

Proposal title:

Guidelines (shown highlighted in grey throughout this document):

- a. The uploaded document must include the proposal title in the header. Applicants must use the following formatting constraints: Arial, at least font size 10, margins (2.0cm side, 1.5cm top and bottom), single line spacing. References should be listed in footnotes, Arial font size 8 at least. All references will count towards the page limit.
- b. Applicants must follow the structure outlined below:

ABSTRACT (max. 2,000 characters including spaces). This will not count towards the page limit.

Start page count

10 pages **maximum** comprising of sections:

1. Excellence
2. Impact
3. Implementation

Stop page count

GANTT CHART. This will not count towards the page limit.

- c. Delete all text highlighted in grey before submitting your proposal.

Please ensure that sections 1-3 do not exceed the limit of 10 pages. It is up to you to decide how many pages you wish to allocate to each section within the allowed 10 pages.

ABSTRACT:

Max. 2,000 characters

ANNOTATED **TEMPLATE**

Important note – This is an annotated document. The text inserted¹ is shown in red throughout the following pages. The text is intended to provide guidance only, and it is not exhaustive.

As part of the application documentation, applicants must submit a research proposal:

- The first page should contain an abstract limited to 2,000 characters – this will not count towards the page limit.
- **10 pages maximum consisting of:**
 - **Section 1: Excellence**
 - **Section 2: Impact**
 - **Section 3: Implementation**
- The last page should contain a Gantt chart – this will not count towards the page limit.

Please ensure that sections 1-3 do not exceed the limit of 10 pages. It is up to you to decide how many pages you wish to allocate to each section within the allowed 10 pages, as there are no section page limits.

N.B. Reviewers will be instructed to disregard pages associated with sections 1-3 that are outside the overall page limit.

Reminder: The evaluation criteria are weighted differently. The set of weightings shown below will be applied to the scores provided for each of the criterion (Excellence, Impact and Implementation). The priority outlined below will be used to rank applications that achieve exactly the same score.

Weighting and priority		
Excellence	Impact	Implementation
Weighting: 50%	Weighting: 30%	Weighting: 20%
Priority: 1	Priority: 2	Priority: 3

N.B. You need to score well in all three sections to progress to the interview stage, as there is an overall threshold of 70% applicable to the final weighted scores produced.

Please see <http://alecs.lero.ie/evaluation-criteria-and-scoring-system/> for details.

Note on the secondment:

- As part of the ALECS fellowship, fellows will undertake a secondment to the non-academic sector (e.g. industry) of 3-6 months duration. You must include a secondment period (either planned or agreed) in your proposal. The secondment may be undertaken in a single period or split into shorter periods. It must be relevant to your research project and to your career development. The secondment may be carried out in Ireland or abroad.
- If fully agreed, provide the specific details for the secondment. General details (e.g. type of

¹ Text inserted was based on content covered in a handbook prepared by the Irish Marie Skłodowska-Curie Office intended to support researchers submitting a proposal for the Marie Curie Individual Fellowship Call. Content that was applicable to ALECS was reproduced/adapted to suit ALECS.

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organisation, proposed duration, timing and technical objective) must be included for the planned secondment. It is not mandatory to specify the exact secondment host and the secondment supervisor at the application stage. Therefore, the proposal will not be penalised if the secondment has not been fully agreed.

- Make a note on the relevant sections stating whether your secondment is planned or fully agreed.
- **Make sure you show the evaluator how the secondment is relevant to your proposal and to your career development.**

You might find useful to carry out a short self-assessment of your skills before writing the proposal (e.g. this is relevant to sections 1.2, 2.1):

Now	Fellowship	The future
Skills I have...	Skills I will gain during my fellowship... (e.g. at the research group I will join, at the secondment organisation...)	Where do I want to be?... What skills are needed for that role?...
First: Write down all the research specific (technical) and other transferrable skills that you already have: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skill X• Skill Y• Skill Z, etc.	Now fill in the gaps... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• X• Y• Z ...	Then: Where do you want to be in the future? What sector? What role? Now list the skills you need in that position: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• X• Y• Z ...

