

Response to Taighde Éireann–Research Ireland strategy

IHA Research and Innovation Working Group

5th May 2026

On 2 March 2026, Taighde Éireann-Research Ireland launched its strategy document, *Curiosity Capability Competitiveness: Charting Ireland's Research and Innovation Future 2026-2030*. While acknowledging that the document, and the strategy planned for the new funding agency, represent important new developments, the [Irish Humanities Alliance \(IHA\)](#) is concerned about the marginalisation of the Arts and Humanities apparent in this strategy that arises from a very limited understanding of the nature of contemporary Arts and Humanities research. We and our [fourteen institutional members](#) fully agree with the statement that 'Our strength in arts and humanities research can be a national differentiator, strengthening Ireland's ability to address complex societal challenges' (p. 6). Indeed, Ireland's reputation for the Arts and Humanities is well-known as a driver of our country's soft power internationally. The United Nations Trade and Development Report, '[Creative Economy Outlook 2024](#),' found that 'in 2022, the United States of America and Ireland were by far the largest exporters of creative services, with US\$ 244 billion and US\$ 231 billion, respectively' (p. 26).

However, subsequent references to humanities-related disciplines in the strategy fall far short of acknowledging parity of esteem. The Arts and Humanities sector seems mostly included as a user and stakeholder rather than as a significant producer of knowledge and research. For instance, a major goal of the strategy is said to be to 'Connect the research and innovation community to enterprise, investors, policy practitioners, the arts and culture sector, civil society, and international stakeholders, taking a developmental approach' (p. 20, similar references on pp. 17, 35, 47).

In the document only two references to the creative industries attest to the importance of these as employers, and their connection with research: 'Across the range of Ireland's economic priorities (e.g., semiconductors, life sciences, AI/digital, quantum technologies, advanced manufacturing, Agri-food, creative industries) there is one consistent need – a requirement for trained researchers' (p. 24); and subsequently, 'We will also build capacity in future-facing areas such as AI and quantum technology, and within sectors such as the creative industries, bioeconomy, and life sciences' (p. 50). There is a visual image of a medieval manuscript text on p. 58 but no comment on the value of historical knowledge, or any other kind of Arts and Humanities-related knowledge. Here we would note the significant intersection of historical research and the tourism industry in Ireland, as expressed in many long-term relationships between Irish Arts and Humanities researchers and the Office of Public Works, and the development of cultural exports such as *Samhain / Halloween* and associated international revenue streams. Of six case studies, none are from the Arts and Humanities. Caroline McGregor's transformative '[Language, Terminology, and Representation](#)' project is mislabelled as a humanities project whereas it stems instead from Social Sciences research (p. 38). In the Foresight section, a possible 'AHSS-led Initiative of Scale' is placed under the third pillar, 'Society' (p. 44; see also Appendix, p. 65) – suggesting this is conceived in terms of applied Social Sciences rather than Arts and Humanities.

The Arts and Humanities in Ireland have demonstrated research excellence time and time again, through winning competitive international funding from agencies such as the European Research Council and Horizon Europe, and via schemes such as the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) and [Humanities in the European Research Area \(HERA\)](#). Numerous projects, many of which have been promoted by the IHA through our [Arts & Humanities Research and Innovation Showcases](#), highlight the successful impact of AH funding such as the [Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland](#), an all-island and international research partnership hosted by Trinity College Dublin; [Grangegorman Histories](#) led by the Grangegorman Development Agency and based at the RIA; and [Ultonia – Cultural Dynamics in Medieval Ulster and Beyond](#) hosted jointly by UCC and Ulster University. It is, therefore, extremely perplexing to find no trace here of Arts and Humanities as knowledge-generating fields, boasting world-leading research.

Regarding funding, past performance is an important indicator, but a pie chart on p. 42 shows funding for the Social Sciences and Humanities together and includes only the Investigator-led portion of allocations from 2021-2024. Here, SSH comprises 20 per cent of an allotment making

up 44 per cent of the whole pie. Next, a table on p. 43 indicating 'Minimum levels of investment per domain' going forward, designates only 13 per cent for Social Sciences and Humanities, once again viewed as a unit and referring only to Investigator-led programmes. A breakdown of the data that supports these figures to disaggregate Arts and Humanities from those for Social Sciences is necessary. In a previous communication, the IHA [Research and Innovation Working Group](#) requested Taighde Éireann-Research Ireland provide us with the data underpinning Figure 4 (p. 14): specifically, the €589 million figure for Horizon funding; 1,100 new postdocs / PhDs; and the 19 ERC grants, as well as the data underpinning Figure 8 (p. 42), which supplies the current portfolio breakdown of 20 per cent for Social Sciences and Humanities combined under 'Investigator-led'; and inquiring whether there are any Arts and Humanities projects included in the 'Underpinning' or 'Thematic' figures supplied there. We await this information.

The review of the national schemes that support PhD research projects, promised on p. 25, has been announced to HEIs as a decision to devolve said funding as a block grant to individual institutions. This has caused consternation across the university sector and across all disciplines, STEM and AHSS. While we await any form of guidance as to how this decision is to be implemented, we note that there is widespread concern regarding the possible impact upon the reputation and prestige of Government-funded doctoral research, especially as such a decision seems to sidestep international peer review and may result in a decrease in the number of highly qualified international applicants. We also note that the administrative burden of this work is not being supported by Taighde Éireann-Research Ireland and will impact unfairly on smaller institutions. The decision to model the amounts of funding awarded based on previous allocations also prevents the growth of younger and smaller institutions and protects established hierarchies in the Irish higher education landscape.

In sum, we believe that Taighde-Éireann-Research Ireland should reconsider this strategy with a view to resolving the issues raised here and providing Arts and Humanities research with the necessary resources to continue flourishing in the coming years.

Signed:

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Further information

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