

Royal Irish Academy Gold Medals

Terms of Reference

Introduction

The Royal Irish Academy awards two Gold Medals every year. The medals are awarded to individuals who have made a demonstrable and internationally recognised outstanding scholarly contribution in their fields.

In 2005, the Royal Irish Academy and the Higher Education Authority established six high profile Gold Medals to acclaim Ireland's foremost thinkers in the humanities, social sciences, and across the fields of science.

The medals aim to identify and recognise inspirational figures in order to celebrate the achievements of higher education in Ireland and to inspire future generations.

Purpose

These Terms of Reference are designed to capture and document the purpose and processes (nomination, assessment and awarding) for efficient and consistent delivery of the RIA's suite of Gold Medals. In order to ensure that these awards are delivered in accordance with best practice, these terms should be re-considered, and amendments applied, at the conclusion of each awarding cycle.

Awarding cycle

The awarding of the RIA Gold Medals will rotate as follows:

- The RIA Gold Medal in the Humanities and the RIA Gold Medal in the Social Sciences are awarded in alternate years.
- The RIA Gold Medals in the Chemical, Mathematical and Physical Sciences; the Computer and Engineering Sciences; the Environmental Sciences, Geography and Geosciences; and the Life and Medical Sciences are awarded one per year, on a four-year cycle.

Officers

Senior Vice-President

The RIA Gold Medals are included in the Senior Vice-President's portfolio of RIA business. The Senior Vice-President oversees the complete awarding process and reports to the Executive Committee and Council on the evolution and administration of the scheme. The Senior Vice-President works in consultation with the Science Secretary and the Polite Literature and Antiquities Secretary on these processes and to nominate Members to the awarding committees.

Polite Literature and Antiquities Secretary

The Polite Literature and Antiquities Secretary chairs the awarding committee for the Gold Medal in the Humanities and the Gold Medal in the Social Sciences. In consultation with the Senior Vice-President, the Polite Literature and Antiquities Secretary selects and invites the members of the awarding committees for these awards. The Chair oversees the process, ensuring that the guidelines and due process are followed. The Chair does not act as an assessor to the process.

Science Secretary

The Science Secretary chairs the awarding committee for the Gold Medal in the Chemical, Mathematical and Physical Sciences; the Computer and Engineering Sciences; the Environmental Sciences, Geography and Geosciences; and the Life and Medical Sciences. In consultation with the Senior Vice-President, the Science Secretary selects and invites the members of the awarding committees for these awards. The Chair oversees the process, ensuring that the guidelines and due process are followed. The Chair does not act as an assessor to the process.

Eligibility for candidature

- Eligibility for candidature is restricted to persons who are usually resident in Ireland.
- Candidates must be currently making a distinguished, demonstrable, and internationally recognised scholarly contribution to their field.
- The work underpinning this scholarly contribution will have been undertaken while candidates have been working in Ireland.
- Candidates are expected to be research active at the time of nomination.
- Please note: serving RIA Officers are not eligible for candidature.

Eligibility to act as a nominator

A proposer and a seconder are required for each nomination.

Either the proposer or the seconder must be a:

- Member of the Royal Irish Academy (excluding serving RIA Officers)
- Honorary Member of the Royal Irish Academy
- Current member of a RIA Multidisciplinary committee
- Head of an institution designated under the Higher Education Authority Act (2022) or a Higher Education Institution based in Northern Ireland.
- Please note: serving RIA Officers are not eligible to nominate.

Diversity

The Royal Irish Academy seeks to ensure greater gender, disciplinary, institutional, and overall diversity in all of its activities. In the event that at the close of the call for nominations, the RIA is not satisfied that the nominations received are fully representative of the diversity, and especially the gender diversity, of the field, the assessment of nominations will not proceed, and the Gold Medal will not be awarded.

Nomination process

A complete nomination will require the following:

1. *Nomination form* with a citation for the candidate not exceeding 850 words, full contact details (to include postal address and e-mail address) and the positions held by each of the proposer, seconder and candidate.
2. A *supporting statement* of not more than 400 words outlining the candidate's scholarly achievements relevant to the case for the award, clearly listing impact/achievements/positions held etc.
3. a brief up-to-date *CV for the candidate* (using the narrative CV template provided);
4. A list (no more than twenty) of the candidate's most important publications to date and an evaluation by the proposer and seconder of the five most significant publications (evaluation no more than two pages). Details of how to present the list of publications are listed below.

Detailed guidelines to assist a proposer and a seconder in compiling a nomination will be distributed with the call for nominations information on the RIA website.

Nominations must be submitted to the RIA online by the advertised closing date for receipt of nominations. A copy of the submitted nomination and confirmation email are automatically generated and issued to the proposer. All subsequent correspondence relating to a nomination is addressed to the proposer, copying the seconder and the candidate. Information submitted in excess of that requested may not be considered by the award committee.

Data Protection

The RIA's Personal Data Protection Policy governs the use and storage of all data supplied to the RIA. The guidance notes for nominators include a Data Privacy Statement. In order to ensure that the RIA is fully compliant with its obligations under the current data protection legislation, this statement must be shared with the candidate and their approval to be nominated is verified in the nomination process.

