

MATCH IN THE DARK

Writers Pay & Conditions

An author-led document on fair pay
and treatment of writers in Ireland



“The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead there were little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark”

Virginia Woolf, *To The Lighthouse*

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01 | Case Studies

Who created this document?

This document was drafted by Match in the Dark in consultation with a panel of Irish writers as part of an initiative to address the pay, treatment and working conditions of writers in Ireland.

Match in the Dark is run by Brendan Mac Evilly and Dani Gill. Both are published writers who previously worked for Words Ireland, a collective of seven Irish literature resource organisations that created the 'Pay Scale Information for Writers' document. The Pay Scales document paved the way and the demand for this new writer-led work.

To ensure the document represented writers, Match in the Dark employed an advisory group of experienced writers who helped to develop this document's principles and content, and who proposed and agreed the guideline rates offered below. They are:

Mia Gallagher
Ferdia MacAnna
Oisín McGann
Nuala O'Connor
Annemarie Ní Churreáin
Nidhi Zak/Aria Eipe

In an effort to make the document more representative of the Irish writing community, Match in the Dark invited a number of other writers to review and endorse this document before publication. These include:

Irish Writers Union	David Butler	Patrick Chapman
Praxis Artists' Union	Liam Cagney	Jane Clarke
Suad Aldarra	Lucy Caldwell	Harry Clifton
Catherine Ann Cullen	Niamh Campbell	Pauline Clooney
Sheila Armstrong	Siobhán Campbell	Edel Coffey
Celeste Augé	Triona Campbell	Emily Cooper
John Banville	Eoghan Carrick	Gavin Corbett
Sara Baume	Jan Carson	Betsy Cornwell
Amanda Bell	Deirdre Cartmill	Polina Cosgrave
Claire-Louise Bennett	Aoife Casby	Sarah Crossan
Chris Binchy	Laura Cassidy	Madeleine D'Arcy
Christine Breen	Luke Cassidy	Sarah Davis-Goff

Celia de Fréine	Paul Lynch	Nessa O'Mahony
Oein DeBhairdhuin	John MacKenna	Louise O'Neill
Danny Denton	Lauren Mackenzie	Patricia O'Reilly
Martina Devlin	Deirdre Madden	Sean O'Reilly
Sadhbh Devlin	Manchán Magan	Fiona O'Rourke
Greg Dinner	Christodoulos Makris	Maeve O'Sullivan
Moyra Donaldson	Ian Maleney	Lissa Oliver
Katie Donovan	Martin Malone	Nicola Pierce
Theo Dorgan	Andrea Mara	Emilie Pine
Kevin Doyle	Colm McAuliffe	Sue Rainsford
Rob Doyle	Aoibheann McCann	Billy Ramsell
Wendy Erskine	Thomas McCarthy	Liz Reapy
Tanya Farrelly	Gavin McCrea	Nell Regan
Dean Fee	Rosaleen McDonagh	Keith Ridgway
Elaine Feeney	Erika McGann	Mark Roper
Olivia Fitzsimons	Bernie McGill	Dave Rudden
Aingeala Flannery	Afric McGlinchey	Donal Ryan
Bairbre Flood	Belinda McKeon	Fiona Scarlett
Órfhlaith Foyle	Henrietta McKervery	Stephen Sexton
Oona Frawley	Danielle McLaughlin	Tom Sigafoos
Sinead Gleeson	Liz McManus	Stephen James Smith
Mark Granier	Alan McMonagle	Philip St John
Mary Grehan	Paul McVeigh	Susanne Stich
Anne Griffin	Andrew Meehan	Arnold Thomas Fanning
Sarah Maria Griffin	Paula Meehan	Alan Titley
Anne Haverty	Geraldine Mitchell	Jessica Traynor
Claire Hennessy	Sinéad Moriarty	Molly Twomey
Seán Hewitt	Mary Morrissey	Melatu Uche Okorie
Caelainn Hogan	Gina Moxley	Bill Wall
Alannah Hopkin	Mary Murphy	Anna Walsh
Andrej Kapor	Paul Murray	Colin Walsh
Colm Keegan	Chandrika Narayanan-	Joanna Walsh
Victoria Kennefick	Mohan	Margaret Ward
Angela Keogh	Doireann Ní Ghríofa	Sarah Webb
Will Keohane	Réaltán Ní Leannáin	Grace Wells
Roisin Kiberd	Maria Ní Mhurchú	Sheena Wilkinson
Claire Kilroy	Liz Nugent	Niall Williams
Alice Kinsella	Mary O'Donnell	Adam Wyeth
Conor Kostick	Mary O'Donoghue	Enda Wyley
Nick Laird	Sheila O'Flannagan	Dimitra Xidious
Adele Leahy	Lani O'Hanlon	Myra Zepf
Brian Leyden	Lianne O'Hara	

Who is this document for?

This document is aimed at two groups of people:

Writers, who we hope can use it as a tool to ensure they get paid and treated fairly.

