Ireland or another funding agency.
- The applicant does not satisfy the eligibility requirements outlined in this Call Document.
- Canvassing or inappropriate attempts to influence the assessment process occur.
- The proposal is not clearly identifiable as the applicant's own original work.

Assessment of an application does not constitute confirmation of eligibility. UCC reserves the right to verify eligibility at any stage of the application, assessment, award, or registration process and may withdraw an offer where eligibility requirements are not met.

9. How to Apply

Applications must be submitted through the UCC Pure system by the Lead Supervisor by the published deadline. The Lead Supervisor is responsible for reviewing, endorsing, and submitting the application on the Applicant's behalf. The Application Form may be submitted in **either English or Irish**.

As Applicants do not have direct access to PURE, all applications must be developed and submitted in close collaboration with the Lead Supervisor using the Application Form provided as part of this Call. It is the responsibility of both the Applicant and the Lead Supervisor to ensure that the application is complete, accurate, and submitted by the relevant deadline, and that all information provided can be verified if requested.

Lead Supervisors must have an active profile in UCC Pure (the University's Research Information Management System), with their institutional affiliations correctly configured, before submitting an application. Applications cannot be submitted without a valid Pure profile. Supervisors who do not already have a Pure profile should contact pure@ucc.ie as early as possible to ensure that their profile is established and configured before the application deadline.

It is strongly encouraged that the application is submitted well in advance of the relevant deadline, as heavy server traffic on the day may slow down the submission.

Applicants are advised not to wait until the day of the deadline to coordinate submission of their application with their Lead Supervisor. No hard copies or email forms will be accepted. No additional material, beyond that requested in the application form, will be accepted and the inclusion of any such material in the Application Form may render the application ineligible.

Detailed submission guidance, application forms, and a How to Apply - Guide for Applicants will be made available on the UCC Futures Scholars Programme (GoI) webpage.

10. Review and Assessment Process

The UCC Futures Scholars Programme (GoI) operates a competitive, transparent, and merit-based assessment process designed to identify and support outstanding doctoral researchers whose work has the potential to advance knowledge and contribute to UCC's Research and Innovation Strategy.

Applications will be assessed through a rigorous review process involving peer review, panel-based assessment, and institutional oversight. The assessment process is designed to evaluate the excellence of the Applicant, the quality and potential of the proposed research project, and its contribution to UCC's strategic research priorities, including alignment with relevant research strengths, centres, infrastructures, and interdisciplinary opportunities across the University.

Applications must be submitted by the Lead Supervisor on behalf of the Applicant using the prescribed Application Form via Pure. Each application comprises a written proposal of up to 2,700 words, together with supporting information required to assess the Applicant's excellence and potential, the quality of the proposed research project, and the suitability of the research environment in which the project will be undertaken. Application forms may be submitted in either **English or Irish**.

Applications will be assessed solely on the basis of the information provided at the time of submission. Hyperlinks to external websites, online profiles, publication repositories, or supplementary materials should not be included. Any additional materials submitted outside the requirements of the application form will not be considered and may result in the application being deemed ineligible.

To promote fairness and objectivity, personal information, including the Applicant's date of birth, gender, and other special category data under GDPR Article 9, will be collected separately and will not be provided to reviewers during the assessment process.

10.1 Review Panels

Applicants will select one of two assessment streams based on the primary disciplinary orientation of the proposed research project:

- **STEM-Leaning Panel**: Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Health Sciences, and related disciplines.
- **AHSS-Leaning Panel**: Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Business, Law, Education, and related disciplines.

Both panels will apply the same published assessment criteria and scoring framework. Panel membership has been designed to provide appropriate disciplinary breadth, research expertise, and alignment with UCC's strategic research priorities. Each panel will comprise the following members:

- **Chair:** Vice President for Research and Innovation (or nominee);
- **Deputy Chair:** Dean of Doctoral Studies (or nominee);
- **One international external expert** with expertise aligned with the assessment stream.
- **Reviewers** with expertise aligned with the assessment stream will conduct an individual assessment of the Application forms.
    - 10 reviewers nominated through relevant UCC Futures Areas;
    - 2-3 reviewers nominated through relevant FSRCs and Tyndall National Institute;

Reviewers will undertake the independent assessment and scoring of assigned Application Forms. These will be allocated based on disciplinary and subject-matter expertise, while ensuring an equitable distribution of workload among panel members.

