



Innovation in Vision Research Postdoctoral Training Network

Guide for Applicants 2026

The Coordinating organization, South East Technological University, reserves the right to amend this document.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme under the Marie Skłodowska -Curie grant agreement No 101217199.

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Overview of the INNOVISION COFUND programme	3
2.1. Why do we need the INNOVISION?	4
2.2. About INNOVISION Fellowships	5
3. Benefits to fellows	6
3.1. Benefits of a INNOVISION fellowship	6
3.2. INNOVISION COFUND training programme	7
3.3. Supervision and support	7
3.4. Remuneration	8
4. Key Dates	9
5. Eligibility	9
5.1. Eligibility requirements for applicants	9
5.2. Eligibility requirements for supervisors	10
5.3. Summary of the eligibility criteria for INNOVISION fellowships	11
6. Preparing to apply	11
6.1. Identify a suitable fellowship topic	11
6.2. Confirm support of your proposed main supervisor	12
6.3. Confirm support of the Seconding Supervisor	12
6.4. FAQs	13
7. How to apply	13
7.1. The online application system	13
8. INNOVISION evaluation process	14
8.1. Step One – Independent International Expert Review	15
8.2. Evaluation Criteria and Scoring	15
8.3. Step Two – Interview Stage	16
8.4. Gender-blinding applications for evaluation purposes	16
9. Information for successful applicants	17

Additional Information Documents, Guidance Documents, and Templates are all available on the INNOVISION Website

INNOVISION fellowships are governed by the INNOVISION COFUND Terms and Conditions, and the Award Acceptance Form. The contents of this Guide are for general information purposes and the assistance of applicants. In the event of any discrepancy arising between this Guide and the Terms and Conditions/ Award Acceptance Form, the latter will prevail.

Please read this document carefully before submitting your application.

1. Introduction

INNOVISION COFUND is a postdoctoral research programme that is co-funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under Marie Skłodowska -Curie Actions (MSCA), South East Technological University (SETU), Experimentica Ltd (EXP), University of Iceland, Haskoli Islands (HI), McMaster University's Department of Engineering (MMU), The Dry Eye Foundation (DEF), Fighting Blindness (FB), with additional support from: University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus (UOC), Bausch+Lomb Ireland (B&L), Oculdel Ltd (OCD), The Queen's University Belfast (QUB), The University of Birmingham (UOB), Loyola University of Chicago (LUC), Rowan University (RU), OcuMedic Inc (OCM), Instituto Superior Tecnico (IST), Universidad de Santiago de Compostela (USC), Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM), Sirius XT (SXT), MediNect (MNT), Auckland Cancer Society Research Centre (ACSR). The list of partners is consistently growing, and the most detailed and up-to-date this is accessible on the website.

The three recruiting funding partners, SETU (Coordinator), EXP, and HI, along with supporting partners and contributors, have come together to create this critical postdoctoral fellowship programme to tackle the growing health crisis that is vision loss and ocular disease. The complementary research target areas (Ocular Pharmacology & Therapeutics, Drug Delivery & Biomaterials, Disease Mechanisms & Pathophysiology, Imaging, Molecular & Cellular Biology, Computational & Data Sciences, Translational & Clinical Research, Vision Neuroscience & Neurobiology, Public and Patient Involvement in Vision Research), are the keys to INNOVISION's scope. The lead agency, SETU, will manage the programme, with support of all partners within the programme.

SETU, in partnership with all members of the INNOVISION COFUND, has provided this guide with practical information to assist potential applications in preparing and submitting an application for the INNOVISION COFUND.

Important: The overall responsibility for the proposal preparation, for timely completion of all steps of the application process, and for compliance with the INNOVISION COFUND Terms and Conditions if an award is made, lies with the applicant/fellow.

2. Overview of INNOVISION

Vision impairment and ocular disease represent a major and growing global health concern, affecting over two billion people worldwide¹. These conditions include both common and preventable issues, such as refractive errors, ocular inflammation and oxidative stress, and more severe, chronic diseases such as inherited retinal disorders, glaucoma, and diabetic retinopathy. The consequences extend well beyond sight itself: vision loss can restrict educational opportunities, limit employment, and contribute to social isolation, reduced independence, and mental health challenges. At the societal level, the economic costs are enormous, amounting to hundreds of billions each year in direct healthcare expenditure and lost productivity. The burden falls disproportionately on low- and middle-income countries,

