



## Terms and Conditions 2026

### About the Irish Writers Centre International Debut Novel Competition

Irish Writers Centre International Debut Novel Competition is a literary competition that awards 12 first-time novelists with the opportunity to pitch their novels to leading publishers and agents. Formerly known as Novel Fair, and described by The Irish Times as '*A Dragons' Den for writers,*' the twelve selected winners take part in the two Pitch Days (either in-person or online) where they will bypass the slush pile and place their manuscripts directly into the hands of industry professionals. Some winners have even gone on to sign contracts with literary agents and publishers that they meet at the **Pitch Days**.

We all know that the path to publication can feel bewildering and mysterious. This competition's mission is to facilitate first encounters between budding novelists and members of the publishing industry. These encounters will take the form of a series of 15-minute meetings with publishers and agents where the 12 winners are given the opportunity to pitch their novels.

As a first-time novelist it can be difficult to know what an agent or publisher wants. In preparation for the Pitch Days, winners will participate in an online workshop where they will learn how to craft the ideal pitch and what to expect from the competition.

The competition has been attended by representatives from: **Curtis Brown, Penguin Random House, Conville & Walsh, époque, Fletcher & Co, Poolbeg Press, Harper Collins, John Murray, Hachette, Lilliput Press, New Island Books, The Book Bureau, The Bent Agency, Greene & Heaton, Storyline Literary Agency** and many others.

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Before you submit your work, you should familiarise yourself with the Terms and Conditions below.

Make sure you meet all the conditions before submitting your manuscript, as incomplete manuscripts cannot be accepted.

### Entry details:

- The entry fee is €65 (€58.50 IWC Members) and is non-refundable. There will be 10 free entries for student / unwaged or senior, proof will required.
- The application window to submit your 5,000 word sample and 500 word synopsis is between **8am, 1 April 2026 and 5pm, 8 May 2026**.
- **The competition is open to novels of all fictional genres**, accepting hybrid forms including works that play with the boundary between fiction and non-fiction (e.g. autofiction). Please be aware that this is a novel competition and your manuscript will be judged as a novel.
- Memoirs, short story collections and works of non-fiction will not be accepted.
- The writer must not have published a novel before i.e. has not previously published a novel with an ISBN. There are some exceptions to this rule, please see below in 'Eligibility'.
- To enter, applicants are required to send a synopsis of a max. of 500 words (+/- 10%) and a sample of their novel, which should be approximately 5,000 words (+/- 10%).
- The sample can be from any part of the novel but we strongly advise that applicants submit consecutive chapters.
- The applicant's name must not appear anywhere on the synopsis or manuscript. The applicant's name should appear only on the entry form.
- Compile the manuscript sample and synopsis in to one single file / document (PDF or word doc). File name: = "Your Novel Title IDNC 2026".
- Format your manuscript in a standard clear font (e.g. Times New Roman), font size 12, double-spaced with page numbers.

## Eligibility

### Terms & Conditions for Entry

The competition is limited to unpublished novelists that have not signed with any agents or publishers. Applicants who have already had a novel accepted by a publisher, or have previously had a novel published, are ineligible.

A published novel is defined as one that has an ISBN. Exceptions below\*

Applications are accepted from writers who have previously published works of short fiction (individually or full length anthologies) and non-fiction, who are looking to publish their first novel.

***\*If the applicant has a self-published novel with an ISBN, they are eligible as long as they meet ALL of the below conditions. The applicant must be able to provide evidence of upon request:***

- ✓ The sample submitted to the International Debut Novel Competition is not from the published novel (i.e. this competition will only accept new, original work).
  - ✓ The applicant has a maximum of one self-published novel with an ISBN. The self-published novel must not have sold more than 1,000 copies through any medium (i.e. print or e-book).
  - ✓ In the process of publication the applicant has not successfully engaged with or had access to a professional publisher, distributor or editor.
  - ✓ The self-published novel has not been reviewed professionally (i.e. by any recognised print or broadcast media, or online review).
- Entries are welcome from anywhere in the world, however, in order to be eligible, applicants need to commit to participating in the **Pitch Days** which will take place in **September, dates TBC**, either online or in-person.
  - Entries must be in English.
  - The submitted manuscript is still eligible if parts have been published in a journal or magazine, as long as the applicant has not published the novel in its entirety.
  - Applicants must be over 18 years of age at the time of submitting their application.
  - There is a limit of one entry per applicant per annum. Please pay careful attention to the terms and conditions as you will be ineligible to re-enter until the following year if the submission is incorrect.
  - Your submission must be your own work. Writers may not make submissions that have used AI in their creation, whether in the outlining or writing of the manuscript. We have taken this stance on AI to reflect most publishing contracts that require authors to warrant that the work submitted will be an entirely original work. The inclusion of AI-generated text in the final manuscript will violate this warranty, as the text is not considered “original” to the author.
  - The 5,000 word submission sample that you submit must be part of a larger sample. We understand that you will still be working on your full manuscript at the time of submitting your 5,000-word sample to the Competition, please be aware that if you are

shortlisted, proof of a full novel (of a minimum of 50,000 words) is required to gain access to the Pitch Days. We request to see proof to make sure you are sufficiently prepared for International Debut Novel Competition as agents/publishers may request to see your novel immediately.

### **Terms & Conditions for shortlisted applicants**

- The shortlisted applicants will be contacted in **August 2026**, and they will have one week to show proof of their completed novel. The novel should be a minimum of 50,000. We recommend 50,000 words as this is industry standard.\*
- Shortlisted writers must be able to attend the Pitch Days in-person or online.
- Shortlisted applicants will be required to sign a declaration that they have not been signed by a publisher or agent and that they comply with all criteria listed in this document.
- The 12 shortlisted writers who attend the Pitch Days and subsequently sign with an agent or publisher must acknowledge the Irish Writers Centre in promotional material relating to the acquisition of the book. The correct term of acknowledgement is '*The Irish Writers Centre International Debut Novel Competition*'.

*\*Please note, the 50,000 + manuscript is kept confidential and is only used as proof of a finished novel. The complete manuscript must be emailed to the Irish Writers Centre within a week of notification of being shortlisted.*

**Do you have a question?** We can only enter into a limited correspondence with the International Debut Novel Competition entrants. For questions that cannot be answered from the [Frequently Asked Questions](#), please email [IDNC@irishwriterscentre.ie](mailto:IDNC@irishwriterscentre.ie).