BY IMAGI- NATION WE LIVE

A strategy for the humanities
2020−2030

IRISH HUMANITIES ALLIANCE

CONTENTS

In September 2013 the Irish Humanities Alliance (IHA) was established as a joint initiative of humanities researchers within 11 higher education and research institutions including all the universities across the island of Ireland and the Royal Irish Academy (RIA) which hosts and supports the IHA. The IHA entertains close and productive relations with the RIA on matters of mutual concern. Humanities disciplines in both jurisdictions enjoy an excellent international reputation and the IHA was formed to address the central place of the humanities in the context of a higher education policy that is increasingly shaped by economic imperatives. Since its establishment, the IHA has provided a platform for all-island humanities collaboration and consultation. This has enabled the diverse range of humanities disciplines across the island to speak with a single voice. In the context of Brexit, the IHA is especially keen to support an all-island approach to humanities collaboration.

BY IMAGINATION WE LIVE

The IHA strategy for the humanities is rooted in the conviction that the humanities disciplines have a major contribution to make to the most pressing social, political, cultural, technological and environmental issues of the 21st century. *By Imagination We Live* demonstrates and articulates the value and diversity of the established and emerging humanities disciplines and the critical role they play in understanding the human experience through history, culture and language.[1]

Since its creation the IHA has championed humanities research and scholarship in Ireland and Northern Ireland.[2] Faced with considerable geopolitical uncertainty, global societal challenges as well as the transformation of the higher education and research sector, the IHA has set out to articulate its vision for the humanities in the coming decade.

This document proposes a blueprint for how and why the humanities can and must make a central contribution to resolving the major challenges of the 21st century. As higher education in Ireland, Northern Ireland and elsewhere undergoes a period of rapid change, the IHA commits to championing the social, cultural and economic value of humanities education and research.

1. 'By logic and reason we die hourly; by imagination we live', quotation attributed to W.B. Yeats: Molly Andrews, *Narrative Imagination and Everyday Life* (Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 10.

2. A note on nomenclature: while the island's two political jurisdictions are often described using various formulations — for example, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, or Ireland, North and South — for the sake of clarity and consistency the formal names of Ireland and Northern Ireland are used throughout the strategy document.

1. **Protect, promote and develop humanities scholarship across the island of Ireland.**
   - Continue the IHA's work on an all-island basis— as an important network enhancing and promoting the humanities community across the island of Ireland.
   - Advocate for the establishment of specific funding streams dedicated to enhancing collaborative activities in the humanities (teaching, learning and research) between scholars and institutions in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

2. **Ensure parity of esteem between all disciplines.**
   - Promote the significant impact of humanities scholarship at local, national and global level.
   - Develop a broader definition of impact that recognises all aspects of academic research and protects disciplines which are smaller in scale.
   - Advocate for an Open Access policy that protects the diverse expressions of and quality of humanities scholarship.
   - Protect the integrity of established and tested peer-reviewing mechanisms.

3. **Promote secure and adequate funding of humanities research in Ireland, Northern Ireland and Europe.**
   - Champion secure and continuing funding of humanities disciplines at national level.
   - Advocate for the continued participation of Northern Ireland HEIs in new EU funding schemes post-Brexit.
   - Extend the involvement of the humanities community in Ireland and Northern Ireland in relevant European platforms.

4. **Promote the centrality of the humanities in addressing the pressing societal challenges that face us.**
   - Promote the humanities as intrinsic to the functioning of open democracy.
   - Encourage an informed and dynamic engagement in support of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
   - Advocate for the development of interdisciplinary programmes in the arts and humanities which respond to environmental challenges and rapid technological change.
   - Support humanities research investigations into untested assumptions underpinning the widespread use of AI, robotics and digital technologies.

5. **Support excellence at all stages of academic career development in the humanities.**
   - Strengthen the partnership between the IHA and the Irish Research Council (IRC) in the promotion and development of Irish humanities scholarship.
   - Advocate for increased levels of research funding in support of excellence at all stages of academic career development in the humanities.

6. **Advocate research and education strategies attuned to a multi-cultural and multi-lingual society.**
   - Safeguard the diversity of humanities research and of smaller disciplines.
   - Promote the place of the Irish language in a more globally aware and globally connected society.
   - Advocate for the full implementation of Languages Connect to ensure it supports an expanded strategy for international research collaborations and improves language competency among the student population.
   - Support the continued involvement of Northern Ireland in Erasmus+, any successor programmes and Horizon Europe.

THE HUMANITIES IN AN INNOVATIVE, SUSTAINABLE AND RESPONSIBLE SOCIETY

After broad consultation, the IHA has identified the strategic issues that face our disciplines, in Ireland and Northern Ireland, in the EU and globally. The IHA is working to ensure that humanities perspectives are represented in research and higher education policy-making discussions across the island and within the EU.

The IHA engages with National Experts, National Delegates and National Contact Points in Ireland and Northern Ireland to bring an effective, co-ordinated humanities response to bear on draft EU Work Programmes in Horizon 2020 and its successor programme Horizon Europe. At an EU level the IHA is an active member of the European Alliance for the Social Sciences and the Humanities (EASSH) and for the past three years, has been a member organisation of the Governing Board of this body.