¹ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/world-report-on-vision>

where access to eye care services is often limited, and on ageing populations in high-income countries, where chronic disease is on the rise.²

Addressing these challenges requires a bold, interdisciplinary approach to research. Progress in vision science depends not only on advances in ophthalmology but also on breakthroughs in areas such as nanomedicine, pharmacology, genetics, chemistry, engineering, molecular biology, psychology, artificial intelligence, and public health. Solutions to complex eye diseases must integrate perspectives from across the biomedical sciences, while also incorporating insights from social sciences, such as ethnography and health economics, to ensure that new technologies and therapies are both effective and accessible. Equally important is the need to engage with patients and the public, whose lived experiences can shape research directions and ensure alignment with real-world needs. Collaboration between academic institutions, healthcare providers, industry partners, and advocacy groups is therefore central to making meaningful progress. By uniting expertise across disciplines and sectors, vision research can drive innovation, accelerate the translation of discoveries into the clinic, and ultimately reduce the global burden of vision impairment.

These research priorities are closely aligned with the European Union's wider objectives of promoting health, advancing digital and green transitions, and ensuring inclusiveness. Innovative solutions in ocular health can help reduce health inequalities by improving access to care, particularly for underserved communities. The application of digital technologies and artificial intelligence has the potential to transform diagnostics, treatment planning, and patient monitoring, while sustainable approaches in biomedical research contribute to the EU's green ambitions. By situating ocular research within these broader policy frameworks, projects in this field not only address an urgent healthcare need but also contribute to the long-term vision of a healthier, fairer, and more sustainable Europe.

2.1. Why do we need INNOVISION?

The rising incidence of vision impairment and ocular disease is a major global health challenge. More than two billion people are affected worldwide, and at least one billion cases are preventable. These conditions include common refractive errors as well as severe disorders such as inherited retinal diseases, glaucoma, and diabetic retinopathy. Their impact extends beyond vision, restricting education, limiting employment, and increasing risks of isolation and mental health difficulties. The economic burden is also substantial, costing hundreds of billions each year in healthcare and lost productivity. The effects are felt most strongly in ageing populations and in low- and middle-income countries where access to care is limited.

To respond effectively, research must be international, interdisciplinary, and intersectoral. Progress in ocular health and vision requires more than advances in ophthalmology. It depends on contributions from genetics, nanomedicine, pharmacology, chemistry, engineering, artificial intelligence, and digital health, combined with insights from psychology, public health, and the social sciences. Most significantly, it requires input from the people living with and caring for persons with these ocular conditions. Examples include the need for new drug delivery systems for chronic eye disease, improved genetic and molecular therapies for inherited retinal disorders, and better use of digital technologies to transform diagnostics and patient monitoring. Research must also address behavioural and

² <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeclinm.2022.101354>

societal aspects such as health communication, patient engagement, and reducing inequalities in access to treatment. Together, these priorities define the agenda for vision research in the years ahead.

As such, INNOVISION aims to:

- Support researchers from a range of disciplines to conduct and manage projects that address the growing global burden of ocular disease and vision impairment.
- Build a critical mass of well-connected experts who are fully engaged with the European and international innovation ecosystem, working together across disciplines, sectors, and countries to develop solutions with real impact on eye health.
- Advance fellows' career development through high-quality research training, supervision, mentoring, and transferable skills development, preparing them for diverse career opportunities in academia, industry, healthcare, and beyond.
- Promote the dissemination and communication of research outcomes to a wide audience, including patients, practitioners, policymakers, and the public, ensuring that knowledge is translated into better prevention, treatment, and care.
- Pioneer a holistic, interdisciplinary approach to tackling complex ocular diseases by integrating expertise from biomedical sciences, digital technologies, engineering, social sciences, and patient engagement.

INNOVISION fellows and alumni will contribute to relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals in relation to health and well-being (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4), and reduced inequalities (SDG 10).³

2.2. About INNOVISION Fellowships

INNOVISION will recruit 12 research fellows over the lifetime of the programme. Recruitment will take place in two calls, each appointing six fellows. Every fellowship will be a full-time position of 30 months' duration, with fellows employed under competitive conditions in the identified recruiting organisations (SETU, EXP, and HI) that follow the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.⁴

The programme uses a “bottom-up” approach, giving fellows the freedom to define their own research project, select their main supervisor from the allotted Main Supervisors on the website, and design international and/or intersectoral secondments that best support their training and career goals. This flexibility allows each fellow to shape a project that reflects both their own expertise and ambitions while contributing to the wider objectives of advancing vision science and reducing the global burden of ocular disease.