Anyone who pays writers, including festivals, journals, publishers, resource organisations, arts offices, commercial enterprises or other individuals. The document sets out principles of best-practice before, during and after work engagements. It aims to improve understanding of writers pay, and offers a guide to what writers believe is fair pay for the various jobs they undertake.

In speaking to two distinct groups, the document addresses one or other group at different points throughout.

What does this document hope to achieve?

This document aims to set out key principles and propose best practices for the most common situations involving the pay, contracting and employment of writers in Ireland. In doing so, it hopes to improve the pay, conditions and treatment of writers, and make the pursuit of a writing life more financially viable.

The Arts Council's 'Paying the Artist' policy lists a number of 'best-practice principles for all those engaging artists'. In this list, it states that organisations should:

Comply with rates, terms, practices and standards recommended by representative and resource organisations, and utilis[e] available toolkits and resources to support the contracting process.

In offering guideline rates for writers, the overarching principle of this document is to state what the advisory panel of writers collectively believe is fair pay for a fair day's work. Their views are endorsed by the Irish Writers Union and a long list of writers, above.

Match in the Dark is acting as a representative organisation in so far as it attempts to accurately communicate the views of writers who contributed to and endorsed this document. Nobody is under any illusions that organisations will need time to bridge the gap between the current standard rates and the guideline rates.

However, the Paying the Artist policy also states that organisations should:

Aim for continued improvement in rates, acknowledging the low base from which current norms and standards are set and that minimum standards are not an acceptable ambition.

Context

As the Arts Council's 'Paying the Artist' policy states, the context for this document is the 'the low base from which current norms and standards are set'.

In 2021, Words Ireland carried out a survey of creative writers' incomes, focusing on the pre-pandemic year of 2019 and mid-pandemic year of 2020. It learned that the average income earned by writers was €24,000. However, the vast majority of writers' incomes were earned from work completely unrelated to writing. The above information tells us three things:

1. Most writers' incomes are untenably low.
2. The majority of professional writers need to seek employment in areas entirely disconnected to writing to survive.
3. Writing work currently pays poorly.

Some of our best loved writers do not earn anything close to a living wage from their writing, and struggle to sustain apparently successful careers. A CSO Labour Costs bulletin stated that at the end of 2018, while economic recovery was benefiting most sectors, both the 'Accommodation & food' and 'Arts & entertainment' sectors continued to fall further and further behind.

In addition to untenably low pay, writers battle with the precarity of the gig economy where maternity, parental and sick leave as well as pensions and housing are beyond reach. Writers cannot afford to be sick. They find it difficult to plan careers and near impossible to secure a mortgage. Ironically, the stress involved from such precarity makes them more likely to be unwell. Life choices such as a place to live, work and family formation are fraught with uncertainty.

If it is acknowledged that the fees currently offered to writers do not add up to a reasonable income, the only adequate response is to seek increased fees for writing and writing-related work.

In 2016, Words Ireland created the Pay Scale document which listed fees that each of seven literature resource organisations paid to writers. This acted as a useful benchmark for writers who could point to it when other organisations attempted to offer lower fees, or none at all.

However, almost seven years on, despite increases in funding generally, many of these fees have not increased, let alone year-on-year, reflecting the wider problem of pay stagnation. Many organisations have achieved significant increases in funding and enlarged their programming activity, but without implementing proportionate increases to rates of pay.

Low pay also affects diversity. Underpaid literary work turns writing into a profession for those who can afford it only. Ta-Nehisi Coates said ‘Writing is a game of attrition.’ Those who can afford to stay the course will have the greatest chance of success. This translates to fewer literary voices emerging from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, among others. Increasing writer pay = improving literary diversity.

A Note on Pay Transparency

The publication of this document follows the launch by Match in the Dark of the #SayWhatYouPay initiative (November 2022). The Arts Council’s Paying the Artist policy asks all funded organisations to be:

open, transparent and upfront in communications with artists to ensure clarity from both perspectives on the ask and the offer.

To this end, we asked all funded literature organisations to go a step further by creating a page on their websites that outlines their standard or minimum rates. The Irish literature sector responded positively. Approximately two-thirds of Arts Council funded literature organisations are now transparent about the fees they pay writers. Links to writers ‘pay pages’ can be accessed at:

matchinthedark.com/saywhatyoupay/

This will help writers to ascertain the minimum amounts they are likely to be paid before they pitch or submit writing or ideas to festivals, journals, publishers or resource organisations.

02 | Key Principles

Below are five key principles for engaging any writer. These have been identified by Match in the Dark and the advisory panel of writers and, we hope, can be applied to artists from other disciplines and creative freelancers generally.

A writer should get paid for any work where some or all of the other people involved in the project are getting paid (e.g., programmers, editors, administrators, technical staff, printers, etc).

If you can't afford to pay professional writers appropriately for their time and work, you can't afford to undertake the project/publication/event.

Travel expenses and accommodation should be offered where writers are travelling out of their county for work offered. A day's work on the opposite side of the country can preclude a writer from working for two full days. Fees should reflect this.