The IHA has also been active in the national policy scene, informing policy on modern languages and through publication of policy documents and position papers.[3] It is working to generate public awareness of the importance of humanities teaching and scholarship within higher education and wider society. In pursuit of these objectives, the IHA collaborates closely with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the Irish Research Council (IRC), the main funding body for the humanities in Ireland. The IHA has developed an excellent working relationship with the IRC and engages widely with other stakeholders within the Irish research eco-system.

The value of the humanities
The humanities are 'the study of how people process and document the shared human experience' through culture, history and language.[4] They offer a long-term historical perspective fostering the growth of self-aware, outward-looking and creative societies based on the principles of equality, diversity and fairness. The growth of STEAM approaches in education — Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Humanities and Mathematics — is testament to the vital role played by the arts and humanities in developing critical thinking, creativity and communication. STEAM is based on an understanding that innovation is often found where different subjects intersect and that student achievement in science and mathematics increases when arts and humanities perspectives are integrated.[5]

By breaking down disciplinary boundaries and developing new perspectives, many humanities researchers address urgent societal challenges, such as the social impact of rapidly changing technologies, the opportunities and challenges of ageing, migration and globalisation, and, above all, our collective responsibility to prevent a further degradation of the environment. By analysing the profound social, cultural and ethical implications of these challenges, the humanities adopt a non-technocratic approach to our shared world. These actions will contribute also to shaping an informed and active engagement with the UN Sustainability Development Goals.

3. Policy, www.irishhumanities.com/policy/; *Languages for the Future — Northern Irish Languages Strategy*, www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/languages-future-northern-ireland-languages-strategy-final-report. Work on the modern foreign languages strategy for Northern Ireland was funded by Department of Education (NI).

4. Stanford Humanities Centre, *What are the Humanities?*, shc.stanford.edu/what-are-the-humanities.

5. Education Closet, *What is STEAM?*, educationcloset.com/steam/what-is-steam/; Jennifer Miller and Gerald Knezek, 'STEAM for student engagement' Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education International Conference, www.learntechlib.org/primary/p/48602/ (2013).

Why this statement of strategy?

The 2008 financial crisis was unmatched in its negative impact on higher education in Ireland where income fell sharply.[6] Core funding and support for research through the Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRTLI) underwent a sharp decline in the post-crisis period.[7] In spite of a challenging context, humanities scholars have maintained world-class standards,[8] while also generating new income from other sources, such as the European Research Council (ERC).

Recent developments in the framework programmes, notably those intended in Horizon 2020 to develop and promote talent, have contributed decisively to the world-wide standing of European scholarship and these must continue to be a focus for policy. This implies at a minimum that the required base level of funding is defined and maintained for the duration of the national strategy for higher education, to the year 2030, so as to equip researchers at all career stages to sustain long-term excellence in generating and developing original ideas.

Across Europe today, higher education and research are major strategic focuses also because policy is shaped by new economic, social, technological and cultural realities. The Societal Challenges pillar of Horizon 2020 has been a key factor in the development of new research directions.

With its successor programme, Horizon Europe, due to launch in January 2021, there is a pressing need to address the central place of the humanities in these developments.[9] To this end, the IHA has engaged widely with the humanities community in member institutions to ensure that humanities perspectives are duly represented in research and higher education policy-making discussions.

In 2016, the Government of Ireland published the report of the review group led by Peter Cassells into the funding of higher education. This report made several important recommendations, most of which have yet to be acted upon. The IHA strongly identifies with the Cassells report's emphasis on the prime importance of strategic thinking and innovation at the front line.[10]

The IHA has developed this strategic statement as a timely and informed contribution to the redevelopment of national policy, in Ireland and in Northern Ireland. In publishing the report, the IHA aims to provide ideas, arguments and resources that can be brought to bear on the indispensable work of humanities departments and schools, through which future graduates can themselves engage with a world that is more and more challenging with an indispensable measure of confidence in the quality and the value of what they have learnt.

6. Irish Universities Association, *Save our Spark*, saveourspark.ie/.

7. PRTLI awarded approximately €1.2bn in exchequer and private, matching funding for buildings, research centres, equipment and training, between 2000 and 2015. The last round was committed in 2009 and a sixth cycle has not yet been established. Royal Irish Academy, *Future-Proofing and Improving Research Infrastructures in Ireland* (Dublin, 2018), p. 8.

8. In the QS University rankings, the humanities are the most highly ranked areas in Ireland: www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/university-subject-rankings/2019/arts-humanities.

9. The strategic challenge continues to be acute, given the failure to date fully to integrate the humanities into the Societal Challenges pillar of Horizon 2020. See EU Commission, *Integration of social sciences and humanities in Horizon 2020*, publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f094a641-30dd-11e9-8d04-01aa75ed71a1 (February 2019), and European Alliance for the Social Sciences and the Humanities, *Interdisciplinary perspectives for Horizon Europe*, www.eassh.eu/sites/default/files/pdf/positionpapers/easshsshintegration4threportfnl.pdf (April 2019). The place of the humanities is likewise not addressed in a major report that is the basis of the design of Horizon Europe: see Mariana Mazzucato, *Mission-Oriented Research & Innovation in the European Union*, ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/mazzucato_report_2018.pdf (February 2018).