In addition to their research activities, fellows will receive comprehensive training in advanced scientific methods, transferable skills, and professional development, including project management, grant writing, science communication, and patient and public engagement. This training is designed to prepare fellows for leadership roles in research and innovation across academia, industry, healthcare, and policy sectors.

INNOVISION aims to recruit top-class researchers from anywhere in the world,

³ For more information, see <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

⁴ <https://www.setu.ie/research-innovation/our-research-culture/hr-strategy-for-researchers#:~:text=The%20Human%20Resources%20Strategy%20for,by%20sending%20the%20endorsement%20letter.>

funding their projects on the basis of excellence. Fellows will have the freedom to define their own research project within the broad field of vision science. Projects are expected to be interdisciplinary, intersectoral, and internationally relevant. While not exhaustive, potential areas of investigation may include:

- Nanomedicine and advanced drug delivery for ocular diseases
- Genetics and molecular therapies, including approaches for inherited retinal disorders
- Pharmacology and biomaterials for novel therapeutics
- Biomedical engineering and imaging technologies for diagnosis and treatment monitoring
- Artificial intelligence and digital health in ophthalmology and vision care
- Chemistry and molecular biology relevant to ocular disease mechanisms
- Psychology and mental health impacts of vision impairment
- Public health and health systems research, including access to eye care
- Ethnographic and social science studies of patient and community experiences
- Veterinary ophthalmology and comparative medicine as translational models

These themes illustrate the wide range of disciplines that can contribute to advancing understanding, treatment, and prevention of ocular disease. Applicants are encouraged to propose projects that cross traditional boundaries and demonstrate creativity, feasibility, and potential impact.

3. Benefits to fellows

3.1. Benefits of an INNOVISION fellowship

The successful applicants will participate in a unique, innovative, and high-level fellowship programme.

Fellows will:

- Be provided with a 30 -month fully paid internationally recognised HE MSCA COFUND fellowship, employed by one of the three recruiting organisations (SETU, EXP, or HI). Fellowships will include a family allowance, where applicable.
- Be free to choose their own topic, the Main Supervisor, Co-Supervisors, and Seconding institutions (See Section 5) as applicable.
- INNOVISION, in line with the European Charter and Code for Researchers,⁵ is based on individual-driven research. Fellows, together with their supervisors, will design and lead projects that reflect their own expertise and interests, provided the research is highly relevant to ocular disease and vision science as described in Section 2.
- Deepen their disciplinary expertise while developing their interdisciplinary competencies through immersion in individual and programme-wide training opportunities.
- Avail of enhanced intersectoral upskilling, growing their professional networks, as a result of substantial targeted exposure to policymakers and practitioners in the context of INNOVISION training events, conferences,

⁵ <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/hrexcellenceaward/european-charter-researchers>

- intersectoral/international/interdisciplinary secondments, and high-profile circulation of programme reports.
- Develop both research and transferable skills as a result of INNOVISION COFUND training.
 - Be supported in their research projects, attainment of training goals, and career development planning by a dedicated supervisory panel.
 - Be supported in carrying out their research project through provision of research budget.
 - Develop partnerships, research and support networks with their co-fellows through collaboration opportunities during the fellowships.
 - Develop public profiles as experts in their scientific areas and beyond, supporting their future career prospects.

3.2. INNOVISION COFUND training programme

Given the highly ambitious nature of INNOVISION's goals, the training programme includes individualised training at local level in the host organisations, as well as programme-wide training. Individual training will take place in the main host organisation, as well as during the international, intersectoral, and/or interdisciplinary secondment, where applicable.

Fellows will work with their supervisors in each setting to identify their training needs, identify local training opportunities to meet those needs, and to gain access to that training.

The programme-wide training will consist of three multi-day training events and a final monthly online/hybrid Seminar Series organized by the fellows jointly, and a final closing conference and networking event.

At all levels, training in research-related skills and transferable skills will be made available to INNOVISION fellows, facilitating their consistent upskilling. The training programme is informed by members of the INNOVISION Steering Committee, which is both multidisciplinary and intersectoral in composition.

3.3. Supervision and support

Each fellow will have a Supervisory Committee (SC), consisting of their Main Supervisor at the Recruiting Organisation, a Seconding Supervisor, and up to two potential Co-Supervisors within their recruiting organization. Further details on eligibility of Supervisors in Section 5.