Online work and online performances should be paid at the same rate as in-person work. It should not be assumed that writers are giving the organiser the right to record and share. Public dissemination of video or audio recordings can diminish a writer's ability to earn from similar performances elsewhere. Writers have the right to refuse digital or audio recordings, or transcriptions of live events, particularly when the request has not been mentioned in the initial offer of work. Additional fees should be offered for limited-time sharing rights, particularly for recordings that are not behind a paywall.

Writers should never be invited to donate their fees back to the paying organisation. Fundraising efforts by arts organisations should be aimed at arts patrons and supporters, not at the writers and artists being programmed. Arts organisations should aim to improve artists' incomes, not subtract from them.

Where offering work to a writer or artist – particularly event, teaching or other location-based work – it is recommended that the commissioning body should provide the following information in their first email:

- **Date, time and location (incl. Irish time for events abroad).**
- **Format and duration.**
- **Moderator – is there one and who is it.**
- **Whether the event is free or ticketed.**
- **Whether the event will be recorded for online use, and where and for how long the recording will be available.**
- **Other artists involved.**
- **Theme or topic of conversation (A more in-depth discussion can be had with event Moderators/Chairs).**
- **Fee, how it's paid and the admin involved in getting it paid.**
 - » **Is there a supplier set up form?**
 - » **What is your invoicing system?**
 - » **When will the artist receive payment and what steps will you take to ensure that the payment is timely?**
 - » **Do writers need to be added to your payroll, and if so, have you alternative payment arrangements for non-EU writers on a work permit who cannot be added to the payroll for legal reasons?**

This may be used as a checklist for writers before saying yes to work offered.

03 | Guideline Rates of Pay for Writers

The rates in the section below are offered as a guideline only; please use your own discretion when negotiating a payment. The guideline rates below are calculated based on the advisory panel's experience of how much work goes into each individual job, and how much time each job takes writers away from their main activity, writing.

In some cases, the below rates are close to double the current 'industry standard'. However, industry standards have been the same for over a decade, and were arbitrary to begin with, regarded in many cases as 'token fees' as they did not reflect the work involved.

We are aware that payment fully reflecting the guideline rates will not be achieved overnight. We also recognise that, where subsidised organisations are concerned, this may require seeking increases in funding to meet the needs of writers. Generally speaking, arts funding has increased significantly over the last decade, yet writers fees and incomes have remained static. Where funding increases necessary to improve writer pay are unlikely to be secured, it is reasonable for an organisation to question whether their current level of arts activity is sustainable if the incomes earned by the writers it engages are not. We wonder, in these cases, whether it might be fairer to reduce overall programming activity, in order to redirect existing funds toward improving writer and artist pay, ahead of increases to programmes, core costs or production costs. (See Appendix Two for more on this issue.)

Whenever an organisation commissions a writer for work, even if it's for an hour-long event or workshop, the writer's work inevitably involves some or all of the following:

- **Preparation, research and rehearsal.**
- **Reading or researching fellow writers/artists involved in the job.**
- **Travel to and from the venue, often out of county.**
- **Emailing back and forth with programmes, administrators and accounts departments.**
- **Providing updated biogs, blurbs and headshots.**
- **Completing surveys or feedback forms.**
- **An implication or request that the writer will help with marketing and promotion.**
- **Invoicing, which regularly involves filling out 'supplier set up forms' or even registering as an employee of the paying institution, and often involves follow up emails when payment is late.**

Therefore, in addition to notes on each particular job outlined below, the guideline fees should reflect this ‘hidden work’. These figures are offered as a guide to publicly funded organisations. Writers can be expected to achieve higher fees and rates of pay when working in the corporate sector.

a) Writing (publication/commissions)

Short Story Publication	€500
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Essay Publication	€500
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Poem Publication	€250
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These were difficult figures to set, as the rates still don’t reflect the hours of work involved in writing a story, essay or poem. At the above rates, most writers will still earn below the national minimum wage. However, the figures above assume that writers are submitting unsolicited work to small Irish journals and magazines, whose role is as much to develop new literary talent as it is to provide pay that equals the work involved. Fees offered in such circumstances may be considered as license fees for the rental of intellectual property. Writers can earn further income if including such work in collections under their own name. More experienced writers, or writers who are commissioned or invited to submit work for publication should feel encouraged to negotiate higher rates, particularly where original work on a particular subject or theme is sought. While commissioned writing can also be published in collections at a later date, rates for such work should be in keeping with the realtime cost of writing.

Publication of a review	€400
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Again, this is a fee that does not reflect the writing or reading work that goes into this job. However, it is acknowledged that fees offered in the commercial sector may put downward pressure on fees in the subsidised sector, and separately that critical reading is part of any writers’ life. That said, publicly funded organisations aiming to pay writers fairly for their work should consider offering fees commensurate with the reading and writing work involved in completing a review.

Writer-in-Residence	€200 per day
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Universities, arts centres, and organisations of all kinds increasingly engage professional writers as ‘Writer-in-Residence’. The work involves carrying out a mixture

of commissioned work for the organisation (events, workshops, writing on particular themes) as well as paying the writer to follow their own chosen writing pursuits.