When doing the above, it might be useful to think about:

- Research skills core to your research project
- Additional research skills (to diversify your competencies)
- Transferable and complementary skills (you might wish to also consider skills useful in non-academic careers)

The Vitae website and Researcher Development Framework is an excellent career development resource that you may find useful when assessing your skills...

<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/rdf-related/researcher-development-framework-rdf-vitae.pdf/view>

Additional points provided for your consideration:

- Avoid jargon and explain any abbreviations.
- Be concise. Get rid of repetitions (sign-post to other parts of the proposal if necessary).
- You may use charts, diagrams, tables (Arial font size 8 at least).
- Ensure any colour diagrams, if provided, are understandable when printed in black and white.

Please delete the gray guidelines provided under each section and the footnotes provided in the original template before submitting your proposal. You may add your own footnotes (e.g. for literature).

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1. Excellence²

1.1. Proposed research

In this section, you must provide a detailed description of the scientific and technical aspects of the proposal, demonstrating the originality and novelty of the research, the proposed research methodology and its potential impact.

- Introduction, state-of-the-art and objectives – Provide an overview of the proposal. Discuss the state of-the-art. Specify the objectives of the proposal, in the context of the state-of-the-art in the field. When describing the envisaged research, it should be indicated how and why the proposed work is important for the field and what impact it will have if successful. Specify any particularly challenging or unconventional aspects of the proposal, including multi- or inter-disciplinary aspects (if relevant).

Introduction

- **Educate the evaluator on the importance of the research being carried out.** The evaluator (s) may not be an expert in the specific subject area so write in a style that is accessible to the non-expert. You may use figures/tables/charts/diagrams to illustrate where appropriate.

Start with the overall aim of the fellowship so the evaluator knows exactly what it will entail. This should include an introduction to the fellow, supervisor, host organisation and secondment organisation. For example: *the researcher X will carry out a fellowship to address (main aim of research). This fellowship will be carried out in (name of host) under the supervision of X. As part of this research the researcher will carry out a secondment in X.*

Grab the evaluator attention in the introduction – some suggested questions to consider when writing the introduction:

- **Why bother? What problem are you trying to solve?**
- **Is the solution already available (e.g. product, service)?**
- **Why now? (what would happen if we didn't do this now?)**
- **Why you? (are you the best person to do this project)**
- **Is it a European/global priority? Could it be solved at national level?** - Explain the importance of the research being carried out and how it addresses a challenge/priority at a global/European level.

State of the art

- Specify the objectives of the proposal, in the context of the state-of-the-art in the field. Break the state of the art into separate short paragraphs, each focusing on a separate part of the research project.
- Each paragraph should be focused and relate to a specific objective of the project.
- For each paragraph, briefly outline the current level of knowledge in the research area and highlight how the project will progress the research 'beyond the current state of the art'. Use up-to-date references!
- If there is state of the art work being carried out by your supervisor or by you then mention this here.
- You could finish each paragraph with a bold /text-box statement of how the project is progressing the area beyond the current state of the art.

Research objectives

- **What is the research question (s)?**
- **Specify the research objectives of the project:**
 - These should give the evaluator an insight into what research will be carried out during the project.
 - They should reflect the state of the art described (see section above). As already mentioned each state of the art paragraph should relate to a research objective.

² References should be listed in footnotes, Arial, font size 8 at least.

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- Be clear and concise. Let the evaluator know exactly what you are proposing.