Supervisory Committees will support the INNOVISION fellows in identifying training needs, and in drafting their Career Development Plan (CDP) and revising it throughout the fellowship. Ultimately, the CDP should facilitate alignment between fellowship activities (research, training, outputs) and long-term career plans and training needs. All supervisors must adhere to the Charter and Code for Research Supervision.

Fellows will meet individually with their Main Supervisors and entire Supervisory Committee regularly to ensure their projects are supported, and to avail of the best training opportunities and be made aware of upcoming opportunities.

3.4. Remuneration

Fellows Allowance	Gross Amount Per Month	Gross Amount Per Year
Living and Mobility Allowance <i>without family allowance</i> <i>(All totals prior to tax, social deductions, or involuntary contributions for any host country. Amount in Euro, to be converted to local currency and cannot be adjusted for changes to exchange rate)</i>	€5,400	€64,800
Living and Mobility Allowance <i>with family allowance</i> <i>(All totals prior to tax, social deductions, or involuntary contributions for any host country. Amount in Euro, to be converted to local currency and cannot be adjusted for changes to exchange rate)</i>	€5,900	€70,800

The mobility allowance will be paid throughout the whole duration of the fellowship. The employment contracts will be in line with each recruiting organisations national laws. In Ireland, recruited fellows’ employment contracts will be aligned to the Terms of Employment (Information) Acts 1994 and 2001⁶. The Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005⁷ provides social security coverage for illness, maternity, unemployment, and pensions, while the Pay-Related Social Insurance (PRSI) scheme mandates employer and employee contributions to fund benefits such as maternity leave, disability, and unemployment support. Ireland’s public healthcare system, in combination with the Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI) contributions, offers healthcare benefits to all workers. In Iceland, employment laws ensure strong social protections and work-life balance. The Working Hours Act⁸ caps working hours at 40 per week, with a guaranteed minimum of 11 hours of continuous rest in each 24-hour period. Social security coverage in Iceland is provided under the Social Security Act (No. 100/2007), which includes healthcare, pensions, unemployment benefits, and parental leave. The Icelandic Parental Leave Act grants parents 12 months of paid leave, with a 6+6 system where both parents have six months of leave, promoting gender equality in caregiving responsibilities. Social benefits are funded through contributions from employers and employees, with additional state support. In Finland, employment conditions are regulated by comprehensive labour and social security laws. Under the Working Hours Act (872/2019),⁹ the standard workweek is capped at 40 hours, with flexible working arrangements widely available to employees. The Finnish Social Insurance Act ensures that both employees and employers contribute to social security, covering a wide range of benefits, including sickness, maternity, and unemployment. Finland is known for its generous parental leave system, with both parents entitled to 320 days of leave per child, supporting a strong family welfare system and gender equality. All of these specific rights and protections will be detailed in each employment contract issued to each researcher.

The researcher will continue to receive the above allocated allowances while on secondment.

⁶ <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1994/act/5/enacted/en/html>

⁷ <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2005/act/26/enacted/en/index.html>

⁸ <https://work.iceland.is/working/workers-rights/>

⁹ <https://www.finlex.fi/en/legislation/translations/2019/eng/872>

INNOVISION will also cover training and research expenses, including support for secondments, including up to €500 per month for travel costs, and €1000 per month in research and training costs, for a total of €45,000 over the 30 month project. €5,000 of this total per year, is withheld by the Coordinating Organisation, SETU, to support the running of annual programme-wide events as laid out in the programme-wide training table, meaning the researcher as the remaining €30,000 to use freely. This does not cover travel for researchers to these events. This budget will be managed by the recruiting organisation, which will set up a budget account that the fellow can charge for the relevant expenses aligned to public procurement guidelines. Expenses related to attending INNOVISION training events, including travel and accommodation, will be deducted from the fellow's above budget.

Training and Research Costs, including travel costs for secondments, individual conference travel, and programme wide events	
€1,500 per month	€18,000 annually
€5,000 withheld per year by Coordinating Institute to Run Events	
€45,000 for 30 month contracts, €30,000 available to researchers	

4. Key Dates

The call for INNOVISION Fellows is set to Open 15 June, 2026 and will close 05 October 2026. Please see below for the key stages of the application process. Please note the interview dates may be subject to change based on applicant availability.

