

Vietnam Ireland Bilateral Education Exchange (VIBE) Programme

1. Background

Investment in human capacity development is a cornerstone of Vietnam's national development policy. Needs assessments of the country's socio-economic development priorities consistently point to education and training at all levels as key areas for investment and reform. In particular it is recognised that tertiary education in Vietnam is facing greater demand for improved soft skills training to meet the needs of the private sector and the fast-changing and more internationally integrated economy.

Ireland has been supporting successive Vietnam Socio-Economic Development Plans since 2005. Ireland's first Vietnam Country Programme 2007-10 included a commitment to support bilateral experience exchange links between the two countries. This commitment reflected an expressed Government of Vietnam request that, alongside financial support, Ireland shared its development experience and expertise with Vietnam in such areas as third-level education, economic policy making and enterprise development.

To respond to the request by the Government of Vietnam, Ireland established the Irish Development Experience Sharing Programme (IDEAS) in 2009. The programme has been successfully delivered since then. Under the IDEAS programme, over 250 dedicated post-graduate Fellowships have been provided to Vietnamese students to study at Irish universities and Institutes of Technology, various exchange links between economic research and policy institutions and collaboration in regard to enterprise development have taken place. A core theme has been facilitation of Irish experience sharing with peer institutions in Vietnam.

Ireland's third level education sector places an emphasis on innovation, entrepreneurship and global collaboration and is creating opportunities for the future leaders and entrepreneurs which society needs and is a core engine for growth. Irish third level education intuitions build soft skills such as communication, problem-solving, and creative- and critical-thinking skills which are vitally important in today's competitive economy and consequently Irish graduates are in high demand from employers. Because of the high quality of Ireland's education system, Ireland has become a magnet for international corporations. Ireland is European headquarters to 9 of the top 10 global software companies, and 9 of the top 10 US technology companies. The World Bank lists Dublin as one of the top 10 places in the world to do business.

Wider economic and trade links between Ireland and Vietnam have been growing from a previously low base. Increasing numbers of Vietnamese students are undertaking self-financed third level education courses in Ireland; trade between the two countries is expanding; and investment in each other's economies is commencing. These trends reflect increasing awareness of Ireland as an English speaking, modern, high-tech, dynamic partner for Vietnam.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Ireland's Department of Education and Skills and Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training was signed in November 2011 and extended in 2016. The MoU provides a framework for enhanced cooperation in the third level education sector.

As part of the implementation of the MOU and to further progress embryonic education and research links between Vietnam and Ireland, the Irish Embassy in Hanoi through the Irish Aid programme, has implemented the Vietnam-Ireland Bilateral Exchange (VIBE) programme since 2015 under the IDEAS programme framework to stimulate co-operation between universities and research institutions in Vietnam and Ireland. To date a total of 15 partnerships between 14 Vietnamese Universities and 9 Irish Universities have been supported by the Embassy.

2. VIBE Programme Objectives

The overall objective of the Vietnam Ireland Bilateral Education Exchange (VIBE) programme is to contribute to Vietnam's socio-economic development priorities by encouraging mutually beneficial development links between the two countries, with particular reference to third-level education and research cooperation.

The specific objective is to act as a catalyst to encourage and deepen third-level education **linkages**, build capacity and research capability by supporting the commencement of a number of new partnerships between Irish and Vietnamese education and research institutions.

"Linkages" here refer to new cases of two-way co-operation between Vietnamese and Irish third level institutions across a broad range of academic and research activities and can include:

- Staff and student exchanges that contribute to collaborative innovation/learning projects, digital Innovation and creativity
- Joint curriculum design and development
- Joint teaching programmes that contribute to capacity/systems strengthening
- Development and sharing of quality assurance/certification systems
- Exchanges that contribute to building skills and institutional management capacity
- Joint work on student enterprise development and innovation
- Joint research focussed on creating opportunities for sustainable research collaboration¹

3. Disciplines

The disciplines of VIBE programme should reflect the overall objectives of contributing to sustainable socio-economic development in Vietnam and the Government of Vietnam's sectoral priorities for overseas education and research collaboration.

¹ As this funding is catalytic, the scale of available resources is unlikely to support major research but can contribute to research planning, sharing and joint funding identification and stimulating initial links between and supporting capacity building among, early career researchers.