Some suggestions:

- Each research objective should correspond to the research work packages you might have. For example, objective 1 is the objective for research WP 1.
 - Number the objectives O1, O2, O3 etc. and include the corresponding work package in brackets at the end of each objective (WP1).
- Describe the proposed methodology.
 - In this section you should describe how the research will be carried out.
 - Break this section up into short paragraphs/bullet points to describe the steps/methods you will take to achieve the research objectives proposed.
 - Highlight any experiments, blocks of work to carry out, techniques and equipment that will be used.
 - If a secondment or short visits are included, be specific about why they are needed in terms of the work being carried out (e.g. use of equipment, access to data, skills to be gained etc).
 - For each method/step described put in brackets the research work package it relates to. The workplan relating to the research WP will be described in detail in section 3.1.
- Originality and novelty of the research - Explain the contribution that the proposed research is expected to make to advancements within the research field. Describe any novel concepts, approaches or methods that will be employed.
 - Provide the key aspects of the fellowship that highlight the original and innovative aspects of the proposal. You could also have a bullet list highlighting any novel aspects related to your research. Some examples which might apply to your project:
 - Use of equipment, technique, method to investigate a piece of research in novel way.
 - Advancement in research being carried out in the host.
 - New analysis, concept, method that will be implemented.
 - Next stage of development.
 - Working with a mix of disciplines beyond the field.
 - Non-academic & academic collaboration.
 - Communication the research area to a non-scientific audience.
 - Receiving a mix of specific and transferable skills in a certain research field.
 - Provide details on the proposed secondment to the non-academic sector. State whether the secondment is fully agreed or if it is envisaged.

Important note: As part of the ALECS programme, fellows will undertake a 3-6 month secondment to the non-academic sector. The secondment must be relevant to the proposed research. Whilst it is not mandatory to have the secondment fully agreed at the application stage, general details of what is envisaged must be provided (e.g. type of organisation, timing, duration, technical objective). ALECS will assist fellows in securing a relevant secondment host.

Additional points for consideration:

- Explain to reviewers how the secondment relates to your research, what is its technical objective...
- Convince the reviewers of the secondment added value (to you + to the company... e.g. what skills can you gain at the secondment host, what can the company give you that you might not have access to at the host university? (e.g. equipment you might not have access to at the host university, data ...) Are you solving a problem for them?

Section 1.1 - Common weaknesses in unfunded applications

- The proposal fails to present a convincing state of the art analysis and the objectives are not clearly outlined.
- A precise indication of the methods that would be implemented is not provided.
- Some aspects of the project methodology are poorly specified.
- The research strategy outline lacks the necessary detail to infer on its credibility.

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1.2. Transfer of knowledge

- Outline how a two-way transfer of knowledge will occur between you and the host institution (s):

Break up this section into 2 parts: how you will receive knowledge at the host (Transfer of knowledge to the researcher from the host) and how you will transfer knowledge to the host (Transfer of knowledge to the host from the researcher).

- o Explain how you hope to gain new knowledge during the fellowship at the host institution and at the secondment host.

Describe that you will receive training in following types of skills:

- Research Skills: These are core skills relating to your project.
- Additional Research Skills: These are research skills that will advance your competencies in the research areas
- Transferable & Complementary Skills: Transferable skills are the skills you acquire and transfer to future employment settings.

Be specific!

Some examples which might apply to you:

Training-through-research:

Show what exact core and advanced research skills you will develop during the proposed project. Describe how your supervisor and the rest of the research team will enable you to develop core research skills.

Hands-on training activities:

Any hands-on training that can be utilised. For example: staff development programmes - check the host university's website for research development programmes, training courses, workshops, online courses, internal meetings.

On the job transferable skills:

Describe how you will develop skills throughout the project (e.g. participation in the research and financial management of the project, dealing with IP issues, project management, task coordination, managing finance, communication & dissemination etc).

Describe who else in the host will support you during the fellowship with these issues (finance team, technology transfer, research office, communication & outreach).

You can also mention networking skills through working with various members of the institution & external networking/collaborations (e.g. through exposure to the industry sector via the secondment).

Inter-sectoral (or interdisciplinary – if applicable) transfer of knowledge:

Remind the evaluator about the **secondment** you will carry out during the fellowship. Be specific about why and when it will happen and what knowledge you will gain (e.g. research & transferable skills).