Call Opens	15 June, 2026
Deadline for Applications	05 October 2026
Eligibility Check, Ethics Check, and Independent International Expert Evaluation Complete	15 November, 2026
Interviews	01-07 December, 2026
Outcome	Anticipated February, 2027

5. Eligibility

5.1. Eligibility requirements for applicants

INNOVISION fellowships are open to applicants of all ages and nationalities, subject to the relevant eligibility criteria being met.

Eligibility requirements for INNOVISION are based on the general MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships (PF) criteria for Horizon Europe, with modifications where necessary to fit the specific scope of the INNOVISION COFUND Programme.

In order to be eligible to apply for an INNOVISION fellowship, the applicant:

- must be fluent in English (written and spoken).
- must be an **Experienced Researcher (ER)**. This means they must, either at the date of recruitment or by the deadline date of the open call, **hold a doctoral degree or have at least 4 years of full-time equivalent research experience**. Full-time equivalent research experience is measured from the date when an applicant

obtained the degree that would formally entitle them to embark on a doctorate, either in the country in which the degree was obtained or in Ireland, even if a doctorate was never started or envisaged.

- Be in a position to engage full-time in fellowship-related activities should they be funded
- **Mobility Rule:** Aligned to the MSCA IF-Global Fellowship model, all INNOVISION fellows must move to the country of their recruiting organization as part of their fellowship.

Please note the following important conditions of the mobility requirement, which may affect eligibility:

- The applicant cannot have resided or carried out their main activity in the outgoing phase country for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately before the call deadline.
- Applicants, regardless of residency may include secondment to any country.
Note: applicants are not *required* to have identified their secondment during the application phase, but it is highly encouraged.
For refugees under the Geneva Convention, the duration of the refugee procedure will not be counted as a period of residence in the country of the proposed outgoing phase.
- Compulsory national service and/or short stays such as holidays, or attending conferences, meetings, or workshops, will not be counted as a period of residence in the country of the proposed outgoing phase.

At application stage, applicants will not need to attach documentary evidence of their experience and residency. However, SETU reserves the right to request it after the call deadline. Should this information be found to be incorrect, contradictory or unavailable, the funders reserve the right to withdraw the award offer.

5.2. Eligibility requirements for supervisors

At proposal preparation stage, applicants must identify a Main Supervisor from the available identified supervisors on the INNOVISION website. Additional supervisors (co-supervisors) may be added from across the organization. Within the recruiting institutions, applicants must have one Main Supervisor and may have up to three co-supervisors (including a seconding-supervisor) listed.

Main and Co-Supervisors must:

- be staff of the selected recruiting organisation and outgoing host;
- be experts in their field;
- have appropriate supervisory experience;
- be able to devote adequate time to the supervision of the fellow.

Main Supervisors must be selected from the available Main Supervisors on the INNOVISION website. Co-Supervisors can be any identified supervisor in the recruiting organization.

The suitability of all supervisors will be evaluated at remote international expert review stage (see Section 8).

When a secondment (international, intersectoral, and/or interdisciplinary is foreseen (at proposal submission stage), a secondment supervisor must also be identified. This entails someone to report to during the secondment, e.g., a line manager. The secondment supervisor will be invited to be part of the supervisory panel.

Secondment Supervisors must:

- Agree to be a part of the programme and supervisory panel
- Be experts in their field/industry as relevant
- If a candidate chooses to apply with a secondment host not currently listed on the website, they must ensure the secondment host is aware of the cost of hosting a seconding researcher (up to €1,000 per month of secondment in consumables and research costs), unless the recruiting organization agrees to cover full costs of secondment. An agreement template is available in Document Downloads on the INNOVISION website. This agreement should be attached to the application. **No such agreement will be required for seconding institutions already listed on the INNOVISION website.**

All Supervisors listed within the proposal must submit a fully completed Supervisor Endorsement Form, and provide their CV (see Document Downloads on INNOVISION website).

Applicants are required to liaise with their proposed supervisor(s) before adding them to an application. If an applicant assigns a supervisor to their application without their consent and that supervisor subsequently objects to being associated with an application and raises this with the INNOVISION Recruitment and Hiring Committee, the Committee will remove that supervisor from the concerned application and will notify the applicant. This will deem the application ineligible. Should it happen that you are associated with an application without your consent, and you wish to avail of this option, please email INNOVISION@SETU.IE.

5.3. Summary of the eligibility criteria for INNOVISION fellowships

Please see below for further details on each of these requirements.