10. Department of Education and Skills, *Investing in National Ambition*, www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Investing-in-National-Ambition-A-Strategy-for-Funding-Higher-Education.pdf (March 2016).

1 | AN ALL-ISLAND VISION FOR THE HUMANITIES

The disciplines represented by the IHA have played an important role in the recent history of the island of Ireland. Both jurisdictions have benefited from the social, cultural and economic innovations pioneered by the higher education sector, with its nourishing of talent, its promotion of social cohesion and research excellence and its commitments to open democracy and knowledge transfer. The humanities help us to understand the shared histories and complex relationships on the island of Ireland and with Great Britain, while also playing a critical role in the development of Northern Ireland's distinctive cultural heritage.[11]

The RIA Brexit Taskforce's report *Higher Education and Research in Northern Ireland Post-Brexit* states that 'it is arguable that higher education plays an even more critical role in promoting the functioning of a stable post-conflict society in Northern Ireland'. More broadly, the Higher Education (HE) sector is instrumental in 'promoting greater cooperation and interaction between Northern Ireland, Ireland and Britain'. In this regard 'Strand 2 of the Good Friday Agreement recognises education as a powerful social integrator to secure the peace process by contributing to economic competitiveness and social cohesion across the island'. Viewed from this all-island

> ## Higher Education plays an even more critical role in promoting the functioning of a stable post-conflict society in Northern Ireland

perspective, in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement both jurisdictions continue to 'accrue significant benefits from the development of a de facto all-island research system... and from the social dividends arising from the cross-border flow of people to study and work in HE'.[12] The cross border flow of students continues to be a key element of cultural and educational collaboration between the two jurisdictions.[13]

Any post-Brexit isolation of Northern Ireland's higher education institutions from all-island opportunities would be counter to the objectives of the Good Friday Agreement.

The IHA is mindful of the complex legislative and policy terrains shaping the conditions of scholars working in institutions located in the island's two jurisdictions. While impacted by different political settings, however, those working in the humanities in Ireland and Northern Ireland share many common concerns around the pressures being brought to bear on their work and intellectual freedom. The IHA provides a space within which scholars across the island can enter fruitful dialogue and find common cause in maintaining the highest standards of humanities teaching and scholarship.

---

11. 'Niche tourism opportunities: Cultural and heritage tourism', www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/cultural-and-heritage-tourism.

12. RIA Brexit Taskforce Northern Ireland Report: *Higher Education and Research in Northern Ireland Post-Brexit*, www.ria.ie/programmes/policy-and-international-relations/ria-brexit-taskforce.

13. In 2015/16, there was a flow of 3,395 HE students across the border. See *An Analysis of Existing Statistics on Student Flows Between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland in Higher Education*, hea.ie/assets/uploads/2018/12/ROI-NI-Student-Flows-Report-December-2018-FINAL.pdf (December 2018).

The IHA identifies two major systemic threats impacting on its members North and South:

1. **Brexit and the possible impact of increased regulatory divergence across the island.**

   The Good Friday Agreement and the gains achieved across almost all sectors in its wake is underpinned by the common EU membership of its co-guarantors (UK and Ireland). The imminent re-articulation of the UK's relationship to the EU poses a very real threat to the shared research community on the island. The IHA is committed to protecting and deepening connections between scholars and institutions in Ireland and Northern Ireland and believes that special funding should be put in place at governmental level (North and South) to ensure the security of this vital shared intellectual space.

2. **Increased market-led decision making in the Higher Education sector.**

   Humanities scholars across the island are very concerned about the increasingly instrumental funding models that dominate the current HE research-landscape: models that favour economic growth without due concern for sustainability, while also foreclosing genuinely expansive research.

   Secondly, decreasing financial resources allocated to the HE sectors in Ireland and Northern Ireland have resulted in the impoverishment of staff-student ratios and the foreclosing of the properly imaginative in favour of market-oriented short-termism.[14] Much that has been gained at a societal and cultural level in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement is put at risk due to this ideological diminution of intellectual life across the island.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- **Protect, promote and develop** the entire spectrum of humanities scholarship across the island of Ireland.

- **Support humanities scholarship in Northern Ireland** in its vital work undergirding the stable settlement secured by the Good Friday Agreement

- **Endorse the values of regional coherence and cultural respect** that have underpinned the island's post-1998 history.

ACTIONS

- **Continue the IHA's work on an all-island basis** as an important collaborative network enhancing and promoting the humanities community across the island of Ireland.

- **Advocate for the establishment of specific funding streams** dedicated to enhancing collaborative activities in the humanities (teaching and learning/research).

- **Collaborate with all-island bodies** such as the RIA, the Irish Universities Association and Universities Ireland, as well as UK-based organisations such as Universities UK, as they foster further opportunities for all-island and UK–Ireland collaboration.

