RECOMS – Recruitment of 15 Early Stage Researchers (ESRs)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

This document contains answers to FAQs within the following categories:

A. Application questions  
B. Eligibility questions  
C. Organisational questions  
D. General questions

A. Application questions

Q1. How do I apply?

A1. All advertised positions require that applicants submit: a letter of motivation (maximum 2 pages), your CV, the name of two referees (to be contacted only in the event of shortlisting) and evidence of eligibility (see below) through the recruitment system of the host institution for each individual ESR position to which you are applying. In addition, however, please also ensure that you consult the application guidance provided by individual host institutions (available by following the application links posted against the individual ESR positions) for listings of any additional documents required as part of their application process (the procedure for application differs between host institutions in accordance with their standard recruitment procedures). Additional documents, such as transcripts of Bachelor and Masters programmes may be uploaded by the candidate at the time of application as well.

Q2. When is the deadline for applications?

A2. Applications must be submitted to host institutions by March 1st 2018. Applications received after this date will not be considered.

Q3. Do I have to submit a draft research proposal?

A3. You do not need to send a research proposal as part of your application. The short listed candidates will be asked to send their ideas for a draft proposal as part of the second stage of the recruitment.
Q4. Where can I find the application form?

A4. There is no standard application form for the RECOMS vacancies. Rather, candidates will need to complete institution-specific application forms at the time of applying for individual ESR positions. To access these forms please follow the application link assigned to each individual position advertised. Commonly online application forms are in use by each institution, with guidance on how (and what) to upload as compulsory attachments (see above) included in these forms.

Q5. Can I apply to several ESR positions?

A5. You can apply for a maximum of three positions from across the 15 positions advertised. For each position to which you apply you will need to complete a separate/new application. Candidates applying for more than one position are also encouraged to include specific reference to the individual positions to which they are applying in their accompanying motivation letter (maximum 2-pages). If you do wish to apply for more than one position and prefer to write separate motivation letters for each position to which you apply this is also permitted.

Q6. Will it make a difference to my chance of being short-listed if I apply only to one position, or to the maximum of three positions?

A6. Candidates will be treated exactly the same regardless of whether they have opted to apply for 1, 2, or the maximum of 3 positions. We are keen to appoint candidates that are highly motivated and committed to a particular topic. However, we also recognize that many individuals may be interested in more than one position in connection with a broader overarching enthusiasm for engaging in research and advanced trained aligned to the broader scientific rationale of RECOMS.

Q7. Why do I have to submit applications only via the recruitment portal of the host institution as named for each individual ESR vacancy?

A7. It is essential that applications for individual positions are submitted directly/only via the recruitment portal of the hosting institution (see links assigned to each individual vacancy for access to the respective recruitment portal) as there will be a different selection and appointment committee for each vacancy.
Q8. I am interested in applying for a position within a specific Research Theme Cluster. How do I apply?

A8. There are three umbrella Research Theme Clusters, each with five assigned individual ESR doctoral research projects assigned to it. You will need to apply for a specific ESR project. Where you wish to apply for more than one project the ruling of a maximum of three applications per individual applicant applies across the total 15 vacancies. You are free to choose whether you prefer to apply for up to three vacancies within a single Cluster, or from across different clusters.

B. Eligibility questions

Q9. What degree qualifications do I need to be eligible?

A9. To be eligible for an ESR position in RECOMS you need a university Master degree that allows you to embark on a doctorate.

Q10. I have a degree from a one-year master’s programme. Am I eligible?

A10. In general, a one-year Master’s degree should be sufficient for purposes of eligibility. However, due to the fact that the individual institutions participating in the RECOMS project abide by their own set of rules and procedures, applicants with only a one year Masters qualification are encouraged to contact the named individual(s) listed against the ESR position(s) to which they are applying for confirmation of eligibility in this respect.

Q11. Can a PhD holder apply for an ESR position within RECOMS?

A11. No, a Ph.D. holder cannot apply.

Q12. How should I interpret the eligibility ruling that applicants must be ‘in the first four years of their research career’?