Applicant	Is an Experienced Researcher per MSCA Definition
	Meets Mobility Requirements
	Is fluent in English
Main Supervisor	Must be staff members of the recruited organization and listed on INNOVISION website
Co-Supervisors	Can be any supervisor from recruiting website with relevant experience
Seconding Supervisor	Must be listed on INNOVISION website or provide agreement, as described above, by the application deadline

6. Preparing to apply

Once you have ensured you satisfy the eligibility criteria, there are several steps to take ahead of beginning your application for an INNOVISION Fellowship:

6.1. Identify a suitable fellowship topic

Researchers from all relevant disciplines are welcome across the sciences, engineering, arts and humanities provided that projects relate to INNOVISIONS aims and priorities outlined in Section 2 above, and aligns to one of the Main Supervisors available on the INNOVISION website.

Research areas within INNOVISION may include, but are not limited to:

- **Nanomedicine and advanced drug delivery systems** for ocular therapies
- **Polymer and biomaterials engineering** for sustained and targeted delivery
- **Biotechnology and molecular science**, including genetics and cell-based therapies
- **Biomedical science and pharmacology** addressing mechanisms of ocular disease
- **Analytical and characterisation techniques** for formulation and therapeutic development
- **Digital health and artificial intelligence** applied to diagnostics, monitoring, and treatment optimisation
- **Public and global health**, with a focus on access to eye care and reducing health inequalities
- **Psychology and mental health**, exploring the impact of vision impairment on quality of life
- **Health communication and patient engagement**, including Patient and Public Involvement (PPI)
- **Comparative and translational medicine**, drawing on veterinary ophthalmology and related fields

INNOVISION funds researcher-led projects, meaning that you should design and propose an original research project that emphasises your own contribution and development as a researcher.

6.2. Confirm support of your proposed main supervisor

Prior to creating an application, applicants should contact, and discuss their fellowship application with, their proposed academic supervisors, including their main supervisor in the recruiting organisation, any potential co-supervisors (up to 2 in the recruiting organisation) and your seconding supervisor if identified at the application stage.

All applicants should have a main supervisor confirmed before beginning an application. Applications must not name a supervisor on an application without their consent.

6.3 Confirm Support of the Seconding Supervisor

During the application stage, applicants may work with their proposed Main Supervisor to identify a potential secondment supervisor. This is not required, though doing so at this phase does ensure your proposed project will meet all requirements. Secondments must be at least one month in duration and can last up to nine months. You may select multiple secondments, but the total time in the project on secondment may not exceed nine months. There is a list of currently identified secondment hosts on the INNOVISION website, with profiles of the research activities and key areas of expertise. This list is not exhaustive. Should you decide on a secondment host not listed on the website, you must provide the Secondment Agreement Form for the proposed supervisor, as well as the required documentation (Secondment Supervisor CV and Supervisor Endorsement Form). The Secondment Agreement Form is required to demonstrate that your proposed host agrees to contributing up to €1,000 per month of your planned secondment, for research and training costs.

Secondments must be one, two, or all three of the options:

- Intersectoral (eg. University recruiting org → Industry secondment host, or the reverse)
- Interdisciplinary (eg. Main Supervisor and work focused on pharmaceutical chemistry → secondment host works in Public and Patient Involvement)
- International (eg. Main Supervisor in Finland → Secondment host in Ireland)

These secondments should be confirmed with your Main Supervisor and any co-supervisors, to ensure relevance to the proposed project and feasibility. However, it is the responsibility of each applicant to identify a suitable secondment host.

6.4. FAQs

During the application process, you should address initial queries regarding your proposal to your proposed supervisors. However, questions they are unable to answer may be sent to INNOVISION@SETU.IE, where the management team will aim to respond to your queries within 48 hours.

There is likely to be a deadline for submission of queries by applicants several weeks before the call deadline. This will be confirmed after the call has opened.

Please note that for reasons of transparency and fairness to all applicants, the INNOVISION management team will not enter into individual correspondence about proposed project eligibility. Only questions regarding application procedure will be addressed.

7. How to apply

7.1. The online application system

The application consists of the following documents, all available on the INNOVISION website, under Application Documents:

- Main Application Form (sections and limits detailed below);
- Supervisor Endorsement form (one for each proposed supervisor);

- DORA Compliant CVs for Applicant and Supervisors (max 5 pages for applicant, 3 pages for Main Supervisor, 2 pages for co-supervisors/seconding supervisors);
- Ethics Self-Assessment (guide available in Supporting Documents) including a sex and gender dimension;
- Declaration of Understanding of the INNOVISION Privacy Notice;
- If selecting a secondment host is not currently listed on the INNOVISION website, a Secondment Agreement Form must also be provided.