The Chair, Deputy Chair, and International External Expert will not undertake the primary assessment or scoring of individual applications. Instead, they will provide oversight of the assessment process, support consistency in the application of assessment criteria, and contribute to panel deliberations to ensure fairness, transparency, and robustness in decision-making.

Independent assessments completed by designated reviewers will form the basis of panel discussions. Final recommendations will be agreed through the panel process, informed by the reviewers' evaluations and scores.

10.2 Assessment Criteria

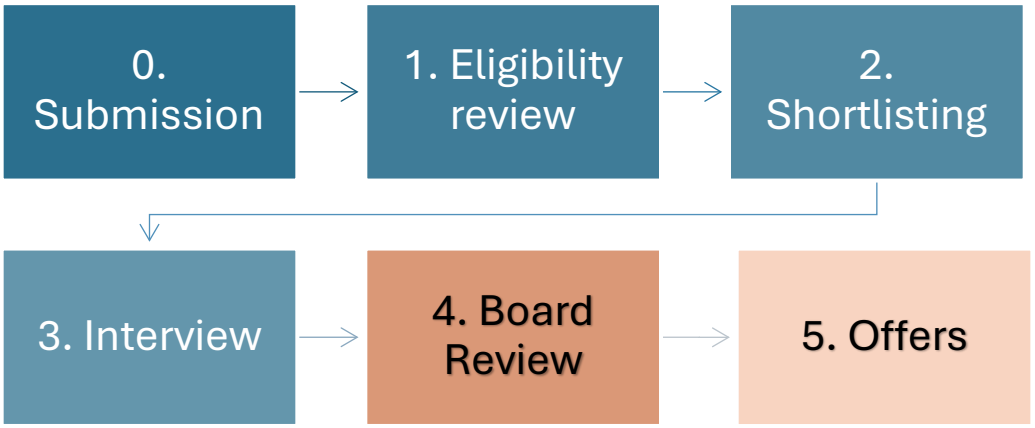
Applications will be evaluated against the following assessment criteria:

Criterion	Weighting
Applicant Profile and Researcher Development & Training Plan	45%
Quality of the Research Project	45%
Research Environment, Research Ecosystem and/or Interdisciplinarity	10%

Detailed descriptors and scoring rubrics are provided in **Appendix 1**.

10.3 Overview of the Review Process

The assessment process comprises the following stages:



The assessment process is designed to achieve two complementary objectives:

A. Excellence Assessment → Identify the most outstanding applications (blue in the diagram above)**.** The eligibility review stage confirms that applications meet the Programme requirements. Applications that pass this stage proceed to shortlisting and subsequent interview, where they are evaluated by expert reviewers against the published assessment criteria. These stages evaluate the calibre and potential of the applicant, the quality and feasibility of the proposed research, and the extent to which the project contributes to and benefits from the relevant research environment, including opportunities for interdisciplinary engagement. This process results in a ranked list of applications based on their performance against the assessment criteria.

B. Strategic Review → Ensure alignment with institutional strategic priorities (orange in the diagram above)**.** The Board Review stage provides institutional oversight and governance of the competition. Drawing only from applications that have demonstrated excellence through the assessment process, the Board considers funding recommendations in the context of UCC's Research & Innovation Strategy, strategic research priorities, the distribution of awards across the research ecosystem, available resources, and historical performance in comparable programmes.

Importantly, strategic alignment does not replace excellence as the primary basis for selection. Rather, the Board makes funding recommendations from among the highest-ranked applications that have already demonstrated excellence through expert review.

Stage 1: Eligibility Review

The Doctoral Institute, in partnership with the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation (OVPRI), will conduct an eligibility review of all submitted applications. This review will confirm that:

- The application has been submitted by an eligible Lead Supervisor.
- The Applicant satisfies the eligibility requirements set out in this Call Document.
- The application is complete.
- Word limits per section have been observed.
- No unauthorised supporting materials have been included.

Only eligible applications will proceed to assessment.

Please note that progression to assessment does not constitute confirmation of final eligibility. UCC reserves the right to verify eligibility and supporting documentation at any stage of the process.