- **Support the establishment of a Northern Ireland Tertiary Education Committee** as recommended by the RIA North-South Committee.

- **Advocate for the continued involvement of Northern Ireland in Erasmus+, any successor programmes and Horizon Europe.**

> Much that has been gained at a societal and cultural level in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement is put at risk due to this ideological diminution of intellectual life...

---

14. RIA Brexit Taskforce factsheet, www.ria.ie/sites/default/files/single_pgs_ revised.pdf (October 2017).

2 | THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE HUMANITIES

There are significant instrumental values of humanities scholarship — cultural, social and economic — that benefit society in direct ways. The humanities support a critical and informed understanding of the world and make a fundamental social contribution through the education process. They exercise direct influence on the creative industries,[15] the arts sector, tourism and even on STEM subjects through new fields, such as the medical humanities, environmental humanities and digital humanities, which address the societal challenges of the 21st century.

The humanities also make a vital social contribution to active citizenship in a healthy democracy. Over the past three decades Ireland has undergone a remarkable process of social modernisation. Significant recent milestones include the successful referendum on same-sex marriage in 2017 and the repeal of the Eighth Amendment in 2018. The endorsement of the Good Friday Agreement, by referendums in Northern Ireland and Ireland, in 1998 facilitated an unprecedented period of peace and growth on the island of Ireland. This programme of social transformation and modernisation, including the Irish State's agreement to amend Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution, required informed public debate and the citizens' active engagement with complex legal, social and ethical questions.

Arts and humanities graduates are the key contributors to the creative industry sector.[16] The 2010 report *Building a Digital Economy: the importance of saving jobs in the EU creative industries* attests to their importance within the European context. In 2008 the EU's creative industries contributed 6.9%, or approximately €860 billion, to total European gross domestic product (GDP) and represented 6.5% of the total workforce, or approximately 14 million workers. In Northern Ireland, creative industries employ over five percent of the entire workforce contributing nearly £1 billion gross-value added (GVA) national product.[17] From the *Creative Momentum* project we know that the creative sector is worth €730m to the economy of the West of Ireland alone and that the sector employs approximately 13,000 people in the region.[18] Given the significance of the creative sector, policymakers should focus more on enhancing its potential.

A broad-based education provided by the humanities can help develop the essential qualities that the workforce of the future will require. Humanities graduates are educated to use credible source material and learn how to gather, interpret and synthesise information from variant viewpoints. They are especially trained in critical thinking, interpersonal and communication skills and problem-solving abilities. These transferable skills ensure that humanities graduates are adaptable in a rapidly changing economic and technological environment. STEAM approaches to education aim to develop transferable skills and interdisciplinary approaches

---

15. *Building a Digital Economy: The Importance of Saving Jobs in the EU's Creative Industries*, Tera Consultants for BASCAP, 201.

16. 'Britain's creative industries break the £100 billion barrier', www.gov.uk/government/news/britains-creative-industries-break-the-100-billion-barrier (November, 2018).

17. Ulster University, Creative Industries Institute, www.ulster.ac.uk/cii.

18. Patrick Collins et al., *Economic and Social Impact Assessment: West of Ireland Creative Sector*, mycreativeedge.eu/app/uploads/2018/02/west-ireland-eia-report-web-final_rev-compressed.pdf.

to learning among all students.[19] A 2016 World Economic Forum report on *The Future of Jobs* found that 'social skills — such as persuasion, emotional intelligence and teaching others — will be in higher demand across industries than narrow technical skills'.[20] The 2018 Royal Bank of Canada report, *Humans Wanted*, found that automation will increase demand for employees who are adaptable and display the foundational skills of 'critical thinking, co-ordination, social perceptiveness, active listening and complex problem solving'.[21] Modern Language programmes in particular provide graduates with vital linguistic and intercultural competencies which are quintessential in our globally interconnected world and in the context of populist culture wars that jeopardise democracy as well as the successful integration of migrant communities.[22]

The Irish language has been the focus of important strategic and policy initiatives in recent years, including the Government's 20-year strategy, which the IHA fully supports.[23] Irish is now also an official language of the European Union. The IHA will actively engage with initiatives that contribute to the development of holistic language policies that enable citizens to become bilingual and plurilingual, so working towards to the realisation of the strategy for the Irish language. The humanities more widely also have a vital role to play in sustaining the many forms of cultural activity that take Irish as their medium.

19. *What is STEAM?*, educationcloset.com/steam/what-is-steam/

20. World Economic Forum, *The Future of Jobs*, www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs.pdf (2016). See also Nord Anglia Education, *Succeeding in the 21st century means learning how to think, not what to think*, www.nordangliaeducation.com/teaching-and-learning/enriched-curricula/our-approach-to-steam/building-skills-for-the-21st-century.

21. *Humans Wanted: How Canadian youth can thrive in the age of disruption*, www.rbc.com/dms/enterprise/futurelaunch/humans-wanted-how-canadian-youth-can-thrive-in-the-age-of-disruption.html (Spring 2018).

