

**EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE (ERC)
VACANCY FOR FULL-TIME RESEARCH FELLOW – TESTS AND LARGE SCALE ASSESMENTS
(PERMANENT)**

Background

The Educational Research Centre (ERC) was established as a Statutory Body in accordance with the Education Act (1998) in September 2015, but has been in existence since January 1966. It has a dual remit of providing tests and supports for these tests to schools, and conducting educational research and evaluation studies. Its programme of work can be divided into seven strands (with more information available at www.erc.ie):

1. Oversight, delivery and national reporting of large-scale international assessments
2. Management, oversight and reporting of large-scale national assessments
3. Contributing to policy on, and evaluation relating to, educational disadvantage
4. Test development, standardisation and support (in both paper and online formats)
5. Programme evaluation
6. Data analytic support
7. Independently-initiated research.

The main ERC building is located on the grounds of DCU's St Patrick's College Campus in Drumcondra and its Test Department is nearby on Richmond Road, Drumcondra. The ERC employs about 38 staff who work together in small collaborative teams. The work is supported by an administrative team and the ERC's senior management team, which is comprised of the CEO, senior researchers and the senior administrator. The ERC engages with various sections of the Department of Education and other bodies and organisations in its research projects, and participates in a range of project, advisory and steering committees, both national and international.

Job Specification

The ERC now has a vacancy for a permanent Research Fellow. Key elements of this senior research and management role include:

- Leading and overseeing the Centre's online and paper-based test development, standardisation and support work programme,
- Leading on the development and implementation of the Centre's assessment roadmap and strategy, which will include stakeholder consultation and development work in both online and paper-based modes,
- Leading and overseeing one of the Centre's large-scale assessment/evaluation studies,
- Sitting on the Centre's Senior Management Team,
- Supervising and mentoring research teams, and liaising with the administration team, during all stages of the work (design, development, delivery, analysis, reporting),
- Overseeing project, risk and budget management of projects assigned,
- Participating in advisory or steering committees or groups as relevant to the work of the Centre,
- Maintaining and fostering collaborative and strategic relationships both nationally and internationally,
- Contributing to the overall strategic development of the Centre.

The main functions of the role are as follows:

- Developing and overseeing work programmes for test development, standardisation and supports, both on paper and online
- Overseeing large-scale projects and managing small research/project teams,
- Generating research, publishing and presenting research work and programme results to a variety of audiences
- Developing, implementing and monitoring strategies within own workstreams to support the ERC's Strategic Plan
- Communicating and collaborating effectively with the CEO and Senior Management Team to identify organisational solutions and strategies, and to explore alternatives where appropriate,
- As part of the Senior Management Team, advising on organisational objectives and assisting with internal matters (e.g. project planning, staffing) as relevant,
- Establishing and managing relevant training, coaching and mentoring programmes for supervisees,
- Managing stakeholders and establishing/maintaining effective external relations as required by the function,
- Critically assessing, monitoring and reviewing quality assurance, risk, data governance, and data processing elements of the workstreams,
- Ensuring governance compliance at all project levels, and
- Managing, monitoring and reviewing project budgets effectively and efficiently.

The successful candidate will be encouraged to participate in training and upskilling to maintain and enhance levels of knowledge and expertise.

Note: This job specification is intended as a basic guide to the scope and responsibilities of the position. It is subject to ongoing review and will evolve in line with the constantly evolving practices and functions of the ERC.

In carrying the above duties, the candidates will be able to demonstrate that he/she can:

- Actively contribute to the development of the strategies of the ERC,
- Consider the effectiveness of outcomes in terms wider than his/her own immediate area,
- Identify and take opportunities to exploit new and innovative perspectives, technologies and methodologies,
- Understand complex issues quickly, accurately absorbing and evaluating data,
- Integrate diverse strands of information, identifying inter-relationships and interdependencies,
- Use judgement to make clear, timely and well-grounded decisions on important issues,
- Plan and prioritise work in terms of importance, timescales and other resource constraints, re-prioritising in light of changing circumstances,
- Ensure that quality and accuracy is central to the work,
- Look critically at issues to see how things can be done better,
- Be open to new ideas, initiatives, and creative solutions to problems,
- Present information in a confident, logical and convincing manner, verbally and in writing,
- Encourage open and constructive discussions around work issues,

- Develop and maintain a network of contacts to facilitate problem solving or information sharing,
- Manage staff effectively taking into account the needs of the Centre and address resulting issues (staff allocation, performance etc).