We advise that all tasks required by the contracting organisation be listed in detail from the outset. New workloads should not be added after contracts are signed. Working hours should account for the preparation, administration and/or marketing of events or workshops that the writer is asked to lead. Additional production costs should be covered by the organisation.

Residencies that follow best practice generally pay the writer to dedicate time to their own writing practice and creative pursuits (exclusive of writing to a theme or subject set by the commissioning organisation). This uninterrupted time is paid for by the commissioning organisation.

Requests for the writer to write on a particular theme, or writing commissions set by the organisation, should be considered work for the organisation and thus paid at the guideline daily rate.

Where such work involves relocation for the writer, particularly given the current housing crisis, the commissioning organisation should try to provide or source a residence for the writer for the relevant period of work.

Match in the Dark and the writers advising on this document feel that a more detailed set of guidelines to deal with Writers-in-Residence / Residencies is needed.

b) Public Events

Solo Marquee/Festival Event **€500**

For events that focus on a single writer – in conversation with a Chair/Moderator, reading or performing – the guideline rate reflects the responsibility that goes with them, and the onus on the writer's good name to attract an audience.

Keynote Address / Masterclass **€500**

Some of the advising writers preferred to formulate this as a single speaking fee + a lower hourly rate for writing and preparation, which writers might be better advised to do. Therefore, the above rate is a simplified guide. The contracting organisation should be prepared for the writer to seek higher fees if being asked to develop a tailored, original masterclass or lecture.

Solo Event in other contexts/locations**€350**

As per above, but where the venue, audience, or occasion is smaller, including at libraries, bookshops, and small festivals and venues (capacity below 100). Again, this is a guideline rate, so writers should feel comfortable negotiating more favourable rates, bearing the context in mind.

2–3 Performers/Panel**€350**

Although less responsibility than a solo reading, panel events regularly involve additional work for writers, as it is hoped, if not expected, they research and read the work of their fellow panellists. This guideline rate is offered regardless of the size of the venue or event.

Chairing / Moderating**€500**

Fees offered to writers for chairing or moderating events are often the same or lower than the performing writers or panellists, yet the work involved is generally greater, with more responsibility (to the audience, festival, panellists), while being less valuable to the chair's writing career. Chairing may also include pre-event discussion with panellists as well as sourcing and reading books. The above guideline rate is offered for situations where it is known the chair is already intimate with the work of the panellists, and so a smaller amount of reading and preparation work is required.

5–10 min slots**€250**

Often multiple writers are placed on the billing for a single event. The logic is that each speaker/reader will attract their own audiences and ultimately boost attendance. However, the reduced time on stage does not necessarily mean a significantly reduced workload. As mentioned above, every event involves admin and preparation.

Podcast interview**€200**

This guideline rate assumes the writer will be asked about their work and for off-the-cuff opinions. Requests for podcast interviews on more specific topics that inevitably involve more research by the writer should command higher fees.

c) Workshops/facilitation

School visit	€300
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Workshop/Facilitation per 90min–2hour workshop (multiple)	€200
per 90min–2hour workshop (one-off)	€300

Facilitators should consider negotiating more favourable rates based on factors including: their experience/confidence in attracting an audience for the contracting organisation; where a new course is being designed; the amount of reading of participants work outside class hours. This guideline rate is based on workshops with up to 12 participants.

Half-day Workshop/Seminar	€400
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Day long Workshop/Seminar	€600
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Weeklong Workshop/Seminar	€3,000
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Writers can consider negotiating more favourable guideline rates of €500/€800/€4,000 where it is intended that the facilitator design a new course, or the facilitator is asked to read the work of course participants in advance of the course, or after it. Writers being asked to do one-off half-day or full-day workshops should assume they've been invited due to their specialist knowledge in a particular field. Writers and contracting organisations should agree on maximum participant numbers at the outset.

Mentoring	€400 per day
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Different writers will have different formulations for how they wish to price mentoring. It may involve an hourly rate for meetings (€100 or thereabouts) + a lower rate for reading and critical analysis in advance (€60–€80 per hour). Here, this document offers a simple daily rate as a guideline. This figure reflects the fact that anyone being asked to mentor is not only a published professional, but is a writer held in high regard by their peers, and has plenty of teaching experience.

d) Producing/Editing/Judging/Reading

Reading Competition Entries

€200 per day/€15 per entry

The Arts Council currently pays writers to read and review grant applications at a rate of €200 per day, plus €400 (unsalaried) and €200 (salaried) for writers to attend panel discussion days in person. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that other publicly funded organisations should pay similarly. This document also offers guideline 'per entry' rates, as above. This rate assumes the entry is as short as a poem or two, or a flash fiction entry. Writers should consider more favourable rates reading short fiction or essay entries where the word count may rise as high as 5,000 words per entry. Some judges may wish to agree fees with competition organisers based on word count.

The above rates account for the initial back and forth with competition organisers, getting set up on Submittable or similar submission software, or understanding the brief and scoring system. Additional fees should be offered where judges are expected to carry out work beyond scoring each entry, such as attending awards ceremonies or writing feedback for each application.