Stage 2: Shortlisting

The purpose of the shortlisting stage is to identify the highest-ranked applications for progression to interview. Applications will be assigned to reviewers according to disciplinary expertise and workload considerations. Any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest will be managed in accordance with UCC's Conflict of Interest Policy.

Individual Review

Led by the reviewers, each application will receive:

- Three reviews.
- Assessment against the published assessment criteria (Appendix 1).
- Independent scoring using a common assessment rubric.

The scores awarded by the reviewers will be aggregated to produce an overall score and preliminary ranking.

Panel Deliberation

Following completion of the individual reviews, each panel will convene to consider the assessment outcomes and agree on a final shortlist for interview. During this meeting:

- Applications will be considered in rank order based on their aggregated review scores.
- Reviewers may be invited to discuss their assessments where significant differences in scoring are identified.
- Material score variances will be examined to ensure consistency in the application of the published assessment criteria across all Applicants in the panel
- Following deliberation, the panel will agree a final ranked shortlist for interview.

The Chair, Deputy Chair, and International External Expert will attend the panel deliberation meeting to oversee the integrity, consistency, and fairness of the assessment process.

Applications will be shortlisted for interview based on their final ranking within the relevant review panel. As a guide, approximately three Applicants may be shortlisted for interview for each scholarship available under the baseline funding allocation.

Following completion of the shortlisting process, all Applicants will receive their numerical assessment scores. Written feedback will not be provided at this stage, regardless of whether an Applicant has been shortlisted for interview. The shortlisting panel meetings are expected to take place in **mid-January 2027**.

After the conclusion of shortlisting panels, applicants shortlisted for interview will be notified of their allocated interview date and time within the provisionally scheduled interview period outlined under Stage 3: Interview. The notification will include all relevant interview requirements, details of the interview format, and information on any available support arrangements.

Stage 3: Interview

The interview stage provides an opportunity for a more in-depth assessment of the Applicant's research potential, readiness to undertake doctoral studies, and understanding of the proposed research project.

Interviews will be conducted online using University-approved videoconference systems and software. Detailed instructions will be provided to shortlisted Applicants in advance of the interview. UCC will take reasonable measures to support Applicants in accessing and using the required platforms and to mitigate potential technical issues where possible. Any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest arising during the interview stage will be managed in accordance with UCC's Conflict of Interest Policy.

Interviews are provisionally scheduled as follows:

- **AHSS leaning panel:** 9-10 February 2027
- **STEM leaning panel:** 11-12 February 2027

By submitting an application, both the Applicant and the Lead Supervisor acknowledge the provisional interview dates set out above and **commit to ensuring the Applicant's availability for interview** at any time during the scheduled interview period. As interviews form a mandatory component of the assessment process, Applicants who are unavailable to attend within the designated period, other than in exceptional circumstances approved by UCC Futures Scholars Board, may be deemed ineligible and excluded from further consideration under the Programme.

During the interview, Applicants will be required to:

- Deliver a short presentation on the proposed research project (maximum 3 minutes). Detailed interview guidance and presentation templates will be provided in advance.
- Participate in **a structured interview led by the three designated reviewers** who assessed the application at the shortlisting stage.
- Interviews will be **conducted online via UCC's designated platform**. To ensure a fair, consistent, and effective assessment process, only the three designated reviewers will have their cameras activated during the interview. **Additional panel members may attend in an observational capacity** and will remain off camera unless required to contribute to the discussion.
- Interview questions will be designed to further explore and substantiate the Applicant's responses against the published assessment criteria.

- Applicants should be prepared to discuss the proposed research project's objectives, methodology, feasibility, and work plan, as well as any relevant ethical considerations, data management arrangements, knowledge dissemination and impact plans, interdisciplinary dimensions (where applicable), and alignment with UCC research priorities and the UCC Futures Framework. The interview may also explore the Applicant's academic achievements, prior research experience, and plans for researcher development throughout the doctoral journey.
- At the shortlisting stage, in exceptional circumstances, the designated reviewers may identify a need for **additional expertise to ensure a comprehensive assessment** of an Applicant at interview. In such circumstances, the panel may request that an expert be co-opted to provide specialist input in the relevant area. Co-opted experts will normally be drawn from UCC academic or professional staff with relevant expertise in the domain. Any such appointment must be approved by the Deputy Chair, who will oversee the process and coordinate the necessary arrangements with the Doctoral Institute. All co-opted experts will be subject to the requirements of UCC's Conflict of Interest Policy.
- Any **co-opted expert** will participate only in the interview(s) for which their expertise has been requested. They will be provided with the relevant application materials and shortlisting assessment information and, during the interview, will perform a role equivalent to that of a designated reviewer in the assessment of the Applicant.
- The Chair, Deputy Chair, and International External Expert will attend all the interviews and oversee the integrity, consistency, and fairness of the assessment process.