Essential Requirements

The successful candidate must meet **each** of the following requirements:

- eligibility to work full-time in Ireland,
- a research doctorate in education, assessment, psychometrics, or a related discipline,
- at least 5 years' experience in the field of educational research and/or assessment,
- at least 3 years' experience in a minimum of **three**, and preferably **all** of:
 - (a) development of tests for use in primary and/or post-primary education settings
 - (b) classical test analysis
 - (c) item response theory (IRT) scaling
 - (d) design and implementation of test standardisation studies and/or large-scale assessments (framework development, survey development, sampling, administration, quality assurance, fieldwork)
 - (e) large-scale assessment analysis and reporting (application of sampling weights, bivariate and multivariate analysis, drafting reports, communicating/disseminating results)
- demonstrated knowledge and experience of project management (including team supervision, budget and risk management),
- demonstrated knowledge and experience of relevant statistical methods (e.g., multi-level modelling, scaling),
- knowledge of programme evaluation,
- a record of publication in a relevant aspect of education,
- demonstrated understanding of the complexities of the relationship between research and policy,
- demonstrated understanding of the uses of standardised tests in schools and relevant policy issues in the Irish context,
- knowledge of the international literature on relevant aspects of educational assessment and/or test development,
- capacity to generate research,
- proven competence in team leadership,
- familiarity with public service governance, including procurement,
- excellent written and spoken communication skills, especially report writing.

Essential personal qualities for this role include commitment, patience, empathy, the ability to manage challenging demands and competing priorities and an open-minded approach to problem solving.

Strong proficiency in spoken and written Irish would be an advantage.

Applicants must demonstrate, by reference to specific achievements in their career to date, that they possess the qualities, skills and knowledge required for the role of Research Fellow as identified in the 'Essential Requirements' above.

The appointment is made as a permanent appointment, subject to successful completion of a 12-month probation period.

The ERC may establish a panel of the successful candidates in order of merit. Any panel created will expire after a period of 12 months from the date of the closing date for application (unless extended for a further 6 months) or when it has been exhausted, whichever is sooner.

Salary Scale

The appointment will be made on the Research Fellow scale (**€67,687 – €99,826**, as at Sept 2020) to the Public Sector at a point in line with current Government Pay Policy, with new entrants commencing at the first point of the scale.

Different terms and conditions may apply if, immediately before appointment, the successful candidate is a currently serving civil/public servant.

Pension

The successful candidate will be offered the appropriate superannuation terms and conditions as prevailing in the ERC at the time of being offered an appointment. In general, and except for candidates who have worked in a pensionable (non-single scheme terms) public service job in the 26 weeks prior to appointment, this means membership of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme (“Single Scheme”). However, in the latter scenario, some exceptions may apply.

Place of Attendance

The appointee for this role will be based in the ERC’s Head Office, Drumcondra or its Test Department on Richmond Road, Drumcondra. When absent from home and place of employment on official duty, the appointee will be paid appropriate travelling expenses and subsistence allowances, subject to normal civil service/public sector regulations.

At present and in line with public health guidance and the ERC's COVID 19 response plan, ERC is operating a remote working policy.

Tenure

In the event of appointment to a permanent or temporary position with the ERC the appointee must serve a probationary period, which normally will last for twelve months. If at any time during this period it appears that the appointee would not be suitable for final appointment the employment will be terminated.

Hours of attendance

Hours of attendance will amount to not less than 37 hours net per week. The appointee will be required to work such additional hours from time to time as may be reasonable and necessary for the proper performance of his/her duties subject to the limits set down in the working time regulations.

How to Apply

Only applications submitted electronically will be accepted.

Applications will not be accepted after the closing date. **THE CLOSING TIME AND DATE FOR APPLICATIONS IS: 5.00 PM, FRIDAY 4TH DECEMBER, 2020.**

Applications must include:

- A cover letter that describes how the applicant's skills and experience meet the requirements for the post
- A Curriculum Vitae
- The names and contact details of two referees.