Guest Editing a Magazine or Journal

€5,000

The job of a guest editor can involve months of work – reading entries, managing emails, proofing and developing selected texts with chosen writers, selecting artwork, participating in the launch event and more. They also lend their good name to the journal. In setting their fee, the guest editor should find out how many submissions they are expected to read, and use the 'Reading Competitions Entries' rate (above) as a guideline. Any journal seeking a guest editor is advised to budget for at least the above guideline rate.

Writer-as-Producer/Editor

€200 per day

There is a growing culture of writer-led curation and production. Writers are increasingly involved in the management and administration of print projects, events, podcasts, cross-arts collaborations, outreach programmes and more. This is further encouraged through the Arts Council's Literature Project Award and Commissions Award. However, there is no standard fee for this work, and writers are often uncertain about what to charge. The above guideline rate assumes the producer is a professional writer with enough production experience to be trusted with funding/

budget from the relevant funding body or commissioning organisation. Writers are encouraged to negotiate higher daily rates where the work involved will last less than a week.

Illustration work

While many illustrators receive funding through the Arts Council's Literature department, Match in the Dark acknowledges that the work of illustrators differs greatly from writers, and that illustrators frequently charge for their work in different ways, working to an hourly rate, and not setting a predetermined figure on how many hours will be required. More work, and a separate document, is required to do illustrators justice.

Other gigs and job types

There are so many other individual gigs and job types that writers undertake on a freelance, mostly one-off basis. To list them all would be impossible. It is hoped that there is enough information in the above list that any writer or contracting organisation can extrapolate out from these guideline rates.

Is it ever OK not to pay writers?

It's worth acknowledging that writers already do an inordinate and mostly unavoidable amount of work for free ... reading/editing the work of their peers, most launch events, writing blurbs, radio appearances and other unpaid promotional work. 'For the exposure' is perhaps the weakest and most insulting excuse not to pay a writer or artist. Exposure on its own, even where it leads to increased book sales, rarely leads to substantial increased royalties and, when time away from writing is taken into account, can result in a net loss to the writer. If an organisation can't afford to pay writers, then the exposure it offers is unlikely to be of any great value.

In exceptional circumstances, writers may be willing to work for free for a genuinely charitable cause. (Literature or arts organisations registered as charities do not count.) For charity events, the fees of everyone involved in the project, including the organisers, should be foregone for the cause outlined. Writers are encouraged to ask who is getting paid or not getting paid?

The other instance where it may be acceptable not to pay someone for literary work or services is where the writer in question is a bona fide amateur, i.e. they are not, and have no intention of ever becoming, a professional author and only ever write as a hobby. This may be true of local or community publications or events. However, organisers should always assume that the writers they want to work with or publish would like to be paid for their work. This distinguishes between professional and amateur.

04 | Case Studies

Sara Baume on Tramp Press

I started working with Tramp Press in 2014; my first novel was the fourth book they published, and since then we've published four more together, three novels and one work of non-fiction. My first advance was €1,000 but after the novel sold much better than any of us expected, Tramp paid me a bonus of an additional €500. The advance for my second book was €2,000, and €5,000 for my third, and €10,000 for my fourth. Tramp have always been efficient and prompt about paying out rights and royalties of various forms.

Because Tramp publishes three books a year on average, I've always felt like each of mine has their undivided attention for a long period of time surrounding publication. I didn't have any social media accounts until 2020 and Tramp never put me under pressure to create an online presence in order to promote myself. They've always said that it's their responsibility to sell the book and my responsibility simply to write as best I can. They pitch me for as many festivals as possible, both here and in the UK. There have been times when I have turned down invitations or pulled out of engagements at the last minute and Tramp have been understanding about this, and I've always felt that they are very considerate of my well-being.

Tramp have consistently put each of my books forward for all the awards for which they've been eligible and supported me in the event of a shortlisting or win. In the coming weeks, for example, I will travel to London on two separate occasions for a reading event and a prize ceremony and Tramp will take care of all my expenses with regard to these trips.

My first two novels were also published in the UK by an imprint of Penguin Randomhouse but in recent years, since Tramp have expanded into the UK market and consolidated their reputation, it has been my decision to publish exclusively with them in these territories. This is because I've had such a good experience with them over the years and we've developed a close working relationship. They've granted me a great deal of freedom with regard to the design of my books, and Lisa is a very fine editor whose skills have always enriched my writing. I feel very lucky to be with a publishing house that also feels like an extended family.



Sara Baume is the award-winning author of three novels which have been widely translated. Her first book of non-fiction, *handiwork*, was shortlisted for the 2021 Rathbones Folio Prize, and her third novel, *Seven Steeples*, was published in 2022 and recently shortlisted for the Goldsmiths Prize. She is based in West Cork where she works also as a visual artist.

Arnold Thomas Fanning on *The Dublin Review*

I've been published by *The Dublin Review* on three occasions, and also included on its podcast, and more recently in an anthology of non-fiction work from its archives. Throughout, I've had my writing taken seriously, been treated with the utmost respect as a writer, and paid promptly and well. It remains a marvellous publication opportunity for writers.