The assessment criteria and weightings set out in Appendix 1 will be applied at both the shortlisting and interview stages. Following the interview stage, the review panel will determine a final score for each Applicant. In doing so, the panel will begin with the scores awarded at the shortlisting stage for the written application and will review those scores and associated comments in light of the Applicant's interview performance. The panel may confirm or adjust individual criterion scores where the interview provides additional evidence relevant to the assessment criteria. The final score will therefore reflect the panel's overall assessment of the Applicant against the published criteria, taking into account both the written application and the interview.

Applicants will be ranked on the basis of their final score after the interview stage. Each review panel will produce a final ranked list of all interviewed Applicants within its respective assessment stream (AHSS or STEM-leaning). These ranked lists will reflect the panel's final evaluation against the published assessment criteria and will form the basis for the subsequent scholarship allocation process.

Following completion of the interview stage, the review panel will provide concise written feedback to interviewed Applicants. Feedback will be issued at the same time as award outcomes are communicated.

Reasonable Accommodation

UCC is committed to providing equality of opportunity and an accessible assessment process for all applicants.

Reasonable accommodations are available at the interview stage of this competition. A reasonable accommodation is any appropriate adjustment to the interview process that enables an applicant to participate on an equitable basis and demonstrate their suitability for the award.

Applicants who require a reasonable accommodation or other accessibility supports for the interview will have the opportunity to submit a request following notification that they have been shortlisted for interview. Requests must be submitted within **five working days** of the interview invitation.

Requests for reasonable accommodation will be considered on an individual basis. In determining whether a requested accommodation can be provided, the UCC Futures Scholars Board will consider the applicant's requirements alongside the practical requirements of the assessment process. The objective is to ensure, insofar as reasonably possible, that applicants can participate fully and fairly in the interview.

Requests for reasonable accommodation will be treated confidentially and will only be shared with those involved in administering or facilitating the interview process where necessary to implement the accommodation.

The need for a reasonable accommodation, or the request for one, will not influence the assessment of an application and applicants will not be disadvantaged through seeking support.

Applicants should **not** submit personal health information, medical records, or evidence of a medical diagnosis as part of their accommodation request unless specifically requested for the purpose of assessing and implementing a reasonable accommodation.

Stage 4: UCC Futures Scholarship Board Review

The UCC Futures Scholarship Board provides institutional and strategic oversight of the programme and is responsible for approving final funding recommendations.

The Board is chaired by:

- Chair: The Vice President for Research and Innovation;
- Deputy Chair: The Dean of Doctoral Studies.

Other Board membership may include representatives from:

- UCC College Vice-Deans for Research;
- Early career researcher representation;
- a representative of the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging sub-committee of University Leadership Team;
- Other relevant institutional stakeholders.

The Board is responsible for:

- Ensuring the integrity and consistency of the assessment process.
- Reviewing final ranked Applicant list from the review panels.
- Ensuring alignment between scholarship outcomes and the strategic objectives of the UCC Futures Scholars Programme.
- Providing governance oversight of the programme and associated processes, including decisions relating to funding withdrawal, reasonable accommodations, and other matters requiring formal governance review.
- Confirming final funding recommendations.

The Board will not reassess individual applications or substitute its judgement for the peer-review evaluations undertaken by the review panels. Its role is to provide oversight of the competition, ensuring that funding recommendations are consistent with the objectives of the UCC Research and Innovation Strategy and are derived from an assessment process that is robust, fair, transparent, and applied consistently across all applications. The Board's oversight function relates to the integrity and governance of the process rather than the reassessment of individual applications or review outcomes. Any conflicts of interest at Board level will be managed in accordance with UCC's Conflict of Interest Policy.