A12.
The eligibility ruling that applicants must be ‘in the first four years of their research career’ is calculated as full time equivalent research experience beginning from the date that they obtained a degree which formally entitled them to embark on a doctorate, either in the country in which the degree was obtained or the country in which the research training is provided, irrespective of whether or not undertaking a doctoral was originally envisaged. To illustrate this with some examples:

- If an applicant has been awarded a Masters degree but has not since held a research position (in either an academic or non-academic organisation), then on the basis of the above they have ‘0’ years of research career experience and accordingly ARE ELIGIBLE to apply. It is important that they can support this with written material.

- If an applicant has been awarded a Masters degree and subsequently held a position of employment (in either an academic or non-academic organisation, or as self-employed) which includes a contractual responsibility for undertaking research, then only the time spent in employment position will be considered for calculation of eligibility. If, for example, the employment contract will have been for three years and ten months (full time) up to the start date for RECOMS (September 1st 2018), then they will be classified as having ‘three years and ten months’ of research career experience and accordingly ARE ELIGIBLE to apply. It is important that they can support this with written material.

- If an applicant, having completed their first Masters, then decided to enroll and complete a second Masters (or either one or two years duration), but has not since entered into employment of a kind with contractual responsibility for research, then their research career experience will be calculated as the duration of the second Masters (ie. one or two years duration) and they ARE ELIGIBLE to apply. It is important that they can support this with written material.

- If an applicant, having completed their first Masters, then secured employment in a research position for three years, and then enrolled for and completed a second Masters, the latter being of two years duration, they will be deemed to have five years research career experience and there for ARE NOT eligible to apply.

Q13.
After obtaining my Master degree I worked for 5 years, but not in a research position. Am I eligible?

A13.
You are eligible when you have less than 4 years of experience in a research position after obtaining your Master degree. It is important that you can support this with written material.

Q14.
I have no research experience at all. Am I eligible?

A14.
Even if you have no research experience at all after having completed your Master program, you are still eligible. It is important that they can support this with written material.

Q15.
Do I need to have a degree from a specific discipline, e.g. geography or sociology?
A15.  
Please consult the guidance for applications posted by the host institution of each individual ESR vacancy. Whilst the majority of positions are open to applicants from a wide range of disciplines, some ESRs (due specifically to the focus of the project) do specify specific disciplines with which existing academic qualifications should be aligned. Each ESR will not only be supervised by a staff member of the host institution but also by a staff member from one of the other host institutions. In many (if not all) cases this will always imply a combination of disciplines. This is also one of the features of the training programme: all ESRs get advanced scientific training in a variety of disciplines.

Q16.  
Are there any restrictions for applicants who are not EU nationals and will they be considered equally and based on the same criteria as EU nationals, regardless of nationality?

A16.  
We will treat all applicants equally regardless of their nationality. RECOMS aims at enhancing mobility of early stage researchers and therefore we welcome applications from all over the world.

Q17.  
I will not be able to produce the necessary English language proficiency certificates by March 1st. Can I submit these at a later stage?

A17.  
The requirement for English language test certification varies between individual host institutions. Please follow the recruitment links assigned to each individual position for further institution-specific guidance on this. The host institution application selection committees will carry out a first selection (leading to a shortlist of candidates per vacancy) by early/ mid April, which will be followed by a round of interviews (Skype or Video conferencing) in either late April or May. Where required by individual institutions formal language test certification as evidence of English language excellence will not be required until after the point of shortlisting.

Q18.  
I hold an international Master degree taught completely in English. Do I still need to do a TOEFL/IELTS test?

A18.  
The requirement for English language test certification varies between individual host institutions. Please follow the recruitment links assigned to each individual position for further institution-specific guidance on this. The host institution application selection committees will carry out a first selection (leading to a shortlist of candidates per vacancy) by the middle of April, which will be followed by a round of interviews (Skype or Video conferencing) in either late April or May. Where required by individual institutions formal language test certification as evidence of English language excellence will not be required until after the point of shortlisting.
C. Organisational Questions

Q19. What financial support and/or costs can I expect if I am recruited as a RECOMS ESR?

