

FAQ – National Mentoring Programme

Questions on Eligibility:

I'm not sure if I qualify as an emerging writer. What is the criteria?

A: To qualify as an emerging writer, we expect applicants to show us examples of how they are committed to writing. This might be through attending courses and writing groups, publishing in journals, literary prizes or past awards they have obtained. You may also wish to mention writing experience from jobs undertaken, such as journalism or playwriting.

I live in Northern Ireland. Can I apply?

A: Yes. The Irish Writers Centre is an all-island organisation and, unless otherwise stated, all of our programmes and opportunities are for writers living across the island of Ireland (all 32 counties).

I'm Irish but I currently live abroad. Can I apply?

A: Unfortunately, on this occasion you are not eligible. The National Mentoring Programme is specifically for writers currently living on the island of Ireland.

Why do you disclude people in full-time education? Is there any wiggle room on this?

A: We believe that anyone in full-time education should focus on and commit themselves to one educational programme at a time. We also wish to avoid supporting writers who have just had, or are about to have, significant exposure to teaching or mentoring support through Creative Writing BAs or MAs. However, if your course is completely disconnected from creative writing, and you feel you have the time and capacity to also take on mentoring, we may make exceptions.

I write genre fiction. Can I apply?

A: Yes, all types of fiction writers can apply.

My county / local arts office area is not supported by the NMP. Can I still apply?

A: Yes. Although we do have county-specific mentorships that are individually funded by county/arts offices and other organisations, the programme is also supported by the Arts Council of Ireland who ensure that mentorships are available to writers living in 'All Other Counties.'

I am a script writer/screenwriter. Can I apply?

A: The NMP doesn't include script writing or screen writing, as the NMP is funding via Arts Council Literature Department mainly, so we only fund the forms that the AC Lit department supports, namely poetry, fiction, short stories, poetry, creative non-fiction and Children's/YA writing (books as opposed to scripts).

Do you accept applications in the Irish language?

Yes, we do. Please upload your sample text as Gaelige. But we ask that you give us your 'Summary of Work & Statement of Benefit' and your CV in English, so all members of the panel can read and assess your application.

Questions about the application process

Do I have to stick to the 1,000 wordcount for sample texts?

A: Yes, please stick to these guidelines. We appreciate this means you may be cutting your writing off mid-chapter or mid-story, but our blind readers understand this.

Why do you want ideally published work for the first sample text (1,000 words / 1 poem) and work in progress for the second sample (1,000 words/two poems).

A: Through the first 1,000 words, we want to get a sense of your best work. Through your second 1,000 words, we want to get a sense what you're working on right now... i.e. what text you'd like a mentor to help you with. We don't stipulate 'ideally published writing' for Children's/YA writers as there are much fewer journals or outlets in which emerging Children's/YA writer can get publish.

I have prepared an application for the mentoring programme. Do I send it as a word document, pdf or in the body of an email?

A: All applications must be submitted through Submittable. You'll need to set up a Submittable account to do this. Within the Submittable platform, we ask you to upload sample text doc and a writing CV in pdf/doc/docx/odt/txt file format.

Do I have to pay to apply?

There is no fee for application.

Why do I have to submit my application through submittable?

A: Submittable is an online platform that the Irish Writers Centre uses to collect and review submissions and applications. It helps us collate the applications efficiently, and distribute them easily to our judging panel. To submit your application via Submittable, applicants will need to create a Submittable account. It's free and easy to use but if you have any issues with Submittable, please email projects@irishwriterscentre.ie. Applications will be acknowledged via an automatic email.

What 'County' should I select in the application?

A: Please select the county/area where you currently live as a first preference; or where you were born as a second preference, as some arts offices will support your work even if you were born in a given county, but no longer live there. If none of the below apply, please select 'ALL OTHER COUNTIES'. You must be currently living on the island of Ireland to receive mentoring, and intend to live here for the next year.

Who will see/read my application?

Initially, a blind reader will read your sample text. If it is shortlisted, a panel of three judges will be able to see your sample text, plus the rest of your application and CV. If you are selected for mentoring, we will share your application with any potential mentors that you propose, and with selected staff from the funding partner of your county/area if relevant.