At this stage, the separate ranked lists produced by the AHSS and STEM- leaning review panels will be integrated into a single consolidated ranking of Applicants. As a pilot initiative in 2027, the allocation of doctoral awards at the Board Review stage will seek to maintain continuity with established patterns of research excellence and success under previous iterations of the Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Programme across UCC's strategic research ecosystem. The final funding recommendation and approval stage is provisionally scheduled for the **end of February 2027**.

Stage 5: Award

Following approval by the UCC Futures Scholarship Board of the final ranked list of applicants, informed by the outcomes of the assessment process and the strategic priorities of the Programme, applicants will be assigned to one of the following categories:

- **Awarded:** Applicants who are selected for funding will be required to submit the documentation necessary to satisfy the admission requirements for a structured PhD in UCC before 1 April 2027.
- **Reserve**: Applicants placed on the Reserve list are not funded in the first instance but may be offered an award where additional funding becomes available; an awarded applicant declines an offer of funding; an awarded applicant fails to satisfy the conditions required to take up the award; or funding is otherwise reallocated by the University. Placement on the Reserve list does not guarantee that an award will subsequently be offered.
- **Not Awarded:** Applicants in this category will not be offered funding under this call.

Awards are subject to the availability of funding. Once all available funding has been allocated, no further awards will be made. The outcome of this call remains subject to confirmation of the funding awarded to UCC by Research Ireland under the Empower Programme. Accordingly, inclusion on a ranked list, placement on the Reserve List, or notification of award does not constitute an offer of admission to a doctoral programme and does not guarantee funding.

All applicants who progress to the interview stage will receive written feedback together with their final interview-stage score, regardless of the outcome of their application (Awarded, Reserve, or Not Awarded).

Post-Award Requirements

Applicants offered an award will be required to submit all documentation necessary to support admission through the University's admissions platform (UCC Apply). To facilitate these processes, **all required documentation must be submitted in UCC Apply no later than 1 April 2027**.

Failure to provide the required documentation by this deadline, or the submission of information that is inaccurate, misleading, false, incomplete, or incapable of verification, may result in the application being deemed ineligible, withdrawal of the funding offer, or termination of the award.

Awards will be formally confirmed only upon:

- Successful admission to an eligible doctoral programme at UCC;
- Completion of all applicable University admission and enrolment requirements; and
- Registration as a full-time doctoral student at UCC no later than 1 October 2027.

Conditions of Award

Awarded applicants must engage in full-time doctoral research at UCC for the duration of the scholarship in line with applicable policies for progression and examination for a structured PhD. Throughout the award period, awardees must:

- Maintain full-time PhD registration at UCC and comply with all applicable policies, regulations, and requirements relating to postgraduate research at the University[2];
- Not be employed on a full-time basis by UCC, another Research Body, or any other organisation, company, or undertaking;
- Maintain residency in the Republic of Ireland; and
- Maintain a physical presence at UCC and reside within a reasonable travelling distance of the University to support full participation in their doctoral programme, research activities, training, and cohort-based programme requirements.

Appeals

[2] More details on applicable policies for postgraduate researchers in UCC here: https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/gs-policies/

To safeguard the integrity, fairness, and transparency of the assessment process, appeals may be submitted **only on procedural grounds**. An appeal may be made where an Applicant can demonstrate that a procedural irregularity, administrative or factual error, conflict of interest, bias, or failure to apply the published Call Document rules or assessment criteria.

The appeals process is limited to reviewing whether the assessment and decision-making processes were conducted in accordance with the published procedures. It does not provide an opportunity to reassess applications or reconsider academic judgments. Appeals will therefore not be considered where they are based solely on disagreement with reviewer comments, assessment scores, rankings, interview outcomes, panel deliberations, or funding decisions.

Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Doctoral Institute within **10 working days** of the outcome being communicated to Applicants. The appeal must clearly set out the grounds for appeal and include any supporting evidence. Appeals received outside this timeframe, or which do not identify valid procedural grounds, will not be considered. The UCC Futures Scholarship Board will review the appeal to determine whether sufficient grounds exist. Where an appeal is upheld, the Board will determine the appropriate corrective action, which may include a review of the affected stage of the process. Upholding an appeal does not guarantee a change to the outcome of the competition or the award of funding.

Applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of their appeal. The decision of the UCC Futures Scholarship Board shall be final, and no further appeal or review will be permitted under this Call.

