

STRATEGY STATEMENT



IRISH RESEARCH COUNCIL
An Chomhairle um Thaighde in Éirinn

The Irish Research Council supports excellent research and recognises creative individuals with innovative ideas, thus enabling a vibrant research community which enriches Irish research, the economy and society.

THE ROLE AND MANDATE OF THE IRISH RESEARCH COUNCIL

Established in mid-2012 under the Government's Public Sector Reform Plan, the Irish Research Council ('the Council'), a merger of two former councilsⁱ, is an associated agency of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and operates under the aegis of the Higher Education Authority (HEA).

The Council was established and mandated to –

- I. Fund excellent research within, and between, all disciplines, and in doing so to enhance Ireland's international reputation as a centre for research and learning.
- II. Support the education and skills development of excellent individual early stage researchers and cultivate agile independent researchers and thinkers, whilst offering a range of opportunities which support diverse career paths.
- III. Enrich the pool of knowledge and expertise available for addressing Ireland's current and future challenges, whether societal, cultural or economic and deliver for citizens through collaboration and enabling knowledge exchange with government departments and agencies, enterprise and civic society.
- IV. Provide policy advice on postgraduate education and on more general research matters to the HEA and other national and international bodies. In giving the Council this role, the Minister for Research and Innovation requested that particular attention be given to the arts, humanities and social sciences (AHSS).





VALUES

In delivering on its mandate the Council's core value is **Excellence**, determined on the basis of independent peer review, in an open, objective, transparent and trusted way.

The Council also holds to the values of:

Independence – The Council operates within the government's policy framework, but is independent in its funding decisions.

Partnership – To best deliver for the research community and for citizens, the Council partners nationally and internationally, as appropriate, with the research community itself, government departments and agencies, enterprise and civic society.

Openness – The Council consults and engages regularly with the research community to inform its work and the future development of its activities, recognising the inherent diversity of that community.

Professionalism – The Council ensures high standards in Council practices and policies through periodic review and evaluation, both internal and independent.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PEOPLE AND KNOWLEDGE

Investment in knowledge creation (research) and expertise (education and skills) has been the bedrock of economic and social progress in Ireland for over half a century. The nature and sophistication of this investment has evolved over time influenced by demographic trends and national requirements. Our education system has responded to these challenges. Within a generation we have advanced from the introduction of universal access to second-level education to the creation of a vibrant community of scholars making original contributions to the advancement of knowledge for economic, cultural and societal benefit.

Ireland has invested in developing the skills of students from the primary to the postgraduate level and these students represent a vast pool of talent and creativity. Their potential spans the domains of the Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Biological Sciences, Medicine, the Physical Sciences, Engineering and Mathematics. The higher education and research community is therefore a key

national resource. Those students (People) and research (Knowledge) output which flows from higher education are critical for the future. New knowledge fundamentally pushes the boundaries of our understanding about us as human beings and every aspect of our environment. As our level of knowledge grows so too does the quality of our education and training, and our quality of life in general whether in an economic, health, or societal context. New knowledge is needed to develop evidence based policies and to facilitate innovative and sustainable growth, welfare, and well-being. It is of course an important cultural asset and is needed to understand and interpret our past and ever changing present.

None of this can be achieved however without an ambitious research climate and most importantly a creative and vibrant research community, composed of individual researchers with excellent expertise and skills. As our society at large develops and new social and economic challenges arise, the ability of researchers in Ireland to be innovative and creative will be a key determinant of our progress as a country in the future.

CHARTING A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The vision of the Council is for a healthy research ecosystem in Ireland which provides a diversity of supports and opportunities and which enables the country to reap the full value and benefits of research. This balanced ecosystem will address the breadth of economic and societal needs and develop the knowledge, understanding and insights required by citizens, employers and government. The Council will play its part and support the best talent. It will provide opportunities for excellent researchers with excellent ideas, regardless of the discipline or research topic. Through its approach the Council will cultivate individual thinkers to question and research and in this way contribute to the development of the skills, competencies and expertise required for the future.

To achieve this vision, **the mission** of the Irish Research Council is to support excellent research and recognise creative individuals with innovative ideas, thus enabling a vibrant research community which enriches Irish research, the economy and society.

The following section sets out the strategic objectives to deliver on this mandate and mission.

THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF THE IRISH RESEARCH COUNCIL

Mandate	Strategic Objectives to deliver on our mandate & mission
<p>I To fund excellent independent exploratory research within, and between, all disciplines. In doing so enhance Ireland's international reputation as a centre for research and learning.</p>	<p>(i) Provide a comprehensive suite of funding instruments for all career stages in line with mandate, and complement those provided by other sources. (ii) Support and enable engagement with international opportunities so as to enhance opportunities for the research community in Ireland. (iii) Cultivate excellent interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research where it adds value to addressing research questions and societal challenges nationally, in Europe and globally. (iv) Promote Excellence through Council recognition awards and provide avenues internationally for researchers based in Ireland to display their excellence.</p>
<p>II To support the education and skills development of excellent individual early stage researchers and the cultivation of independent researchers and thinkers; to offer a range of opportunities which support diverse career paths</p>	<p>(v) Enhancement of the education and training experience of early stage career researchers. (vi) Partner with employers across all domains – enterprise, government and civic society – to showcase diverse career paths (vii) Directly support career development opportunities in the international arena</p>
<p>III Enrich the pool of knowledge and expertise available for addressing Ireland's current and future challenges, whether societal, cultural or economic and deliver for citizens through collaboration and enabling knowledge exchange with government departments and agencies, enterprise and civic society.</p>	<p>(viii) Maximise partnering and collaboration with societal stakeholders, enterprise, government and civic society (ix) Enable knowledge sharing, exchange and transmission for the benefit of all society and enhance dialogue between business, NGOs, cultural organisations and government. (x) Develop a co-ordinated and targeted communication initiative, to raise public and media awareness of the benefits of investment in excellent research.</p>
<p>V Provide policy advice on postgraduate education and on more general research matters to the HEA and other national and international bodies.</p>	<p>(xi) Establish effective communication and consultation processes for interaction with the research community, and all other relevant stakeholders (xii) Provide a voice for Irish research nationally and internationally and engage with policy structures/processes so as to advance Irish research.</p>

Building on progress by the Irish Research Council since its establishment in mid-2012, the Council will on a multi-annual basis set out a Strategy Action Plan to deliver on its mandate and objectives. The Action Plan(s) will be available from the Council website www.research.ie.

CONCLUSION

The Irish Research Council is building on the work and success of the former Councils IRCSET and IRCHSS. The Council has successfully completed the merger and in the past three years consolidated and developed its mission.

The Council has an important and distinctive role in the research ecosystem and in Irish society. We continue to work to ensure that the best researchers and scholars are properly nurtured and supported throughout their research careers. We also, through our emphasis on developing the skills of the individual, are cultivating creative and innovative people who can translate new ideas and knowledge into benefits for the economy and for society, both in Ireland and globally. We are enabling researchers to connect with employers, to contribute to knowledge creation and knowledge application. We are leveraging funding from non-Exchequer sources nationally and at EU level. We are agile and are continually scanning our environment and being responsive to it. We are being ambitious for research in Ireland and always promoting the highest standards for the Council and its awardees.

¹ The Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS) and the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology (IRCSET).