All personal data is processed in the RIA located in Ireland. Hosting and storage of data takes place in Office 365, Admincontrol, JotForm, AWS and on RIA file servers which are in the EEA. Data supplied for the purposes of peer-review and competitive assessment for this award will be accessed by personnel in the Programmes and Engagement and Communications Departments of the Royal Irish Academy and shared securely with the members of the award committee and, in the cases of shortlisted nominations, with external assessors from outside of the RIA. The award recipients' details will feature in the citation read out at the award ceremony and in publicity in all forms of media (including print, broadcast, online and social media) around the award ceremony.

No other third-party providers have access to this data, unless specifically required by law.

Assessment process

Award committee:

The assessment of candidates is made by an award committee. Incorporating diversity within the award committee, particularly relating to disciplinary, institutional and gender representation, the committee consists of:

- a panel of at least five Members of the Royal Irish Academy or its relevant Multi-disciplinary committee members nominated by the Senior Vice-President, having consulted with the Science Secretary or Polite Literature and Antiquities Secretary.

The tasks of the committee are to select:

- a shortlist of candidates (this will normally be two to three, and only exceptionally more than this);
- a list of appropriate international external assessors. The award committee will invite one or more international external assessors to provide a report on shortlisted candidates for the final assessment; and
- recommend to the RIA's Council the final selection of a candidate for the award. The committee will consider the external assessors' reports when determining the final choice for the award.

Criteria

The award committee will give special consideration to the below criteria. Each criterion will be equally weighted

- Demonstrated substantial scholarly achievement
- International impact of the candidate's work
- Distinguished publication record with evidence of recent, ground-breaking publications
- Leadership
- Originality or fundamental nature of work
- Established reputational excellence

DORA Principles

The RIA has adopted the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (SFDORA) principles. This means that in the assessment process for all RIA awards, citations and journal rankings should not be given undue weight in assessments. A statement addressing the RIA's position in relation to these principles is distributed to the Award committee members in advance of the assessment process.

Unconscious bias awareness

Unconscious bias awareness sessions are provided to all Award committees in advance at the first Award committee meeting and in advance of their deliberations.

Confidentiality

All Awarding Committee members and external assessors are required to consider and sign a confidentiality agreement. The agreement states that all information disclosed to them whether in writing, orally or by another means relating to assessment of the RIA Gold Medals is to be treated as confidential and not to be used for any purpose other than the performance of a peer review assessment for these awards.

Conflict of Interest

All Awarding Committee members and external assessors are required to declare an interest where they have a close personal or professional link with a nominee or a nomination. Such an 'interest' is either 'pecuniary' or 'non-pecuniary' (e.g., familial relationships, or partners, or formal or informal business partnerships etc).

In practice, there are a number of situations in which a conflict of interest might be considered to exist, potentially or perceptually. In each of these situations the award committee members are deemed unsuitable to review the application and must declare their conflict of interest with the Chair of the award committee and the programme manager:

Examples where a conflict may occur include.

- Where an award committee member is a former close colleague i.e. past member of the School/Unit/Research Group of the nominee either in their current institute or elsewhere.
- Where a PhD or Post-Doctoral Supervisory relationship has existed between the nominee and the award committee member. This also includes the examination of either party's doctoral students.
- Where there is evidence of close and/or repeated collaboration, recent co-authorship (in the past five years), co-presentational, co-editorial activities (excluding co-membership of editorial boards) between the nominee and the award committee member.
- Where the nominee has served as a formal academic host to the award committee member or where, under similar terms, the nominee has been formally hosted by the award committee

member in her/his institution. Hosting specifically refers to individual responsibility for inviting, arranging and overseeing the process of academic exchange.

- Where a close friendship, business, professional partnership or family relationship exists between the nominee and the award committee member such that this could, or be perceived to, undermine impartiality in judgement and lead to particular advocacy.
- Where direct competition over specific publications/research opportunities is known to exist between the nominee and award committee member that could affect the nature/substance/tone of assessment reports.

In the event of a conflict of interest, award committee members must declare their interest as soon as the conflict is apparent. Where an interest is declared the award committee member will not provide an assessment on the specific nomination and they will be required to leave the room when the nomination is discussed by the award committee. If the nomination is shortlisted for the Gold Medal, the award committee member will be thanked for their contribution to the assessment process and asked to retire from the award committee and the Chair will invite a new award committee member who can evidence no conflict of interest to participate in the final decision-making process.

If the Chair has a conflict of interest they must declare it as soon as they become aware of it in writing and in advance of the meeting. Because the Chair is not participating in the assessment process, they will continue to Chair discussions relating to all candidates.

Evaluation

At the conclusion of the assessment process, award committee members are invited to share their impressions of their experience of the process. The process identifies function and dysfunction in the processes as well as areas for improvement.

Approval of recommended candidate:

The award committee's recommendation of a candidate for the award will be tabled for consideration in confidence at the next RIA Council meeting. Any RIA Council member with a conflict of interest with the recommended candidate, must recuse themselves from the discussion on this item at the meeting.

Freedom of information

The Royal Irish Academy is subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 2014.

Presentation ceremony

The RIA Gold Medals are presented at a ceremony before an invited audience of Officers, Members, colleagues, family and friends and a keynote speaker.