11. Research Ireland relevant Policies

All PhD positions funded under the UCC Futures Scholars Programme (GoI)are based at University College Cork (UCC) and supported through the **Research Ireland Empower Programme**. As such, all awards and awardees are subject to the policies, terms and conditions of both Research Ireland and University College Cork and must comply with the relevant funding requirements in place for the duration of the award.

UCC Future Scholars awardees are recognised as Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship holders.

Applicants and supervisors should familiarise themselves with the applicable Research Ireland policies and guidance, including (but not limited to):

- General Terms and Conditions
- Animal Usage Policy
- Research Integrity Policy
- Maternity, Paternity and Adoptive Leave Policy
- Appeals Process
- Child Protection Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Open Research Policy
- Data Management Requirements
- Grant Budget Policy
- Disability Policy
- State Aid Requirements
- DORA (San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment)

As Research Ireland continues to develop and consolidate its policy framework, additional policies and guidance will be published on the Research Ireland website and may be accessed at: https://www.researchireland.ie/funding-policies/ . Applicants and supervisors should consult the Research Ireland policies in force at the time of application and award. They may also refer to the legacy policy and guidance resources of the former funding agencies, where relevant:

- Science Foundation Ireland (SFI): https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/
- Irish Research Council (IRC): https://research.ie/about-us/policies/

Applicants and supervisors are also expected to familiarise themselves with and comply with all relevant UCC research policies and procedures applicable to the application, award, and conduct of research. These policies are available here:https://www.ucc.ie/en/research/support/#ucc-research-policies

12. ORCID iD

ORCID iD provides a persistent digital identifier that distinguishes researchers from each other and, through integration in key research workflows such as manuscript and grant submission, supports automated linkages between a researcher and their professional activities ensuring that their work is recognised.

The provision of an ORCID iD at the application stage is required to support the administration of the review and assessment process, including the implementation of gender-blind review. Applicants who do not already have an ORCID iD should register for one in advance of submitting their application at: https://orcid.org/register

13. Gender Strategy

The UCC Futures Scholars Programme (GoI)is committed to advancing gender equality in doctoral education and research. This Gender Equality Strategy is aligned with UCC's institutional commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion, including *Belonging at UCC: A Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 2025-2028*, the *UCC Gender Equality Action Plan (Silver Athena Swan) 2024-2029*, the *UCC Race Equality Action Plan 2025-2028*, and *Together with Pride: LGBT+ Action Plan 2025-2028*.

The programme is committed to ensuring equitable access to funding opportunities, fair and objective assessment processes, inclusive research environments, and appropriate support for doctoral researchers throughout the award lifecycle.

The strategy is guided by the following principles:

- **Equitable Access**: all eligible applicants, regardless of gender identity, gender expression, or gender-related circumstances, should have an equal opportunity to compete for funding.
- **Transparency and Fairness**: assessment processes will be based on transparent and consistently applied criteria.
- **Inclusive Participation**: the programme seeks to support gender diversity across disciplines and research areas.
- **Supportive Research Environments**: awardees should be embedded within supervisory and institutional environments that promote equality, inclusion, and wellbeing.
- **Institutional Alignment**: the programme contributes to UCC's wider commitments to gender equality and inclusive research cultures.

Implementation of the Gender Strategy

To promote impartial assessment, applications will be reviewed through a gender-blind evaluation process. Information that could directly identify an applicant's gender will

not be made available to designated reviewers. This includes applicant profile details such as names, titles, pronouns, and other gender-identifying information.

Applicants and supervisors should, where practicable, avoid including references to the applicant's gender identity within the Application Form. To support a fair and consistent assessment process, all sections of the **Application Form should be drafted using gender-neutral language**. References to the applicant should use terms such as “the applicant” or “they/them”, and should avoid names, titles, pronouns, or other information that may unnecessarily indicate the applicant's gender.

Adherence to these requirements is essential to maintain the integrity of the gender-blind assessment process and to ensure all applications are considered on an equitable basis.

The programme incorporates a number of measures designed to promote fairness and minimise the risk of conscious or unconscious bias during assessment. These measures include:

- the use of published assessment criteria and scoring frameworks applied consistently across all applications;
- structured peer-review and panel processes;
- standardised interview procedures and evaluation criteria for shortlisted candidates;
- the provision of reasonable accommodations, where required, for applicants participating in interviews; and
- reviewer guidance that reinforces the principles of fairness, objectivity, equality, diversity and inclusion.