For my sample text, can the 'polished' text and the 'work in progress' text be taken from the same project?

A: Ideally, these two texts would be taken from two separate works, i.e. two different short stories, poems, etc. However, in the case of a novel, it may be the case that this is all you've written to date. In this case, please include two samples from two different chapters or sections of the book.

When will successful / unsuccessful applicants be informed of a decision?

There are multiple stages to the judging process, so it takes time. We aim to get in touch with all applicants in early June.

Questions on the mentor:

Can I choose my own mentor? Who are they?

A: We currently have more than eighty professional writers to choose from on our mentoring list, made up of poets, prose writers and children's/YA writers. Most writers on our mentor list have published 3 or more books with traditional publishers and have lots of teaching and/or mentoring experience. Selection of mentors is always mentee-led. Mentees can also choose to work with writers who are not on our mentor list where they're keen to work with particular writers. Mentee selections are dependent on mentor availability at any given time.

Who are the mentors, and can I choose them?'

A: The NMP mentoring is made up of anyone who meets the criteria of 'three or more books published with a traditional/recognised publisher, plus teaching experience' and has asked to join the mentoring list. However, there are also mentors on the list who haven't met this criterion. They are on the list because previous mentees have specifically asked to work with them, even though they weren't on our mentoring list or haven't published three or more books. We always make it clear to mentees that they can select writers who are not on our mentoring list. Once an 'off list' mentor has been chosen once, they automatically remain on the mentor list. Professional writers working with mentees on a private basis can encourage their mentees to apply to the NMP, and those mentees can select them as their chosen mentor if they wish.

Can I choose my own mentor? And should I mention my preferred choice in my application?

A: Yes, you can choose your mentor. We'll provide a list of 80+ professional writer mentors, but you can also choose professional writers who are not on this list. You do not need to name your preferred mentor in your application, or have decided who you would like to mentor you at the point of applying. But you can, if you like, mention Irish writers whose work you admire and who you might like to be mentored by if you wish.

How do I get added to the list of mentors?'

A: Anyone who meets the criteria of 'three or more books published with a traditional/recognised publisher, plus teaching/mentoring experience' can contact nmp@irishwriterscentre.ie with a request to join the mentoring list at any given time.

About the National Mentoring Programme:

Who supports the National Mentoring Programme?

A: Many of the mentorships are made possible thanks to the generous support of arts offices, arts centres, libraries and literature organisations across the island of Ireland.

These include:

Carlow County Council, Dublin City Libraries, Dublin UNESCO City of Literature, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Arts Office, Dún Laoghaire- Rathdown Libraries, Droichead Arts Centre, Fingal Arts, Galway City Arts Office, Kildare Arts Service, Kilkenny Arts Office, Limerick City & County Arts Office, Longford County Council, Mayo Arts Office, Meath Arts Office, Offaly County Arts Office, Roscommon Arts Centre, Sligo County Council, South Dublin Arts Office, The Source Arts Centre, Westmeath Arts Office, Wexford Arts Office and Wicklow Arts Office.

We are grateful to all the above who fund individual mentorships for writers in their county area. The Arts Council generously supports this programme by ensuring that multiple mentorships are available to writers living in 'All Other Counties.'

What is the Irish Writers Centre?

A: As the leading support and development organisation for writers since 1991, the Irish Writers Centre carries out its work, online and in person, on an all island basis. We work with writers of all types and talents, and actively encourage writers from all communities to engage in creative writing. We provide many ways and means for them to develop their skill, advance their ambitions and join a vibrant and diverse community of people who share their passion and purpose. We support writers by providing the following: development programmes, resources, events & information sessions and creative writing courses.

Why isn't my county supported through this project?

A: We are in regular contact with all local authority and county arts offices to see if they wish to support the National Mentoring Programme. For a variety of reasons, some organisations prefer not to support the initiative, due among other reasons to policy priorities, budgetary constraints, or the prior availability of literary mentoring in their area.

How is my application judged?

A: Applications will be scored through a combination of externally judged blind readings of your sample work, and an independent panel review of additional information (CVs, Statements, etc), with a respective 75%/25% split between these two. Only applications shortlisted based on the blind reading stage go on to the panel review stage.