22. *Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017–2026*, www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Foreign-Languages-Strategy/fls_languages_connect_strategy.pdf (December 2017).

23. *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language: 2010–2030*, www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2015/07/20-Year-Strategy-English-version.pdf (December 2010).

3 | ENHANCING EXCELLENCE

Humanities scholars make a significant contribution to an open, inclusive and secure society across the island. In education, the humanities have been central to the shaping of a citizenry equipped to deal with the challenges and opportunities associated with an economy increasingly reliant on knowledge capital. The IHA argues for enhanced funding streams to support collaborative research between scholars based in Ireland and Northern Ireland — supporting such links will be all the more important in a post-Brexit landscape. While the IHA recognises the systemic differentials at work across the two jurisdictions (our members in Northern Ireland fall under the Research Excellence Framework for research funding, Department for the Economy allocation for teaching and learning and under the auspices of funding agencies such as the Arts and Humanities Research Council), it remains committed to furthering the cause of humanities scholars working across the island of Ireland.

Further evidence of humanities excellence is to be found in the supports and resources secured by Ireland-based scholars across the European funding landscape (to which success rates in, for example, the European Research Council (ERC) and Marie Skłodowska-Curie (MSC) actions testify).[24] Maintaining and further developing this excellence in research and teaching requires a public policy attuned to providing adequate resources and supports. We need to ensure that a properly future-proofed infrastructure for research and teaching (equipment, facilities, library resources, buildings, research institutes, research support systems, virtual infrastructure and personnel) is put in place and maintained.[25] To this end, the IHA recommends a successor round of funding for research in third-level institutions that is inclusive and builds on the contribution of previous PRTLI programmes to cutting-edge humanities research in Ireland

(in the form, for example, of the Humanities Institutes that provide a crucial physical and intellectual infrastructure across the higher education landscape). Aligned with this, the IHA also argues for the full integration of the humanities into the next round of National Research Priorities.

The current funding landscape for arts and humanities in Ireland provides real challenges in terms of supporting early-, mid- and senior-career scholars. Much of this is the result of an over-emphasis at governmental level on a narrow reading of a small number of techno-scientific disciplines as economic drivers, a reductive approach that ignores the substantial contribution made by humanities research (and indeed the broader scientific community) to understanding the challenges faced by humanity in the 21st century. In a landmark speech in April 2018 President Michael D. Higgins described this 'as a conforming bending of the knee to an insufficiently contested neo-utilitarian mediocrity'.[26] In this regard, Ireland is out of step with other European nations in terms of the proportion of funding allocated to disciplines working across the full range of humanities scholarship.

An important counter-weight to this tendency has been provided by the IRC, which has played a key role in furthering the cause of humanities scholarship in Ireland. The holistic approach to intellectual enquiry promoted by the IRC (as evidenced by its mission statement 'to enable and sustain a vibrant research community in Ireland by supporting excellent researchers across all disciplines and career stages') resonates strongly with the core values promoted by the IHA. Its support of researchers across all stages of their career (from postgraduate studies through to the highly successful Laureate schemes) likewise coordinates with the IHA's mission to support and promote scholars at all stages of their development. Indeed a key sectorial issue for us all is the precarious employment conditions facing early

---

24. See MSC Individual Fellowships: www.iua.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/IF-webinar-July-2014.pdf [accessed 2 April 2019]; Irish Research Council welcomes €12 million in EU funding for six Irish research projects: research.ie/2018/11/29/irish-research-council-welcomes-e12-million-in-eu-funding-for-six-irish-research-projects/ [accessed 2 April 2019].

25. Royal Irish Academy, *Future- Proofing and Improving Research Infrastructures in Ireland* (Dublin, 2018).

26. Launch of the *Cambridge History of Ireland*, president.ie/en/diary/details/president-gives-an-address-at-the-launch-of-the-cambridge-history-of-irelan/speeches (April 2018).

career scholars, something which is having an increasingly detrimental impact on the progression of talent and new expertise within the HE landscape.

The IHA is strongly of the view that the research funding stream directed towards the IRC needs to be increased to ensure equity across the disciplinary research landscape. In addition, the IHA argues that the portion of this funding stream allocated to humanities scholars under the auspices of the IRC needs to be consolidated and enhanced. Currently it is not possible to establish the percentage of funding spent on humanities research in Ireland. There is however strong evidence that the current funding landscape is asymmetrical and disadvantages the humanities which have very limited access to Science Foundation Ireland and Health Research Board funding. As a first step towards more transparency we recommend that the HEA publishes bi-annual reports on the allocation of funding to STEM and humanities and social sciences disciplines (HSS) respectively.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- **Foster excellence** at all stages of academic career development in the humanities.

- **Support the IRC** in securing adequate research funding for the humanities.

- **Promote all-island research collaboration in the humanities.**

- **Advocate the significant contribution made by humanities scholars** to the island's history, peoples, societies and cultures.

ACTIONS

- **Advocate for increased levels of research funding** in support of excellence at all stages of academic career development in the humanities.

- **Support all-island research collaboration in the humanities** through dedicated funding streams, especially in a post-Brexit scenario.