The programme welcomes applications from all disciplines and recognises that patterns of gender representation vary across research fields. Applications will be assessed against the same published criteria irrespective of disciplinary area.

The programme recognises that personal circumstances, including caring responsibilities and periods of approved leave, may affect academic progression and research timelines. To support equitable participation:

- applicants who have taken maternity, paternity, adoptive, medical, bereavement, or other recognised leave may remain eligible where eligibility requirements continue to be met following adjustment for the relevant leave period;
- interviews will be conducted online, and reasonable accommodations will be provided where required to facilitate participation;

- the programme operates in accordance with relevant UCC policies relating to equality, diversity, inclusion, dignity and respect, disability support, and research student welfare; and
- awardees will have access to the institutional supports, training opportunities, and professional development resources available to UCC doctoral researchers.

In assessing applications, consideration will be given to the quality of the proposed research environment and its capacity to support doctoral researcher development. This may include consideration of:

- the suitability and inclusiveness of supervisory arrangements;
- access to mentoring, training and professional development opportunities; and
- the extent to which the wider research environment supports an inclusive and positive doctoral experience.

Governance

Gender equality considerations form part of the programme's governance and oversight arrangements.

The UCC Futures Scholars Board includes representation from relevant University equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging representatives. The Board will oversee implementation of the programme and monitor alignment with UCC's equality commitments.

The programme will periodically review assessment outcomes and operational practices to identify opportunities for continuous improvement and to support the ongoing advancement of gender equality within the doctoral research community. This Gender Strategy may be updated from time to time to reflect developments in legislation, national policy, institutional priorities, and good practice.

The programme is committed to continuous improvement and will consider feedback from applicants, awardees, reviewers, supervisors, and governance bodies in future reviews of this strategy.

14. Plagiarism and Gen-AI Use

Applications must be the Applicant's own work, developed with the support of the supervisory team. The Applicant and supervisory team are jointly responsible for the originality, accuracy, and scholarly integrity of the application. By submitting an application, they confirm that the proposal is free from plagiarism and that its

intellectual content, research rationale, and scholarly judgement have not been outsourced, delegated to, or substantially generated through the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) systems or other third parties. Where concerns arise regarding the academic integrity of the scholarly judgement underpinning an application, the matter will be considered by the UCC Futures Scholars Board, which may determine the application to be ineligible at any stage of the review process.

15. Intellectual Property Management

Intellectual Property (IP) management practices will be in accordance with UCC's Intellectual Property Policy and relevant national guidelines. In particular, the management of IP arising out of the UCC Futures Scholars Programme (GoI) must comply with the practices and procedures described in the RDI Framework, Ireland's National IP Protocol 2019 and UCC Intellectual Property Policy. The UCC Futures Scholars Programme (GoI) is research funded by the State. UCC is responsible for the arrangements related to the management of IP arising from the UCC Futures Scholars Programme.

16. Application Guidance

Applicants and Lead Supervisors should read this Call Document carefully before preparing and submitting an application.

Information sessions for Applicants and Lead Supervisors will be scheduled during the call period, and details will be communicated in due course, ensuring equitable access to guidance and information for all potential applicants.

Any general enquiries relating to this call, including questions regarding eligibility, application requirements, or the operation of the call process, should be directed to the UCC Doctoral Institute at email: **uccempowerapplications@ucc.ie**.

17. Applicant and Lead Supervisor Acknowledgements

The Lead Supervisor (on behalf of themselves, the Applicant, and other members of the supervisory team) must confirm each of the following declarations in the Application Form.

1. I hereby declare that we have read and **accept the requirements as eligibility criteria** as set out in the Call Document.

☐ I agree

2. I confirm that, for the purposes of this UCC Futures Scholarship call, this is the **only applicant whom I endorse**, whose application I submit through the Pure portal, and for whom I have agreed to act as Lead Supervisor in line with Call Document requirements.

☐ I agree

3. I confirm that the **information supplied in this application is correct** and recognise that should it become apparent that any of the information provided in the application is inaccurate or not verifiable with appropriate documentation, it will result in the application automatically being deemed ineligible.