Prioritised areas for the 2019 call include

- Agribusiness, Food Safety and Nutrition
- Environment and climate change
- Enterprise Development and Innovation
- Information Technology and Data analytics

4. Eligible Applicant Institutions

Eligible Vietnamese institutions include higher education academic and research institutions and vocational colleges that have a registered legal status in Vietnam. Eligible Irish intuitions include recognised Irish Higher Level Intuitions (public and private).

VIBE projects/ partnerships that have received fund from the Embassy for 4 years are not eligible for extension under this call.

The applications must be submitted by the Vietnamese partner but should be jointly prepared by the Vietnamese and Irish Institutions based on an agreed partnership. Other stakeholders can be part of the partnership (e.g. private sector engagement).

5. VIBE Funding and project management

Awards is up to a maximum of €70,000 per annum depending on the proposed project activities. The maximum project duration allowable under the VIBE programme is two years. Funding for year two will be subject to satisfactory performance of year one and availability of funding.

Eligible expenditure: Project expenditures eligible for the Embassy's funding include direct cost to implement project activities, travel costs, accommodation and subsistence. In general, eligible areas of focus are those listed in Section 2 above. UN-EU cost norms 2017 for development projects in Vietnam will be applied – see below link for further information.

https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/un_eu_costnorms2017_2.pdf

Non-eligible expenditure: Professional fees for academic staff are not eligible. Salary, allowances, honorarium for the project personnel and academic staff from both Vietnamese and Irish institutions involved in the project are not allowed under the VIBE programme and should be factored into the project budget as the partners' own contribution. Grants for researchers and academics to undertake PhD studies in Ireland or Vietnam are only considered under special circumstances and on exceptional basis.

Costs in kind must also be factored into the proposal budget to demonstrate the commitment and cost-sharing of the applicants.

The Vietnamese applicant will be the project owner who is responsible for overseeing project management, including budget management and reporting to the Embassy in line with the Embassy's partner guidelines. The Vietnamese applicant institutions must possess the organisational, governance and financial structures necessary to receive, manage, account for and report on external funding in a transparent and efficient manner. The Embassy will conduct a preliminary organisational capacity assessment of successful applicants before awarding the grant.

The Irish university will collaborate with the Vietnamese partner to deliver the project, based on the MOU/MOA between the two sides. The Irish partner must confirm to the Embassy the commitment for collaboration and for contribution of own resources for the project.

Upon final selection, an agreement will be signed by the Embassy of Ireland and the successful Vietnamese partner institution. The Vietnam partner will be entirely responsible for oversight of the project budget.

6 Application Process

Stage 1: Submission of Concept note

A concept note following the Embassy of Ireland's format must be submitted in English, by the Vietnamese partner to the Embassy of Ireland, Hanoi by **12:00 hrs local time on 14 June 2019**. The concept note should not exceed four A4 pages, excluding Annexes. Emailed applications are required.

Stage 2: Submission of full technical proposal

Applicants who are successful in the concept note stage will be invited to submit a full technical proposal. The format for technical proposal and further instruction will be provided to the shortlisted candidates.

7. Time Line, Award, Contract

The time line is as follows:

- Call for proposal : 6 May 2019
- Submission concept note : 14 Jun 2019
- Invitation for full proposal: 1 July 2019
- Submission of full proposal: 15 August 2019
- Notification of final results: 30 August 2019
- Contract signing : September 2019
- Project commences fourth quarter of 2019

Appraisal and selection will be undertaken by the Embassy of Ireland Hanoi.

Key selection criteria include:

- Feasibility and organisational capacity
- Project relevance and alignment to Ireland's Strategy in Vietnam
- A clear and practical co-operation plan and activities
- Clear milestones, planned outputs and eventual outcomes.
- Innovation of project approach
- Sustainability beyond the Irish Aid's funding
- Contribution of own resources

8. Submission of applications

Concept note and full proposal should be emailed by no later than the deadlines specified in Section 6 to:

Ms. Vu Thi Minh Thuy

Programme Officer

Embassy of Ireland

Email: vuthiminh.thuy@dfanet.ie

9 Forms

- Concept note format (attached)
- Full proposal format will be sent to applicants who are successful in the concept note stage. A more detailed work plan, and a letter of re-confirmation from the Irish partner, will be required at this stage. Further instruction on preparation of a detailed project budget will be provided to the shortlisted applicants.