



IHA Humanities Strategy Consultation

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

Across Europe today, higher education and research are major strategic focuses, as policy is increasingly shaped by economic as well as social and cultural imperatives, and as participation in Horizon 2020 is a key factor in the development of new research directions.

In Ireland and in Northern Ireland, there is a pressing need to address the central place of the humanities in these developments. The humanities in both jurisdictions enjoy an excellent international reputation. As a result, the Irish Humanities Alliance (IHA) has decided to engage widely with the humanities community in member institutions on the strategic issues that face our disciplines in both jurisdictions and to ensure that humanities perspectives are represented in research and higher education policy-making discussions.

The IHA was formed in September 2013. It is a joint initiative of humanities scholars and researchers within eleven higher education and research institutions, including all of the universities, North and South, Dublin Institute of Technology and the Royal Irish Academy. Through our activities we seek to be inclusive of all individual researchers and academics in the humanities research community.

The Alliance is working to generate public awareness of the importance of humanities teaching and research in higher education and society at large. It is concerned also to inform and shape public policy in both jurisdictions and in the EU. The Alliance is committed to working with all public bodies and other stakeholders in support of higher education and research. Two recent examples of work by IHA Working Groups are Horizon 2020 and the Consultation for Successor to SSTI.

Horizon 2020 (EU): The Alliance has been consulted by Irish National Experts, Delegates and Contact Points in the development of work programmes for Horizon 2020. The Alliance has also engaged intensively with the European Commission in the months before the launch of Horizon 2020 and its contribution, to promoting the involvement of humanities researchers and in making proposals for the embedding of the humanities, has been welcomed in correspondence with the Commission. Most recently, the Alliance has undertaken a major consultation exercise at the request of the Irish Research Council, so as to advise national representatives on the relevant programme committees on key research themes for inclusion in the 2016 and 2017 calls in the Tackling Societal Challenges pillar. The IHA has continued to engage with national representatives through focus groups and other relevant channels.

Successor to SSTI (National): To see the consultation paper prepared by the IHA's Strategy Steering Group on the Consultation for Successor to SSTI please click [here](#).

THE STRATEGY STEERING GROUP

The IHA Strategy Steering Group is now carrying out a consultation with the humanities community to identify the strategic issues that face the humanities disciplines in both IHA jurisdictions. The consultations with the community are the basis on which this exercise will be developed throughout. The outputs from this consultation will be: an all-island conference in October 2015; a scientific strategy and policy paper which details the issues that emerge

from the consultation and conference; and an additional translational paper for communication and advocacy purposes. Communicating the humanities perspectives to a variety of different target audiences is a central element of the remit of the Strategy Steering Group and the outputs will reflect this.

There are a number of guiding principles that the Strategy Group was requested by the IHA Board to bear in mind:

- The intrinsic and distinctive importance of the Humanities should be the key issue to be brought to the fore in this exercise;
- The approach will be modular (e.g. with focuses on social and cultural, economic, higher education, advocacy perspectives etc.) and the modules will be decided by the Strategy Group in the light of the consultation exercise;
- It is important to be forward thinking in tone and content, and include the arguments relating to economic value as well as social and cultural value; and,
- The papers to be produced must be public facing, with a view to informing public debate and policy development to 2020.

This project is coordinated by the Humanities Strategy Working Group of the IHA, whose members are Dr Noel Fitzpatrick (DIT); Dr Victor Lazzarini (MU); Professor Imelda Maher (RIA); Professor Patrick O'Donovan (Convener, UCC); and Dr Aoibhín de Búrca (IHA).

THE CONSULTATION PHASE WITH THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

The consultation is open to all individual researchers, institutions, disciplinary groups and networks and learned societies via the website of the IHA. Responses are treated in confidence.

The website consultation is complemented by a member-led consultation in all IHA member institutions: meetings will be convened by IHA members in their own institution at which they gather the views of humanities researchers. They will then submit a summary of the meeting (500 words) and the response template. These meetings will be attended by one member of the Strategy Group also. **The deadline for submission is Friday 3 July 2015.**

The response template is organised under the following headings: Disciplines; Doctoral Education; Early Career Stage; Funding; Public Humanities; Publishing, Open Access and Open Data; Research Infrastructures; Research Prioritisation Areas; Researcher Careers and Researcher Mobility; Teaching and Learning; and Urgent Humanities Policy Areas.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the IHA Representative in your institution in the first instance (see the list on the [IHA website](#)), or the IHA office through Dr Aoibhín de Búrca: a.deburca@ria.ie

CONFERENCE AND OUTCOMES

At the end of the initial consultation period with the academic community, the Strategy Group will draft an Interim Report on the basis of the submissions, and begin designing panels and strategic priorities for the workshop conference event (bearing in mind the modular design agreed for the exercise).