A19. ESRs get a competitive salary, which includes a mobility allowance. Salary and allowance will differ from country to country, due to a difference in allowance paid by the European Commission (the amount is related to the costs of living in a particular country) and the difference between countries regarding tax rules and regulations. There are no additional costs for the candidates, everything (including training and doctoral study registration) is accommodated by the RECOMS programme.

Dependent on their circumstances, individual ESRs may also be eligible for an additional ‘family allowance’. This will be determined on an individual ESR basis. Family allowances, where awarded to eligible applicants are fixed at the outset of the recruitment contract. Any subsequent change in family status during the 36-month contract will not subsequently alter the original decision to award (or to not award).

Q20. Can I be an ESR remotely; i.e. not living full-time in the city in which the host university/research institute is located?

A20. It is not possible to be a ‘remote’ ESR. The whole idea of MSCA Training Networks such as RECOMS is to enhance the mobility of researchers (as researcher you learn from your host university/research institute and this requires you to be there). However, you will not be based solely with the host university/research institute for the entire duration of the appointment. You will be required to attend a series of training events (each 1-2 weeks duration) to be held approximately one every six months in one of the six countries involved in RECOMS (Austria, Belgium, England, Finland, Germany, The Netherlands). You will also be required to participate in two three month secondments (hosted by one of the other institutions participating in RECOMS; at least one of which to be with a non-University institution). Where relevant to your training and research you will also be encouraged to attend external conferences, events, networking initiatives (etc). Willingness and availability to travel (primarily within Europe) is an important prerequisite for an ESR.

Q21. What is the soonest possible start date for me as an ESR? Can I start earlier or later?

A21. The deadline for applications to be received is March 1st 2018. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to interview during April/May 2018 with decisions communicated to candidates during May/June 2018. All appointed ESRs will be required to commence their contract of employment on September 1st 2018. This is required in order to be able to optimize the delivery of the collective component of the RECOMS training programme.
The final eligibility check will be carried out by the European Commission. Once approved the appointment procedure (including where relevant, applications for visas) will commence and will be carried out by the hosting institution.

Q22. What factors will be taken into account when it comes to selection of candidates for shortlisting?

A22. In reaching a decision on who to shortlist for interview we will look at a range of different factors including: motivation for applying to the individual ESR project, academic record including overall and Masters thesis marks, existing research expertise and experience, internships, publications (where relevant), participation in scientific conferences, participation in national and international research networks and/or projects related to the topic, communication skills, motivation to participate in RECOMS, motivation to participate in an MSCA Innovative Training Network.

Q23. When will I hear whether or not I am selected?

A23. For each vacancy we have established a selection and appointment committee and each committee will rank the applications for that specific vacancy. We plan to make shortlist Of candidates per vacancy by late March, and have job interviews during late April/ early May.

Q24. If I am shortlisted for interview what will I need to prepare/ what will be involved?

A24. Candidates shortlisted for interview will be invited to prepare a short research plan in alignment with the ESR position (or positions) for which they have been shortlisted. Further details on what this document should contain will be provided at the time of shortlisting. In addition to preparing a research plan, candidates will be required to take part in a research interview. The interview date, further detail on the format of the interview (including whether it will be via Skype) and the composition of the interview panel will also be provided at the time of shortlisting.

If you are shortlisted for interview, please note the interview panel will consist of the host and non-host institution RECOMS partners. Your application will be available to all panel members from submission for the purpose of assessing your suitability for the post.

Q25. Where can I access further information on the RECOMS training programme, inclusive of schedule of training events?
A25. For further information on the RECOMS training programme, please see here.

D. General questions

Q26. Where can I find additional information about Marie Skłodowska Curie (MSCA) Innovative Training Network programme and my role in them if I were to be appointed as an ESR?

A26. For additional information on MSCA-ITNs please visit this website (external link).

Q27. I have a question that is not listed here, who can I turn to?

A27. For any additional questions about your application, please contact the person that is mentioned as contact person for the vacancy you are interested in. See also the websites of the hosting institutions. For general questions about the RECOMS programme please contact: alex.franklin@coventry.ac.uk

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