My first experience of writing for *The Dublin Review* was with a spec submission called 'Rough Sleeper' in the winter 2016 issue (No. 65, later anthologised in *Show Your Work: Essays from The Dublin Review* [2022]). This essay, dealing with my experience of mental distress, homelessness, and hospitalisation, was a very challenging piece for me to put out in the world. But having it placed in *The Dublin Review* was the right decision, with its founder and editor Brendan Barrington treating it with care and sensitivity in its editing, and me as a writer with support and professionalism, all of which gave me confidence to see the work placed in the public realm.

After this I went on to have a short story accepted by *The Dublin Review* ('Afterwards,' No.75, winter 2019), as well as a further essay ('My father's LPs, No. 80, autumn 2020). Each time I felt that *The Dublin Review* would be the ideal home for these long-form works, that required the kind of attentive care and scrutiny that only Brendan can bring in his editing.

At its best, editing is a symbiotic relationship between editor and writer, dependent on clear communication and respect, and Brendan is always reliable in this regard, as well as thorough in his reasoning behind his edits. A writer with *The Dublin Review* knows that the piece they submit, the text, the word, indeed the writer, is being given serious and fair consideration at every juncture, with the aim always of making the final reading experience better.

What is particularly gratifying about the fees paid by *The Dublin Review* is that they represent an acknowledgement of the amount of work that goes into the final published piece, both in the writing, which could be the work of months, and the subsequent editing, a considerable labour in itself. In this, the fees are a welcome advocacy of the writer, moving beyond a place of tokenism into one of clear and encouraging professionalism.

Ultimately I feel that when submitting work to *The Dublin Review*, and to Brendan's scrupulous editing if it is accepted, that the work will be seriously read, respected, considered, responded to, cared for, and nurtured into its best form.

I could not ask for more, and as a writer I feel responded to and fully respected too.

Arnold Thomas Fanning's payments from *The Dublin Review*:

Journal: €450–€900 depending on length and genre.

Podcast: €300

Reprint for Anthology: €150



Arnold Thomas Fanning's work has been published in *The Dublin Review*, *Banshee*, *gorse*, *The Lonely Crowd*, *The Stinging Fly*, *Correspondences: An Anthology to Call for an End to Direct Provision*, *Show Your Work: Essays from the Dublin Review* & elsewhere. *Mind on Fire: A Memoir of Madness and Recovery*, was published in 2018 and shortlisted for the Wellcome Book Prize 2019.

Elaine Feeney on the Ennis Book Club Festival

I was invited to the Ennis Book Club Festival in March 2022 for an event called 'Fall in Love with Irish Debuts'. From the first email, it was clear what my fee would be, who I was to read and chat alongside, and that accommodation would be provided. I was afforded a generous amount of time to read Annie McManus' book, and I could see obvious links in our work, themes on motherhood, national identity, and class. It was a well-considered pairing.

Accommodation was booked through the festival and I was offered early check in as our event was at lunchtime. Parking was included. The hotel was wonderful and breakfast was included in the stay.

On the day of the event, the event Chair, Jessica Traynor, met me in the lobby of the hotel and accompanied me to the venue, where we were warmly met by committee members. We were shown to the stage for a run through of seating and the order of events. Jessica ran through the format and asked if we had any issues / questions before we began. We had a green room, which is always a great way to meet the other writer before the event, and to avoid meeting the audience until afterwards, as I find this can be unsettling, and this might be a personal thing, but I find it makes me more nervous.

We were made comfortable on stage where we were asked to read from our novels, and this was followed by a well moderated discussion. The only small issue I have is being asked to read at the top of an event before any conversation. I prefer as a writer to have some warm up time, and then read perhaps ten minutes in. But we decided at this event to read first to set the tone of both novels, and I think it worked well. No assumption was made by the festival for me to read Annie's novel, *Mother Mother*, but I always read the work of anyone I share a stage with. Annie had also read mine. The festival had offered to send me a copy of her novel, but I had already had it. A note however on moderating, I feel very strongly that the overall preparation and reading is far greater on the moderator, and having been both writer and moderator at events, I think it is very important that moderators are paid an equal fee or more, as the workload is far greater.

The festival partnered with the Ennis Bookshop, and copies of my novel *As You Were* were clearly available to purchase before and after the event. A signing table was also available and both the chair and members of the festival remained with us to help during this process, and an official photographer was there to take photographs.

The photographer was very kind and only took photographs with our approval at this juncture. However stage photographs for all events are shared online by most festivals without any approval, and I find this daunting.

I was paid €400 for the event and €50 for travel costs. I thought this was an excellent fee and it is in the top five percent of fees I received for events in 2022. The festival asked that I send my invoice in advance of the festival, so I got paid immediately after the event.

My experience with the Ennis Book Club Festival was very positive. The audience were great, very appreciative, and warm. Overall this was considered curation and well remunerated, and I really enjoyed the experience.



