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.

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) and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland will support 6 mentorships in 2027.

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 exclude 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 application as Gaeilge.

Can I use AI in my writing samples or in my application?

We recognise that Artificial Intelligence (AI), including large language models, are increasingly in widespread use. However, we strongly believe that AI should not have a place in creative writing. We advise applicants to avoid use of AI tools or platforms in our creative writing programmes.

Questions about the application process

Do I have to stick to the 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 selection panel of judges understand this.

Why do you want ideally published work for the first writing sample and work in progress for the second writing sample?

A: With your first sample, we want to get a sense of your best work, a piece that has been published or you feel it is ready to be published. With your second sample, 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. In the Submittable form, you will be asked to type in your statement and writing style, while you must upload your Writer's CV and two writing samples in one single document (Word or PDF).

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 use 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 NMP@irishwriterscentre.ie. **Please note that Submittable is an external platform and the Irish Writers Centre has no access to your Submittable account information, like logins or passwords**. All applications will be acknowledged via an automatic email.

What 'County' should I select in the application?

A: Please select the county you currently live in. If your county is not listed, 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 year of the mentorship, 2027**. If selected, we will ask you to provide us proof of address that must include an Eircode.**

Who will see/read my application?

We have an external selection panel who judge all our competitions and programmes. If you are selected for mentoring, we will share your writer's CV and writing samples with any potential

mentors who you have requested to work with, so the mentors can ensure they are the right match for your work.

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 by early March.

Questions on the mentor:

Can I choose my own mentor? Who are they?

A: We currently have more than sixty professional writers to choose from on our mentoring list, made up of poets, fiction and nonfiction 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. Mentees 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.' 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 60+ 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.

What is the code of conduct required by the Irish Writers Centre in relation to mentor and mentee?

A: The mentee and mentor will treat others with fairness, equality, dignity and respect in a way that is in line with the purpose and values of the Irish Writers Centre, as per our Customer Care Policy. They will communicate respectfully and honestly at all times with all persons who interact with the Irish Writers Centre.

As a mentee, how is my work protected?

A: The Mentor and Mentee agree that all work and advice shall remain confidential and that they also agree to comply with the Irish Writers Centre Privacy Policy, this can be accessed on the Governance & Policy section of our website.

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 are:

Carlow County Council, Cavan County Council, Droichead Arts Centre (Louth), Dublin City Libraries / Dublin UNESCO City of Literature, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Arts Office / Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Libraries, Fingal Arts, Galway City Arts Office, Kildare Arts Service, Kilkenny Arts Office, Laois County Council, Limerick City & County Arts Office, Mayo Arts Office, Meath Arts Office, Monaghan County Council, Roscommon Arts Centre, South Dublin Arts Office, Sligo Arts Centre, The Source Arts Centre (Tipperary), Westmeath Arts Office, Wexford Arts Office, 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 mentorships are available to writers living in 'All Other Counties.' We also gratefully acknowledge the support of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland who fund mentorships for writers living in Northern Ireland.

What is the Irish Writers Centre?

A: The Irish Writers Centre is the leading development and resource organisation for writers in Ireland. Carrying out its work online and in-person, we have a year-round programme of creative writing courses, resources, mentoring opportunities and a vibrant line-up of literary events. We also support the careers of writers through a series of free and exciting development programmes for writer's resident on the island of Ireland.

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 reviewed by a selection panel of external judges and each application is scored based on the quality of the writing samples, writer's CV and statement of intent, both of which should demonstrate a dedication to the writing journey.