Also mention any short visits: You can provide details on opportunities for exposure to other sectors (e.g. industry, charity, national archive etc.) where you will gain additional skills and insight, if applicable.

- o Outline any previously acquired knowledge and skills that you might be able to transfer (e.g. to the research group you will join, to the host institution, to the secondment organisation).

Explain what knowledge you will transfer to the host:

- Describe your current expertise, skills, state of the art techniques that could be applied to research in host.

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- Knowledge to address current gaps in the host.
- Existing collaborations/networks that you have from your past work.

Describe **how** will you transfer this knowledge to the host:

- What specific measures will you use to embed this knowledge into the host organisation and further afield. Examples: mentoring students, delivering workshops to the team on your existing skills, building collaborations between your host and your past collaborators.
- You might want to use a table to describe this, for example:
Knowledge to be transferred: e.g. specific research skill
Audience in host: Research team in the host organisation
How it will be transferred: Workshop with host team on how it can be applied to research/business practices
Benefit to the host: Researchers in host can apply the technique to current research practices.

Be specific!!!

1.3. Proposed supervision

- Relevance of the proposed supervision – Provide information regarding the prospective supervisor that relates to your research proposal (e.g. their expertise in the proposed topic, their track-record in the field, main international collaborations, participation in relevant projects, relevant publications). Provide evidence of the match between your proposed research and the capabilities of the research group you will join. Provide similar details for the secondment supervisor/secondment organisation (if known).

Provide details on the supervision proposed. Info on your supervisor and their key achievements in the area of research e.g. years' experience in the field; examples of awards received; international, intersectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration in the area of research; amount of project funding obtained (give examples such as coordinated projects); supervisory experience; number of publications & conferences (give examples of key highlights); patents, commercialisation, spin-offs etc.

Make sure you provide evidence of the match between the supervisor/ research group you will join and the proposed research. **Convince the reviewer that you are a good fit, that your proposal topic is relevant to the research group/Lero!**

Further aspects that you might consider in this section if applicable

Explain the role of the supervisor in the fellowship (e.g. monitoring research progress, helping you with your career development...). Examples of meeting schedule for progress: weekly meetings, open door policy, Skype meetings etc. Describe the research group(s)/environment as a whole (various disciplines, opportunities to collaborate during the fellowship, number of people in the research group, technical support etc).

Explain how you will be integrated into this research group(s)/environment and the wider host institution – examples internal meetings, induction days, social activities, refer back to training courses that are offered etc. Explain any international/national networking opportunities offered by the host/supervisor/the research group you will join e.g. new networking opportunities with industry through the secondment.

2. Impact

2.1. The potential impact of the research and the expected impact of the fellowship on the applicant's career prospects

Break up this section into 2 parts: The potential impact of the research and the expected impact of the fellowship on your career prospects.

- Describe the contribution that the proposed research is expected to make to advancements within its field. What is the potential impact of the research if successful? (e.g. contributions to literature; contributions beyond academic outputs)
- Provide a **brief** outline of your career objectives/goals.

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Provide an introduction to your specific career goals/ambitions. Be specific here. Do you want to be in academia after the fellowship? Or industry? What role?

- How does the fellowship improve your career prospects? Explain how the fellowship will contribute to further your professional development as an independent/mature researcher. If you have career objectives outside of research/academia, explain the relevance of the fellowship in contributing to these objectives.

Use this section as your sales pitch to convince the evaluator of your potential to reach your career goal and that you are the best person to do be awarded this fellowship and carry out the research you are proposing.

Briefly tell your story to date and what led you to this point. Try to get the evaluators to relate and understand you. Keep them interested! Choose the key highlights from your CV to show the evaluator your abilities. Demonstrate how you have key skills to undertake this project.

Explain how the fellowship will improve your career prospects. What's the added value of the fellowship?

