



**IHA Submission
to the DES
Consultation on a
New Statement of
Strategy 2015-2017**

IRISH HUMANITIES ALLIANCE

An all-island initiative

The membership of the Alliance includes Dublin City University, Dublin Institute of Technology, Maynooth University, NUI Galway, Queen's University Belfast, the Royal Irish Academy, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, University College Dublin, the University of Limerick and the University of Ulster.

Presenting the humanities

The Alliance is working to generate public awareness of the importance of humanities teaching and research in higher education and society at large. The Alliance is concerned also to inform and shape public policy in both jurisdictions and in the EU.

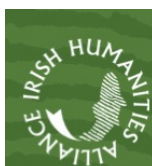
The Alliance seeks also to engage with the humanities community at large and has developed a programme of activity to support humanities scholars in education and research. Through its podcasts, the Alliance aims to make the excitement of research in the humanities today accessible to a wide public.

Advocacy

The Alliance will aim to work productively with policymakers and funders in the wider interests of the humanities in the university sector in both jurisdictions.

The Alliance is led by a board made up of two representatives per member institution. Since June 2013, the board has met on nine occasions.

Full information on the work of the Alliance is available on its website.



Promoting the value of the humanities

A New Statement of Strategy: 2015–2017

The Irish Humanities Alliance welcomes the call on the part of the Department of Education and Skills for submissions to the work being done on a new statement of strategy in the context of the *Overview of Service Delivery and Reform* published in 2014.

The context

The period since 2008 has had a deep adverse impact on the Irish universities, all of which have seen budgets and staff numbers fall sharply, even though the demand for places has increased. Exchequer funding of higher education fell by 32%, and funding per student by 22%, while student numbers nationally have risen from 130,000 to 147,000. This turbulence, while it has given a renewed impetus to reform, has heavily constrained institutions as they seek to innovate and to respond to key European and international developments. The challenges which result are faced jointly by the Department, the relevant national agencies and higher education institutions. A commitment to remedy the investment gap which has been witnessed since 2008 must now be a priority. This calls too for a parallel commitment on the part of institutions to make their key contribution to the expansion of learning opportunities, and the development of research capacity and output to international standards, some funding for which will come from sources other than the Exchequer.

The scope of the New Statement of Strategy

We note and commend the emphasis placed in this consultation on several key objectives, including the fulfilment of learners' potential; the contribution of education not only to economic but also to social and cultural development; continued improvement in quality and learning outcomes; and the commitment to high quality and internationally competitive research and innovation. We note also the projections for growth of numbers of more than 25% by 2027, and urge that steps be taken now to secure the long-term investment in highly trained people which an educational and research system on this scale will demand.



How the Alliance works

The Alliance has established working groups to address the main areas of strategy which impinge on the roles of the humanities in education and research today:

- **Communications and outreach**
- **EU and Horizon 2020**
- **Funding and policy**
- **New directions in the humanities**
- **Publication, impact and research evaluation**

The work of these groups is designed to support the humanities community in our member institutions in their work in teaching, learning and research, and to facilitate productive engagement with key policy-makers and stakeholders.

Highlights to date

Our first event was **New Horizons in the Humanities**, a briefing on **Horizon 2020**, supported by the **Irish Research Council** and the **Royal Irish Academy**. We will also hold a **Lunchtime Workshop Series** on **doctoral formation in the humanities** across HEIs.

The Alliance's website aims to be a key resource for the humanities, serving as a platform for the promotion of activities in all of the member institutions.

The role and contribution of the humanities

The humanities in Ireland enjoy an excellent international reputation. In all international rankings, disciplines in the humanities enjoy higher ratings than Irish universities generally. On this basis, the humanities make a vital contribution to cultural renewal and to social well-being. Research has shown that the humanities are essential to the qualitative understanding of culture; that they underpin the continuous adaptation of our capacity to make sense of the present we inhabit; that they contribute both to individual happiness and to the happiness of social groups; and that they have a bearing on the health of democracy.* In a period of rapid social and technological change, Ireland will depend critically on the capacity of our educational system to equip citizens for the complex and changing world in which they will invest their own potential for creativity and understanding, as independent and inquiring adults. In this context also, the humanities have a key role to place in a strategy which aims for whole-system reform: future teaching capacity at primary and secondary levels is developed in higher education institutions. We call also for a strategic commitment to opportunities for life-long learning in the humanities in higher education institutions, including in particular among part-time students who are markedly disadvantaged by current funding arrangements.

Research and engagement in Horizon 2020

The Alliance is committed to promoting and monitoring the embedding of the humanities in **Horizon 2020**. By this means, we aim to position our respective higher education and research systems to draw on what the Vilnius Declaration rightly identifies as one of Europe's key strengths, namely world-class research capacity across a range of areas in the humanities and social sciences. This capacity is wider than in any other region of the globe. **Horizon 2020** marks a decisive shift in EU research policy in its engagement with research spanning all areas of knowledge and the Alliance will work to support researchers in designing and realizing projects which will meet this challenge. The Alliance actively supports member institutions and the humanities community in its contribution to meeting the target set by the Government for funding in Horizon 2020.

The Alliance urges increased investment in research in the humanities through the Irish Research Council. It is through the project schemes of the Council that researchers in Irish institutions will develop the capacity and experience necessary to compete successfully for awards from the European Research Council. We will produce principal investigators of the number and calibre necessary to achieve a significant European impact only if there are more awards of this type with higher maximum budgets.

* Helen Small, *The Value of the Humanities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