- **Strengthen the partnership between the IHA and the IRC** in the promotion and development of Irish humanities scholarship.

- **Promote an inclusive programme for research excellence** across the whole research base.

- **Champion the establishment of new reporting protocols** to ensure transparency around the distribution of publicly funded research across the key disciplinary pillars.

4
EUROPE AND THE WORLD

Global awareness and engagement are set to be defining features of the mission of higher education and research, not least because both Ireland and Northern Ireland face notable challenges against the backdrop of environmental, political and social risks that are global in scope.[27] Northern Ireland's education sector will face different challenges in accommodating and understanding the UK's re-articulated relationship with the EU. In both jurisdictions, the humanities will have a key role to play in sustaining the development of a globally informed, imaginative and responsive society. Looking beyond the European horizon, moreover, here too international comparisons point to new strategic roles for humanities disciplines.[28] They reveal the ways in which the full imaginative contribution of the humanities can be drawn upon and are a reminder of the importance of harnessing these capacities across the island's two jurisdictions. What is needed, then, is a core strategic shift to a more balanced approach that mobilises the full contribution, cultural as well as social and economic, of the arts and humanities.

In Ireland and Northern Ireland, the European emphasis on talent, exemplified by the MSC actions as well as those of the ERC, is now amply reflected in national strategies. This is a welcome policy commitment and should be matched by actions that ensure optimal participation of humanities researchers in national and European funding schemes. Research strategy and funding schemes alike must be open to all of the talents to a higher degree than they have been to date. Ireland and Northern Ireland have been well served by the humanities community in ERC calls: to attain success rates comparable to leading EU member states will call for higher levels of local investment, not least because the most senior ERC awards reward long-term research excellence of the sort that demands continuity in research support at a national level. In addition, the aim of achieving closer links with EU member states can be realised on the basis of fuller involvement in relevant EU actions (e.g. HERA and NORFACE) as well as shared funding calls with other national research agencies. The challenges that all countries face will call for the kind of horizon scanning to which the humanities can

contribute and for an understanding of long-term risks. While these solutions may be decisively shaped by 21st-century technologies, they must also be closely informed by 'values that science alone can't provide'.[29]

The EU is committed to open societies and its core freedoms, including freedom of movement. The impact of this freedom on European research in particular has been very substantial. Future framework programmes must address the pressing issue of how open science can strengthen open societies. This imperative calls for an urgent review of research prioritisation in Ireland, not least because of the risks to the European project that result from hostile challenges to open societies and indeed to scientific advances.[30] National and European research systems will increasingly need to address the issue of how to make the benefits of research visible to citizens and to foster citizen engagement. We call for the full contribution of the humanities to these important objectives to be duly acknowledged and supported in Ireland and in Northern Ireland and also in our future engagement with Horizon Europe.

The UN Sustainability Goals and the aim of achieving peace and prosperity in a global partnership will depend for their fulfilment on mobilising the kinds of knowledge and understanding that the humanities make available: the goals linked to gender equality, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, a shared attitude of responsibility in the face of climate change and the development of peace, justice and strong institutions are all rooted in areas where the humanities, nationally and internationally, have a vital contribution to make.

27. As Martin Rees observes, 'environmental degradation, unchecked climate change and unintended downsides of advanced technology are collaterals' of material advances, in *On the Future: Prospects for Humanity* (Princeton University Press, 2018), p. 215.

28. R. Simon Marginson, *The Dream Is over: The Crisis of Clark Kerr's California Idea of Higher Education* (University of California Press, 2016), p. 195, doi:10.1525/luminos.17.

29. Rees, *On the Future*, pp 226–27.

30. EU support for democracy and peace in the world, www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/628271/EPRS__BRI(2018)628271__EN.pdf

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- **Promote the provision of funding for the humanities** in keeping with their importance at national, European and global level.

- **Champion the participation of Irish humanities researchers in European funding calls** (Horizon Europe, HERA, MSC actions etc.).

- **Extend the involvement of the humanities community,** in Ireland and Northern Ireland, in relevant European platforms.

- **Advocate for the development of dedicated policies and funding instruments over the next five years** to extend collaborations with a wider range of EU member states.

- **Highlight the contribution of the humanities to the principles of open, democratic societies in Europe** and the core freedoms on which the EU is founded.

- **Support an informed and active engagement** in support of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

ACTIONS

- **Advocate for the continued participation of Northern Ireland HEIs in new EU funding schemes** in a post-Brexit scenario.

- **Ensure the close involvement of the humanities community,** through EASSH and other bodies, in developing EU research calls across the island through direct engagement with the relevant National Expert, Delegates and Contact Points in all areas of science.

- **Improve research oversight and monitoring** to sustain research excellence according to international standards and to secure the contribution of the humanities in responding to global challenges and missions.

- **Challenge the current policy of research prioritisation in Ireland** which has marginalised the humanities.