Further suggestions:

- Show how the skills/experiences you will gain will improve your employability and career prospects both in (and outside academia).
 - You might wish to refer to policies/articles in your area calling for better skills/knowledge.
 - You might wish to give specific examples of your career opportunities in the academic (and non-academic sectors).
 - Why would the skills & experiences (research-related and transferable) acquired during the fellowship benefit such employers and contributing to better quality research and innovation?
- Describe the impact of the collaborations made during the fellowship
 - Highlight the impact intersectoral, interdisciplinary collaborations during the fellowship.
 - Describe if the collaborations made will allow for a higher impact R&I output on your future work, thus more knowledge and ideas converted into products and services.

At the end of this section remind the evaluator why you are the best person to do this fellowship and to achieve the research results, and that you have the potential to reach your career goals.

Section 2.1 Common weaknesses in unfunded applications:

- The researcher aims to become a world leading researcher and build a research team in Europe, but the proposal does not provide sufficient information about the measures that will be taken to achieve this and the ways he/she will obtain independent funding.
- Considering the current career stage and the experience of the researcher, the proposal could be considered premature and might require further research experience, both in terms of individual research and within team settings.

2.2. Proposed measures for communication and results dissemination

- What is your communication and results dissemination strategy? Outline how you will disseminate the results of your research and how you will communicate the new knowledge generated during the fellowship (e.g. publications, conference attendance, poster presentations, reports, workshops, outreach activities).

As an introduction to this section, remind the evaluator what the **key project results** are (e.g. prototype, guidelines, standards, feasibility study etc).

Describe your communication and results dissemination strategy and what the potential impact is expected to be. Discuss the strategy for targeting peers (scientific, industry and other actors, professional organisations, policy makers, etc.) and to the wider community.

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You might also describe potential commercialisation, if applicable, and how intellectual property rights will be dealt with, where relevant.

Step 1. Describe the target audiences of your results (expert audiences).

- You must give specific examples here!
- Who will be interested in the results described and why (benefit). For example,
 - Industry examples that could use the results for further development.
 - Research fields (give examples)
 - Expert users (clinicians, companies, services etc)
 - Regulators
 - Types of policy makers that would use the results.
 - Associations who would be interested in the results.

Step 2. Describe the dissemination activities

- Examples include: conferences, industry events, journal publications, workshops, social media, tradeshow, book chapter etc.
- Any activities listed in this section should be included in section 3.1 and in the Gantt chart.

More examples - Exploitation methods of your project results that will be used and the impact of the method on the target user/society/industry if applicable :

- Further internal research: The results coming out of the project can be applied to further research in the field and beyond.
- Collaborative research: The results can be used for building/contributing to collaborative research projects.
- Product development: Results can be used for developing or contributing to a product, process, technique, design etc.
- Standardisation activities: Results could be used to develop new standardisation activities or contribute to ongoing work.
- Spin-offs: A separate company will could be established as a result of the research results.
- Engagement with communities/end users/policymakers: Describe the activities to ensure that relevant societal actors will benefit from your project. For example, results will be used in policy briefings to impact on policy.

For more details refer to the "Dissemination & exploitation" section of the H2020 Online Manual which is available at <http://alecs.lero.ie/application-documents/>

Section 2.2 Common weaknesses in unfunded applications:

- The academic impact of the research is impaired due to the lack of targeting high quality level journals.
- The publication of the results in more generalist journals to target a broader scientific audience is not sufficiently considered.
- Specific target groups have not been mentioned.
- The proposal insufficiently engages with the possibilities offered by web-based and social media channels of communicating scientific results to academic audiences.

3. Implementation

3.1. The work plan

- Describe your research work plan. Include any work packages, tasks, deliverables and milestones required for the completion of the proposed research/fellowship. The proposed secondment and the proposed dissemination and communication activities should also be included.

The fellowship duration is 24 months. The proposed project must be feasibly undertaken within the fellowship duration.

Important note: A Gantt chart must be provided at the end of this document reflecting your work plan. It should give the schedule for work packages, deliverables, milestones, secondment and dissemination and communication activities. The schedule should be in terms of number of months elapsed from the start of the fellowship. Please see example provided at the end of this document.