Stakeholders, funding agencies, government department, cultural bodies and policy makers will also be sent the Interim Report and will also be invited to take part in the conference. It is

intended that the event be a workshop style conference at which interaction and feedback takes priority.

After the conference the Strategy Group will draft a scientific strategy and policy paper which details the issues that emerge from the consultation and conference, and an additional translational paper for communication and advocacy purposes.

Regular updates on the project will be provided on the website of the Alliance.

SECTION TWO: RESPONSE TEMPLATE

Please fill out the sections that apply to you and include additional thoughts and comments pertaining to the sections you think are relevant. All responses should be emailed to the IHA Office on info@irishhumanities.com.

1. DISCIPLINES

(a) What are the most distinctive challenges faced by your discipline?

(b) In what ways can a system-wide research strategy help you respond to these?

(c) In what ways do you see your discipline helping to respond to societal challenges*?

2. DOCTORAL EDUCATION

(a) What would you identify as the main priorities in order to sustain and improve doctoral education? Please give examples.

3. EARLY CAREER STAGE (OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES)

(a) What are the biggest obstacles and opportunities facing early career stage academics? Do you have recommendations for improved outcomes?

(b) What dedicated supports do early career stage academics need?

(c) What role can bodies like the Irish Humanities Alliance play in support of early career stage researchers?

4. FUNDING

(a) What improvements in core funding for the humanities do you consider to be strategically important?

(b) What improvements in research funding for the humanities do you consider to be strategically important?

(c) What would you consider to be the most important developments to be pursued in the next EU framework research programme (the successor to Horizon 2020)?

(d) What kinds of research funding do you consider to be the most important to the humanities in the next five years, in the next ten years and in the next twenty years?

5. PUBLIC HUMANITIES

(a) What are the most important cultural, societal and economic impacts of the humanities?

(b) What is the significance of the humanities on the island of Ireland?

6. PUBLISHING, OPEN ACCESS AND OPEN DATA

(a) What course of action do you recommend regarding policy development in the areas of Publishing, Open Access and Open Data, specifically relating to how these choices affect the humanities?

7. RESEARCH AREAS

(a) How has research prioritisation impinged on policy in your view? What place should the humanities play in research prioritisation?

(b) Would you encourage a societal challenges approach as has been done in Horizon 2020* as a means of prioritising research areas?

(c) What role should basic research play?

(d) Would you prefer both discipline and interdisciplinary approaches be pursued? If so, what should the breakdown be?

(e) How is the strategic relationship with the social sciences to be understood?

(f) How is the strategic relationship with STEM disciplines to be understood?

8. RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES

(a) What research infrastructures (including facilities, resources and related services) are required at a national level to sustain and improve research and to compete internationally?

(b) What research infrastructures are required at a European level to sustain and improve research and to compete internationally? E.g. ESFRI, the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures.

9. RESEARCHER CAREERS

(a) What structures would you recommend to support career developments for academics and researchers in the humanities?

(b) What suggestions would you make to improve researcher mobility?

10 TEACHING AND LEARNING

(a) How could humanities graduates be better equipped for the working environment?

(b) How can the quality of undergraduate teaching experience be sustained and improved?

(c) What are the strengths and weakness of humanities teaching and learning in Ireland?

(d) How does research inform and sustain teaching? Specify with examples at undergraduate, postgraduate and/or doctoral levels.

(e) Is there awareness within HEIs and MA/PhD course design that most humanities MA and PhD students will not go into academia and require a different skill set to those going into academia? If not, please give suggestions to address this education/skills gap.

11. URGENT HUMANITIES POLICY AREAS

(a) What areas would you identify as urgent policy areas for the humanities?

12. ANY OTHER COMMENTS?

(a) Are there any other issues you think should be part of this consultation, including horizontal issues in higher education and research generally?

* Note regarding societal challenges:

This is a challenge-based approach bringing together resources and knowledge across different fields, technologies and disciplines, including social sciences and the humanities. Examples of societal challenges in Horizon 2020: click [here](#).