All documents must be submitted into the correct section of the online portal linked directly on the website, “Apply Now” button. Please click on that link to submit all required documents and sections. There will be individual sections to upload documents. Documents should be in PDF Format.

The INNOVISION TEAM encourages the submission of applications well in advance of the closing date for the competition, as on the day that the call closes there will be heavy traffic on the server, which may slow down the submission of your application. To prevent problems with heavy server traffic, do not wait until the final day of the call to submit your application.

Key Parts of the Application Form:

Applicant Details: Name, country of residence, nationality, academic qualifications, English language competency confirmation
<p>Fellowship Proposal Project Title</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary Area, Secondary Area, and 5 keywords • Recruiting Host and Main Supervisor • Recruiting Host Co-Supervisor(s) • Named Secondment Host and Secondment Supervisor (if applicable) • Abstract (500 words) and Lay Abstract (300 words) <p>Main Proposal: (10 pages – inclusive of figures, not inclusive of GANNT Chart (1 page) or references (2 pages))</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Excellence: Describe your proposal and how it goes beyond-state-of-the-art. ○ Impact: Includes career training and development plan details ○ Implementation: Description of work packages, milestones, deliverables, and how they will be achieved. A project GANNT Chart should be included as a separate page.
Proposal Indicative budget: 1 page max, template provided
Optional: Personal Statement: 1 page, to include additional information not a part of main project proposal.
Only required if selecting a secondment host not listed on the website: A signed Secondment Agreement Form

8. INNOVISION Evaluation Process

INNOVISION’s evaluation criteria are based on the MSCA Postdoctoral evaluation criteria, with deviations to reflect the specific nature and objectives of INNOVISION. All applications are first reviewed for eligibility and adherence to the INNOVISION Terms and Conditions. Relevant checks will be performed by the INNOVISION Manager and documentary evidence as appropriate may be requested from applicants during this stage.

Assessment is a two -step process consisting of initial remote international expert review, followed by panel interview, for those who progress to the second step.

8.1. Step One – Independent International Expert Review

In the first step, applications will be evaluated remotely by three independent international expert reviewers per proposal, chosen based on the keywords indicated by the applicants and their abstracts. These three expert assessors submit their qualitative and quantitative evaluation. The applications will then be ranked. Reviewers will score the proposals on a range from 0 – 5, with weighting applied for the different sections – Excellence, Impact and Implementation. Reviewers will be asked to provide short written feedback, in the form of an Individual Evaluation Summary Report, based on the MSCA Fellowship Evaluation Summary Report.

8.2. Evaluation Criteria and Scoring

Applications are assessed under three evaluation criteria as detailed in the table:

Evaluation criteria at Remote Review Stage, weight scores, ex-aequo information		
Criteria		
Excellence	Impact	Implementation
Weighted Score		
50%	30%	20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Relevance to the INNOVISION call for responses to vision health crises using innovative ideas in any discipline -Quality and credibility of the research/innovation project; level of novelty, appropriate consideration of inter/multidisciplinary, and gender aspects - Overall methodology and scientific integrity of the proposed research -Quality and appropriateness of the training and of the two-way transfer of knowledge between the researcher and the host(s) -Appropriateness and match of the proposal, the supervisor(s), and the research in terms of ability to deliver on the proposed research and training objectives -Potential of the researcher to reach or reinforce a position of professional maturity/independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enhancing the potential and future career prospects of the researcher -Quality of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the project results -Quality of the proposed measures to communicate the project activities to different target audiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Quality and effectiveness of the work plan and GANTT chart, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages -Appropriateness of the management structures and procedures, including quality management and risk management -Appropriateness of the institutional environment (infrastructure), selected Principal Supervisor, and if applicable, host for secondment
Threshold to proceed to interview: 70%		
In the case of ex-aequo, proposals scoring higher in the Excellence Section will rank higher. In the case that scores are the exact same in both overall and excellence, and both proposals are in range for interview, then both will be moved forward to interview stage.		

All Sections will be given a score (0-5) as described below. Proposals must achieve a minimum of 3 across at least two sections to be progress to interview. Progressing to interview does not mean you have been selected for an INNOVISION Fellowship.