5 | IMPACT AND OPEN ACCESS

When applying for public research funding, academics are required to demonstrate value for money by addressing the contribution of **publicly funded research to society and outlining how it enhances the common good. There are other substantial benefits to highlighting the impact of research: if done properly, it can encourage researchers to share best practice in research and teaching, to collaborate with external partners and to engage with the public. Impact stories can also help us to communicate the value of our teaching and research to students, parents, teachers, civil servants, policy makers and governments. According to the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, the 'powerful impact stories of HSS scholarship are too often under-recognized and undervalued'. Impact assessment can, therefore, allow humanities scholars share the 'exciting success stories that have gone untold for too long'.[31]**

However, how we define and evaluate impact can be challenging. Impact is a contested term, with a variety of definitions and understandings of its implications and an assortment of ways in which it can be assessed and measured.[32] As President Higgins has argued, narrowly utilitarian definitions of the economic benefits of research undermine the quality of scholarship and its contribution to the public sphere.[33] These approaches also threaten the very basis of creative thinking. Measuring impact in terms of quantifiable data suggests a linear link between scholarship and its effects, creating a global 'metric tide' that devalues the incremental and cumulative nature of much humanities research. Currently, there are concerns in the UK that 'impact metrics focus on what is measurable at the expense of what is important'.[34]

The metric tide has had profoundly negative consequences for humanities scholarship. Its rich range of disciplines and methodologies are not conducive to standardised measurement. The risk here is that impact assessment exercises include only those elements that can be easily measured. However, we can develop a broader definition of impact that is more sensibly understood to embrace all aspects of academic research.

Humanities scholarship is intrinsically multi-directional: it creates loops of exchange and dialogue between diverse pasts, contested presents and open futures. The humanities nurture the creative capacities and critical skills that are required to address the complex challenges of our interconnected world in dialogue with the social sciences and the STEM research community

A more comprehensive understanding of impact must include: public engagement; knowledge exchange; undergraduate and graduate teaching; life-long learning opportunities; creating webs of influence through our scholarship and academic debate; contributions to the social good through policy papers; membership of academic and non-academic boards etc. These aspects should be included in the definition to make sure that we correctly convey our deep and broad contribution to society. Any useful definition of impact must also reflect the incremental and cumulative nature of the impact of our scholarship over time.

Open Access promotes the exchange of knowledge and the dissemination of research findings both of which are so critical to informed citizenship and the ideal of an open, democratic society. Making the outputs of publicly funded research more freely available is a desirable outcome. However, very significant differences exist between the different fields and these must be taken into account in the development of Open Access policy.

31. *See Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, Approaches to Assessing Impacts in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, www.ideas-idees.ca/sites/default/files/impact_report_en_final.pdf (May 2017).

32. James Wilsdon et al. (2015), *The Metric Tide: Report of the Independent Review of the Role of Metrics in Research Assessment and Management*, HEFCE, blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/files/2015/07/2015_metrictide.pdf.

33. Launch of the *Cambridge History of Ireland*.

34. Jane Tinkler (2016), *Rather than narrow our definition of impact, we should use metrics to explore the richness and diversity of outcomes*, blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2015/07/28/impact-metrics-and-the-definition-of-impact-tinkler.

Impact stories can also help us
to communicate the value of our
teaching and research to students,
parents, teachers, civil servants,
policy makers and governments

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- **Advocate a broad definition of impact** that captures the contribution of humanities teaching and scholarship to the common good.

- **Recognise the significant impact of humanities scholarship** at local, regional, national and global level.

- **Promote the value of humanities scholarship** and generate public awareness of the importance of humanities teaching and research.

ACTIONS

- **Develop an appropriate set of measures, standards and performance indicators** for the arts and humanities.

- **Endorse a broader definition of impact** that recognises all aspects of academic research and protects smaller subjects, such as the Irish Language.

- **Foster an understanding of socio-cultural impact** as an incremental contribution to the common good over time.

- **Advocate for an Open Access policy** that protects the diverse expressions of and quality of humanities scholarship.

- **Support the viability of publications that advance knowledge in highly specialised disciplines.**

- **Protect the integrity of established and tested peer-reviewing mechanisms.**

6 | THE HUMANITIES AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

The humanities enable people to imagine alternatives to how we live now. They professionalise human curiosity and develop critical capacity while also fostering creative and innovative solutions to the grand societal problems facing us: firstly, climate degradation, secondly demographic growth and thirdly, rapid technological change.

The most pressing issue facing society is environmental degradation through human behaviour.[35] The development of a critical understanding of the impacts of climate degradation can be seen through the mobilisation of concepts such as the Anthropocene which act both as a centralising conceptual framework but also as a metaphor: the new era of mankind needs to come to terms with its responsibilities for the planet. A new form of curriculum is being developed where questions raised by the Anthropocene are present across all disciplines. The humanities are central to the development of a critical reflective society — reflecting on our actions in a process of continuous learning.

Recent census figures show an increase in the number of people living in Ireland who speak languages other than Irish and English and who identify themselves as coming from other ethnic groups. Ireland's population is projected to increase to over 6.7 million by 2050 while the total population of the whole island is expected to reach pre-Famine levels — c. 8.5 million — by the mid-century. The humanities are especially well equipped to foster awareness of intercultural differences — so critical within the modern workplace and wider society itself. Support for the humanities will be essential if Ireland is to become a global leader in developing global citizens and attracting international student talent. The critical humanities perspective on the multi-lingualism, integration and intercultural experience can give a positive account of the nature of intercultural exchange.