Elaine Feeney is the author of three poetry collections including *The Radio was Gospel & Rise* and a novel, *As You Were* which won the 2021 Dalkey Book Festival's Emerging Writer Prize, The Kate O'Brien Prize and The Society of Authors' McKitterick Prize. She lectures at NUIG and is a founding member of the Tuam Oral History Project.

Caoilinn Hughes on the Arts Council TCD Writer's Fellowship

Overall, I had an excellent experience as the Arts Council/TCD Writer Fellow for 2021, from the interview stage through to the (online) event with Dr. Kevin Power to wrap up the fellowship. The director of the Oscar Wilde Centre, Eoin McNamee, was wonderful to deal with, as was the administrator, Sophia Ní Sheoin. I sorely missed out on campus life because of COVID – I met no colleagues or students in person, which broke my heart – so I feel that the role would have been significantly better in a normal year. Largely because of rental costs, I've never lived in Dublin so the free flat on campus makes this fellowship truly unique. What an excellent way to bring non-Dublin-based artists to the city. Alas, I didn't get to cross its threshold ... but in normal years, this is an amazing chance to live beyond one's means as an artist!

The fellowship paid €15,000 – 80% of which was paid immediately following a successful interview in 2020, and 20% upon completion of the role in May 2021. I think I wasn't alone absolutely cratering financially in 2020 – despite having a book out that year – so the fellowship was a lifeline. I'd been offered a similar role at another university the year prior, but I simply couldn't take it up because when I looked into rent costs, they would have come to more than half of the fellowship salary. So I do believe the Trinity set-up is the most viable one for an artist. If the budget allows for tiny violins, cue them now: since I took up this role for €15,000, the pay has now risen to €25,000. If it was a great gig before, now it's better.

It would be easy for such a role to monopolise a writer's time so that their own creative work is paused for the duration of teaching, but that wasn't the case with Trinity: I felt that the expectations were very reasonable. I taught a module for the MPhil and one undergraduate module; I did one half-day public workshop and one public interview, and a few administrative tasks besides. I felt that my contribution was valued, thanks to excellent communication with Eoin McNamee, and some very warm and engaged students. It was a big ask for students to share work via Zoom ... and it took a lot from everyone to make that space productive and open and safe, but we did our best, and some wonderful writing emerged from it.

Having not got into Trinity as a teen, it was pretty nifty to get to teach there! It's a prestigious, highly recommended gig, and it was an honour to take it up.



Caoilinn Hughes' latest novel, *The Wild Laughter*, won the Royal Society of Literature's Encore Award 2021 and was a finalist for four other prizes. Her first novel was *Orchid & the Wasp*, and her poetry book was *Gathering Evidence*.

Appendix

Match in the Dark acknowledges the limitations of this document, and the limited power of a small, new initiative to speak to all the issues that the advisory panel of writers wished to address. However the panel asked for four issues in particular to be highlighted here, and call on larger resource organisations and funding bodies to address these more long-standing structural issues.

ONE Advances vs Commissions

One of the main ways by which writers are funded by the Arts Council is through the Literature Bursary Award. In 2021, the Arts Council offered 116 writers Literature Bursaries (English and Irish language) for amounts between €10,000 and €20,000. This is a huge increase on 2019, when just 39 Literature Bursaries were offered for amounts between €5,000 and €15,000. The increase in the quantity and value of bursaries was greatly welcomed by writers and the literature sector.

Another way writers receive money from the Arts Council is via the Council's funding of independent Irish publishers of literature, poetry and children's books. However, advances offered by such publishers usually range between €500 and €3,000.

The result is an anomalous situation where a relatively large number of writers get paid between €10,000 and €20,000 to develop work that may get published, and a separate, smaller group of writers get paid advances of between €500 and €3,000 for work that is getting published.

The origins of the anomaly are understandable since an advance is calculated on the basis of expected sales. For example, a publisher assumes minimum sales of, say, 2,000 copies and pays a writer something in the region of €1 per copy in advance of their sale. The writer is entitled to receive further income in the form of royalties for any sales above 2,000 copies.

However, it is not guaranteed that literary fiction, children's writing or poetry titles 'pay out' their advances. So writers are left in a situation where the total payment for their book is somewhere between €500 and €3,000 (for anything between one and five years' work).

To address the anomaly, funding for writers via Irish publishers might be better conceived of as non-refundable commissions to bring the text to the point of publication, with royalties paid on sales thereafter. For the Arts Council – a grant funding body – to connect its indirect funding of writers to a purely commercial logic appears contradictory. Doing so also creates an anomaly within the Arts Council. Most artists across other artforms get funded according to work that will be carried out, whereas literary authors get paid according to sales figures projected by the publisher. A visual artist might receive a fixed commission rate to mount an exhibition, whether or not they sell any of the work on display. Their work might not even be available for sale. Writers and other professionals working in theatre and film get paid based on set daily rates or standard commission rates rather than eventual cinema or theatre tickets sold.