Score scale for evaluation	
0	Proposal is missing information, information is incomplete, or fails to address criterion
1	Poor: Criterion inadequately addressed, serious weaknesses in 1 or more aspects
2	Fair: Proposal technically addresses all criterion, but is weak in detail, support, or has inherent weaknesses
3	Good: Proposal addresses criterion, with a number of visible shortcomings
4	Very Good: Proposal addresses criterion well, a small number of visible shortcomings
5	Excellent: Proposal successfully addresses all criterion, with only minor shortcomings

8.3. Step Two – Online Interview Stage

Once the remote peer review assessment process is complete, applicants will be informed of the outcome by email. Applicants who do not progress to interview stage will receive their Evaluation Summary Report and information on the INNOVISION redress process.

Those who progress to interview stage will be notified and requested to prepare a presentation of their project, tailored to a non -scientific audience (the researcher will be asked to specify which audience they are addressing, for example patients living with AMD, policy makers, family carers of people with sight loss). It is important to note that the interviews will be scored as well, and progressing to interview does not ensure you will be offered a fellowship. All interviews will start with the researcher’s 8-minute presentation (slides will be allowed). Interviewers will follow up with a pre-agreed set of questions.

The INNOVISION Management Team will send out written email communication, inclusive of the individual interview report, to all interviewed applicants, including the mention of whether they are offered a fellowship or not. Unsuccessful applicants will receive information about the INNOVISION redress process. Successful applicants will be offered a fellowship. For each call, a reserve list (4 people maximum) will be in place for one year. Reserve list applicants will be notified of their place on the list.

Applicants will have 15 days after being notified of relevant outcomes to appeal the outcome. The appeal can only be about procedural aspects. All appeal requests (max one side of A4) must be sent to the INNOVISION Management Team at INNOVISION@SETU.IE, who will convene the Redress Committee, which will review the case and see if there is ground for a new evaluation process. In such case, a new review process will be granted (from the stage where the redress winner has been deemed ineligible/unsuccessful). All decisions of the redress committee will be final.

INNOVISION management members are precluded from discussing the results of the competition over the telephone or discussing the outcome of individual applications via email or post, or any other mechanism. Feedback to candidates will consist of a summary of the interview panel’s feedback and the decision in relation to funding. Additional feedback will not be provided beyond that which is provided with the assessment result.

Please note that this decision is final and that no correspondence will be undertaken in relation to individual assessments or scoring. Under no circumstance will feedback provided by INNOVISION Management compromise the confidentiality of a reference submitted to the Programme.

8.4. Gender-blinding of applications for evaluation purposes

INNOVISION maintains gender-blinding of applications for evaluation purposes to mitigate any gender bias in the assessment of excellence. Applications are provided to assessors without the applicant's name and without other sensitive information, such as the date of birth or career break reasons. The assessors are briefed about avoiding gender bias, including unconscious gender bias, before the assessment process commences.

To facilitate gender -blinding of applications for evaluation purposes, applicants are asked not to disclose their gender within their fellowship proposal (with the exception of the question which explicitly asks about the applicant's gender).

9. Information for successful applicants

If recommended for funding, the status of successful applications in the CORE PORTAL will change to 'conditional award'. INNOVISION will issue a Letter of Offer and an Award Acceptance Form outlining the approved fellowship budget for the award to the successful applicants. Each award is made subject to the terms of the Letter of Offer, the application, the approved budget, and the INNOVISION COFUND Terms and Conditions.

The conditional offer is subject to the following:

- Award Acceptance Form must be returned to the INNOVISION (electronically) by the applicable deadline and fully signed by the successful applicant, the academic supervisor, and authorised representative of the main host organisation.
- Any other documentation specified in the Letter of Offer (including but not limited to academic transcripts and documentation required in relation to mobility rules) is supplied to the INNOVISION Management team in a timely manner
- A copy of a fully signed agreement between the proposed recruiting organisation and the seconding organisation (as specified in the INNOVISION COFUND Terms and Conditions) is provided to the INNOVISION Management team by the applicable deadline.
- Compliance with the scheme's rules and eligibility of applicants at the time of recruitment will be checked when all relevant documentation is received. Once it is established that the applicable conditions have been met, the award will be confirmed, and the fellowship can commence on the approved fellowship start date.

Please review the INNOVISION TERMS and CONDITIONS and APPENDICES for all further information on submitted and preparing your application to INNOVISION.