Describe your workplan, for example:

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You might have research work packages, management work packages and dissemination work packages... The research project (including the secondment) must be feasibly undertaken within the two-year fellowship duration.

- Research work packages
 - Ensure they are in line with details provided in 1.1 research methodology.
- WP for Management
 - e.g. Meetings with supervisor(s), and standard reports to EU (financial and technical reports at end of fellowship).
 - WP for Training and Transfer of Knowledge
 - Tasks/events should match the details in 1.2.
- WP Dissemination
 - Tasks/events should match the details in 2.2
 - This is why it is important to have specific examples of dissemination & communication activities rather than listing general examples.

You might consider using a work package table in order to address everything required and avoid unnecessary blocks of text, for example:

WP Number	Start Month-End Month	Secondment or host Remind the evaluator which WP will include time outside the main host.
WP Title	Keep concise as the objective described what it will entail.	
Tasks: These are the steps/events/tasks you will carry to complete WPs (T1.1, T1.2)		
Deliverables: Distinct output of the WP (report, data analysis, article, document, prototype, software etc.).		
Milestones: These are control points to help with progress and allow progression to the next stage of the project (e.g. completion of data analysis)		

3.2. Management, progress monitoring mechanisms and risk management

- Describe any management structure/procedures and progress monitoring mechanisms put in place to ensure that the research/fellowship objectives are reached.

Explain how the research, training, career planning will be monitored
How will the supervisor support the project progress (e.g. explain meeting schedule).

- Describe any potential risks associated with the research project implementation. Describe your proposed contingency plans.

Risks and the contingency plans (suggestion use a table to describe these)

- Identify specific risks that could delay the progress of deliverables (e.g. delayed start, equipment failure, insignificant results) and the contingency plans.

Project risks and contingencies		
Risk	WP number/name	Contingency

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Section 3.2 Common weaknesses in unfunded applications:

- Potential risks have not been addressed in a very specific way. Alternative experimental strategies and contingency plans are not sufficiently elaborated.
- Risk management and mitigation methods are not fully considered.
- The tasks are not presented in sufficiently detail; the tasks' relevance for achieving the scientific objectives is not adequately outlined in the Proposal.

3.3. Institutional environment (infrastructure)

- Describe the infrastructure and facilities (e.g. any equipment; specialist software) required for the successful completion of the proposed research that will be available to you at the host institution. Describe any other necessary resources required. If you require additional resources and support that the host does not have, explain where they will be acquired.

You will not have much room left by the time you reach this section. Make sure to keep it concise. It should be the conclusion of what has been described above.

Suggestions:

Provide a table listing the key infrastructure necessary for your research

Examples - Research/technical Infrastructure: equipment, labs, software, technology, data sources, access to end users; administrative Infrastructure: staff training resources, library use, access to finance office, research office etc.

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Please include a Gantt chart reflecting your work plan described in section 3.1. The Gantt should give the schedule for work packages, deliverables, milestones, secondment, and dissemination and communication activities. The schedule should be in terms of number of months elapsed from the start of the fellowship.

Please see example below. You may modify the example below (e.g. add/delete rows; rename work packages) or add your own chart.

Notes:

- The titles of the WP's indicated in the Gantt example do not have to be followed or included in your Gantt. Adapt the Gantt example as needed or add your own chart.
- The number of WP's provided below is an example only. Add or remove WP's as needed.
- Add as much detail as needed to reflect your work plan.

GANTT CHART:

Work Package	Title	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
WP1	Management						D1.1																			M1.1
WP2	Data collection							M2.1									D2.1									
WP3	Field work							M3.1														M3.2	D3.1			
WP4	Research part x																									
WP5	Research part y																									
WP6	Dissemination and communication						D6.1					D6.2			D6.3							D6.4				
WP7	Secondments																									
...	...																									

Legend

Milestone	M
Deliverable	D