Completed application should be submitted to: vacancies@erc.ie, quoting 'Research Fellow Post' in the subject heading.

If you do not receive an acknowledgement of receipt of your application to vacancies@erc.ie within 24 hours of applying, please contact Patricia Gaffney at patricia.gaffney@erc.ie.

Subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, 1997 as amended, applications will be treated in strict confidence.

Campaign updates will be issued to the email address supplied with your application.

The onus is on each applicant to ensure that they are in receipt of all communication from the ERC. You are advised to check your emails on a regular basis throughout the duration of the competition. In addition, candidates should check junk/spam folders should any emails be mistakenly filtered. The ERC accepts no responsibility for communication not accessed or received by a candidate.

Selection Methods

The selection may include shortlisting of candidates on the basis of the information contained in their application. An expert Interview Board will examine the applications against pre-determined criteria based on the requirements of the position.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to interviews to be scheduled approximately two weeks after the closing date for applications or as close as possible to this timeline. Notification of interview date and time will issue to the candidates at the email address provided in their applications.

Candidates should make themselves available on the date(s) specified by the ERC and should make sure that the contact details specified on their application are correct.

Candidates who do not attend for interview or other test when and where required by the ERC, or who do not, when requested, furnish such evidence as the ERC requires in regard to any matter relevant to their candidature, will have no further claim to consideration.

The ERC reserves the right to conduct interviews either remotely online or face-to-face as circumstances require, and also to require candidates to attend a second interview and/or complete a short written assessment prior to or following the first interview.

The preferred candidate will be offered the position subject to satisfactory reference checks. Referees will not be contacted without the candidate's prior agreement.

Arising out of this competition, the ERC may create a panel from which future Research Fellow vacancies may be filled. Where a panel is created, the ERC reserves the right to decide that only a certain number will be placed on that panel. Qualification and placement on a panel is not a guarantee of appointment to a position. Candidates not appointed at the expiry of the panel will have no claim to a position thereafter because of having been on the panel.

Once an offer of appointment has been accepted and/or declined by a candidate, the candidate will no longer remain on the panel and the ERC may select another person for appointment on the results of the selection process. More detailed information will be provided to successful candidates.

Other Important Information

The ERC will not be responsible for refunding any expenses incurred by candidates.

The admission of a person to a competition, or invitation to attend interview, or a successful result notification, is not to be taken as implying that the ERC is satisfied that such a person fulfils the requirements or is not disqualified by law from holding the position and does not carry a guarantee that your application will receive further consideration. It is important, therefore, for applicants to note that the onus is on him or her to ensure that he or she meets the eligibility requirements for the competition before attending for interview. If essential entry requirements are not met but applicants nevertheless attend for interview he or she could be put to unnecessary expense.

Prior to recommending any candidate for appointment to this position, the ERC will make all such enquiries that are deemed necessary to determine the suitability of that candidate. Until all stages of the recruitment process have been fully completed, a final determination cannot be made nor can it be deemed or inferred that such a determination has been made.

Should the person recommended for appointment decline, or having accepted it, relinquish it or if an additional vacancy arises, the Interview Board may, at its discretion, select and recommend another person for appointment on the results of this selection process.

The above represents the principal conditions of service and is not intended to be the comprehensive list of all terms and conditions of employment, which will be set out in the employment contract to be agreed with the successful candidate.

Data Protection Acts, 1988 and 2003; GDPR 2018

When a candidate's application form is received, the ERC will create a record in the candidate's name, which contains much of the personal information supplied. This personal record is used solely in processing the candidature and should the candidate be successful certain information provided will be retained going forward. Such information held is subject to the rights and obligations set out in the Data Protection Acts, 1988 & 2003 and in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), 2018.

To make a request under the Data Protection Acts 1988 & 2003/GDPR 2018, please submit your request in writing to the **Data Protection Officer** at Data.Protection@erc.ie. Ensure that you describe the records you seek in the greatest possible detail to enable us to identify the relevant record.

The ERC provides a flexible, dynamic and challenging working environment and is an equal opportunities employer.