There are further reasons to set funding for advances in line with bursary funding. Providing Irish publishers of prose with amounts of €10,000+ for advances, or of poetry with €5,000 or more, would allow them to compete with international publishers for Ireland's finest literary talent. The general public often hears of six-figure deals being offered by large international publishers, but these are far from the norm. Entry-level advances offered by reputable international literary publishers are regularly below €10,000 per title. Increasing Irish publisher's advances would increase the quality of manuscripts available to them, and ultimately increase their income and financial viability.

TWO

Increasing Pay vs Increasing Activity

Most literature organisations in the sector are publicly funded. For many, their main source of funding is the Arts Council, whose overall budget has increased from €56.9m in 2015 to €130m in 2022 and 2023. As a corollary of the overall increase, most literature organisations have seen their funding increase gradually since 2010, and more significantly since the pandemic. However, the recent Words Ireland survey suggest that writers' fees have not increased to the same proportion.

The bulk of funding increases are being spent on increased activities, as well as on increased costs and staffing in the sector. A greater number of literature organisations are now being funded too, as are more projects and commissions. It is also acknowledged that more writers than ever are in receipt of support and funding, particularly since the pandemic, via the Arts Council's Agility Award and increased bursary recipients. But, based on Words Ireland 2021 survey of writers, professional or semi-professional writers appear to be getting paid just as poorly as they were a decade ago, with their incomes remaining stubbornly low.

Given the recognition that artists are underpaid, and given the policies currently in place to address this, the advisory panel of writers would like to see a push for funded organisations to increase their artist fees ahead of increasing programme sizes.

Match in the Dark would encourage a sector-wide conversation as to how significant fee increases can be incentivized in literature organisation's funding applications, ahead of increased activities, until such a time that 'fair fees' are being paid to writers.

THREE

Payment of Irish Writers Abroad

Literature is Ireland's most successful artform, and it is contemporary Irish writers as much as Yeats or Joyce who are responsible for enhancing the reputation of Ireland as a literary nation. In recent years, the Irish government has recognised the value of cultural capital to Brand Ireland.

Culture Ireland, which plays a pivotal role in showcasing the Irish arts abroad, has nearly doubled its Departmental funding since 2015, from a low of €2.5m, up to €4.6m in 2022. Recently, the Department of Foreign Affairs, under its Global Ireland strategy, appointed seven new cultural attachés in major cities across the globe to increase artistic programming as part of their diplomatic mission. All signs point to increased investment in Ireland's cultural reputation abroad.

However, artists and writers sent abroad often find themselves in the unenviable position of showcasing their work for free. Particularly in relation to trips to the US, where writers, depending on their VISA arrangement, cannot receive payment for their work unless it is paid directly by the DFA or a supporting Irish-based literary organisation.

It's also the case that Culture Ireland, to date, funds flights and accommodation only, and on occasion offers small daily per diems for artists.

As important as international travel is to a writer's reputation, days spent promoting contemporary Irish art abroad ultimately equate to days where writers are unable to write, or earn, at home.

To meet its stated goals of 'creating and supporting opportunities for Irish artists', the panel and Match in the Dark would like to see that Culture Ireland ensure all writers abroad are being paid fairly – either by ensuring that another organisation (in Ireland or abroad) will pay writers fairly, or by directly funding fees for writers in addition to flights and accommodation.

Writers by their nature are sole traders. Compared with other artforms, where the touring entity is usually a theatre company, musical groups or dance companies with their own manager or administrators, writers do not have the same administrative support available. Match in the Dark and the contributing writers to this document would ask the relevant funding bodies and larger literature support organisations to consider and discuss what particular measures can be put in place to support the specific needs of writers when it comes to international travel and performance, and to ensure a fair distribution of funding is spent on international travel across the artforms.

FOUR

Institutional Payment Processes

Most writers, artists and arts organisations frequently encounter ‘Supplier Set Up Forms’. Often, there are additional procedures required to get paid by institutions such as Arts Offices, libraries, venues, museums, schools or universities.

Some procedures are more arduous than others, and writers don’t usually discover this until after their work is completed. Some institutions require that writers be VAT registered in order to get paid. Others require writers to become PAYE employees just to receive a day’s pay, after which 40% is emergency taxed, without their new ‘employer’ supplying any of the usual benefits conferred on the rest of their PAYE staff. Most of these additional procedures are needless requests made by accounts departments that take a one-size fits all approach to payments.

Writers would like to see some engagement between funding bodies and their recipients, such as Arts Offices, Venues, universities, schools – with input from writers and artists – to encourage a simplification of payment processes.

Could a single ‘artist supplier set up form’ be used by all Arts Offices to save repeated filling out of similar forms?

Could institutions acknowledge that they regularly hire non-VAT registered freelancers, and adapt their invoice payment processes accordingly?

At a minimum, institutions should outline how and when they will pay writers and artists at the first point of contact, making clear what forms will need to be filled out, and what criteria will need to be met, in order to get paid. This would allow artists to make informed decisions about whether or not to take on the work being offered.

Until the above issues are resolved, writers should consider charging extra where they have to do admin that is above and beyond emailing a single invoice, or where Professional Services Withholding Tax (PSWT) or emergency tax will be deducted from their fee.

MATCH IN THE DARK

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