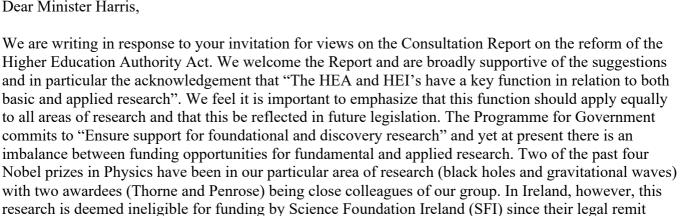


5th March 2021

Dear Minister Harris,



The recent improvements in research funding via the Irish Research Council (IRC) have helped to address this imbalance. Both bringing the IRC postgraduate scholarship stipend in line with the SFI rate and the reintroduction of the IRC Laureate Awards are very welcome, and partially fill a gap left by discontinued Principal-Investigator led schemes such as the highly-successful Research Frontiers Programme. We hope further improvements to funding basic research can be made in the near future.

excludes fundamental basic research (unless linked to international bodies such as the Royal Society).

In the short term, there are two apparently minor changes to the existing IRC schemes that would substantially improve the competitiveness of Irish research:

- 1. Bring the salary of the IRC postdoctoral scheme in line with the IUA Researcher Salary scales to be competitive with SFI and similar European schemes.
- 2. Adjust the timing of the IRC postdoctoral scheme to be in line with the standard international cycle, whereby postdoctoral researchers are typically recruited in the first two months of the year with a view to taking up a position at the start of the next academic year. It is our experience that exceptional candidates more often than not accept offers given at this time rather than take the risk of waiting on IRC results even if a position in Ireland is their first choice. This simple zero-cost change would align the timing of the scheme with that of other prestigious international awards such as the EU's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowships and avoid unnecessary loss of talent from the Irish research landscape.

Ireland has identified research as fundamentally important to our future as a knowledge-led economy. We believe that fundamental basic research such as that we conduct plays a key role in attracting talented youth into scientific degrees. Scientifically, we have the capacity to attract top global research talent, but it is only by recognising this importance through adequate and appropriately-directed funding of all research areas that our ambitions as a society can be realised.

Sincerely yours,