☐ I agree

4. I confirm that this application is the **Applicant's own work**, developed with the supervisory team. The Applicant and supervisory team are jointly responsible for the originality, accuracy, and scholarly integrity of the application. I confirm that the proposal is free from plagiarism and that its intellectual content, research rationale, and scholarly judgement have not been outsourced, delegated to, or substantially generated through the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) systems or other third parties.

☐ I agree

5. I confirm that the proposed research does not include any **activities that are ineligible for funding** under the UCC Research Ethics framework, Research Ireland and EU-funding ethics requirements. These ineligible activities for funding are:

- Research activity aimed at human cloning for reproductive purposes
- Research activity intended to modify the genetics of human beings that could make such changes heritable (with the exception of research relating to cancer treatment of the gonads, which may be funded)
- Research activities to create human embryos solely for the purpose of research or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer

☐ I agree

6. I confirm that **no application for funding for the same or a substantially similar research project has been submitted**, or is intended to be submitted, to Research Ireland or any other national or international funding programme.

☐ I confirm the above statement
☐ I have submitted, or intend to submit, an application for funding for the same or a substantially similar research project.

APPENDIX 1- Assessment Criteria

Applications will be reviewed across three weighted assessment criteria during shortlisting and interviews. Reviewers will assess the quality of the applicant, the strength and feasibility of the proposed research, and the suitability of the research environment (and interdisciplinary potential if relevant) in supporting successful doctoral outcomes.

1. Applicant Profile & Training Plan (45%)

Focus: The applicant's academic preparation, research potential, motivation, and capacity to benefit from doctoral training.

Reviewers will consider:

Academic Qualifications

- Quality and relevance of academic qualifications attained and/or currently being completed.
- Evidence of academic excellence and achievement.

Research Achievements and Experience

- Research outputs and achievements, including publications, presentations, artistic or creative works, datasets, patents, or other scholarly contributions.
- Relevant professional, voluntary, leadership, enterprise, or community engagement activities.
- Evidence of initiative, innovation, collaboration, and problem-solving skills.

Personal Statement

- Motivation for pursuing doctoral research.
- Demonstrated interest and suitability for the proposed field of study.
- Evidence of research potential and capacity to undertake independent research.
- Alignment between previous experience and the proposed doctoral project.

Career Training and Development Plan

- Clarity of career aspirations and professional goals.
- Quality and feasibility of the proposed training and skills development plan.
- Commitment to developing both discipline-specific and transferable skills.
- Preparation for future career pathways within and beyond academia.

2. Research Project (45%)

Focus: The quality, originality, impact, and feasibility of the proposed doctoral research.

Reviewers will consider:

Potential Impact

- Importance and relevance of the challenge, opportunity, or knowledge gap being addressed.
- Potential benefits to society, policy, industry, culture, health, communities, or the environment.
- Clear articulation of expected outcomes and beneficiaries.
- Ability to communicate the significance of the research to a broad audience.

Research Excellence

- Quality and coherence of the research aims, objectives, and questions.
- Demonstrated understanding of the current state of knowledge in the field.
- Originality and potential contribution of the research.
- Overall scholarly merit and significance of the proposed project.

Methodology and Feasibility

- Appropriateness and robustness of the proposed methodology.
- Suitability of methods, data sources, analytical approaches, or research techniques.
- Identification of potential risks and mitigation strategies.
- Feasibility of completing the project successfully within the timeframe of a doctoral programme.

3. Research Ecosystem and/or Interdisciplinarity (10%)

Focus: The extent to which the research environment and supervisory arrangements will support successful project delivery.

Reviewers will consider:

Supervisory Fit

- Alignment between supervisory expertise and the proposed research project.
- Capacity of the supervisory team to support doctoral success.
- Access to relevant academic, professional, and international networks.

Research Environment

- Strength and relevance of the wider research ecosystem, including research centres, institutes, schools, Futures Areas & FSRCs, and collaborative partnerships.
- Opportunities for learning, mentoring, engagement, and professional development.

Resources and Support

- Availability of facilities, infrastructure, specialist expertise, and training opportunities required for project completion.
- Adequacy of resources to support successful research outcomes.

Interdisciplinarity (where relevant)

- Integration of expertise, methods, or perspectives from multiple disciplines or sectors.
- Added value created through interdisciplinary approaches.
- Contribution of interdisciplinarity to research quality, innovation, and impact.

APPENDIX 2- Application Form

(Provided in separate file)