The speed and breadth of technological change also gives the humanities a key role in understanding the impacts of technological change on the construction of knowledge and on cultural production. A critical humanities perspective posits that technology is not something which emerges in a vacuum but is built by people in and for society. Humanities research must engage with these developments by putting forward alternative understandings in relation to technological change. Such research has a key role to play in the development of responsive science, technology studies and the development of innovation-led initiatives which place the arts and humanities at the centre of the endeavour. It is also inherent in important ways in the development of emerging disciplines such as critical software studies and digital studies.[36]

The most pressing issue facing society is environmental degradation through human behaviour

35. Ireland will start paying fines from next year (€25 million annually) for its failure to implement climate action, www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/ireland-faces-fines-in-two-years-if-climate-targets-missed-varadkar-1.3345235 (January 2018).

36. The Digital Studies Network is exploring these questions across a diverse group of disciplines in STEM and in the arts, humanities and social sciences. Hence the preference for the term Digital Studies rather than Digital Humanities.

- **Respond to the opportunities and challenges of an increasingly multi-cultural and multi-lingual society.**

- **Promote the value of equality and diversity in democracy.**

- **Champion the centrality of the humanities** in addressing the pressing societal challenges that face us.

ACTIONS

- **Promote undergraduate and postgraduate programmes** that enhance an increasingly diverse and multi-cultural society.

- **Support the development of interdisciplinary programmes in the arts and humanities** which respond to environmental challenges and rapid technological change.

- **Maximise opportunities for non-traditional pathways to education** — supporting accessible and inclusive life-long learning opportunities for participants from all backgrounds.

- **Support research which investigates the untested assumptions underpinning the development and use of AI, robotics and digital technologies.**

- **Promote the employability of humanities graduates** in the context of disruption through technology and automation.

TOWARDS 2050

By imagination we live and will continue to live. The very act of looking to the future — to conjure its possibilities — calls attention to the primacy of the imagination. It is to be reminded also that the humanities provide the crucial space in which society can reflect on its current challenges and begin to imagine alternatives to how we live now.

This strategy is a purposeful and timely contribution to the key choices that must be made regarding higher education and research policy in Ireland and Northern Ireland over the next decade. This is overwhelmingly likely to be a period of change, perhaps of disruption. In responding to the no less substantial developments over the past quarter of a century, our societies can take pride in the strategic capacity that the humanities have demonstrated. We aim here to provide a statement of the important directions in which these disciplines can channel their thinking in support of the future social and cultural success of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Casting oneself far into the more remote future is a precarious business but some things we can already picture. We know, for example, that the graduate of 2019 will be about twice their present age in 2050 and is likely enough at that point to have at least as many years in the active population ahead of them. In thinking about the future environment that we are seeking to shape, we should reflect that the life of this year's graduate is very likely to be closely intertwined in all of the various processes — environmental, social, educational, cultural — by which we and they will give effect to the choices that we make this year, both in higher education and nationally. We already know the key challenges that face us: radical climate degradation, food security, demographic growth, urbanisation, migration, health and accelerated technological evolutions. These will make their effects felt not only locally but also at the global level and will strongly shape global interactions, for the better and for the worse.

Our societies will accordingly depend increasingly on the kinds of knowledge that the humanities can harness and disseminate in the face of these challenges — an understanding both of the substantive issues related to risk and social choice that these developments will precipitate and of the diverse ways in which such issues will be apprehended and debated not only on this island but across global societies. The island of Ireland, which is now so open to global developments, must ensure that it can call directly on these capacities in a climate of increasing uncertainty and risk and even increased global tensions. Ireland and Northern Ireland will need to be able to call on self-aware and self-confident graduates and researchers in the humanities to be fully equipped to respond both to the undoubted opportunities that the future will bring, but also the challenges whose contours we can also discern.[37]

---

37. Future relevant directions have been identified by the European Commission, among others. See *The Knowledge Future: Intelligent Policy Choices for Europe 2050*, ec.europa.eu/research/foresight/pdf/knowledge_future_2050.pdf, (December 2015).

Members of the IHA Higher Education and Research Strategy Working Group

Professor Patrick O'Donovan
University College Cork
Chair of the Working Group

Professor Anne Fuchs
MRIA, FBA, University College Dublin
Chair of the IHA

Professor Eugene McNulty
Dublin City University
Vice-Chair of the IHA

Professor Victor Lazzarini
Maynooth University

Professor Mary O'Dowd
MRIA, Queen's University Belfast

Professor Noel Fitzpatrick
Technological University Dublin

Dr Mel Farrell
Director, Irish Humanities Alliance

IHA Member Institutions

IHA Executive Members

Professor Anne Fuchs UCD, Chair
Professor Eugene McNulty DCU, Vice-Chair
Dr Mel Farrell IHA, Director