



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

School of Education Research Strategy

2020 - 2025

Introduction

Research and scholarship are central to what we do and what we aim to achieve in the School of Education in Trinity College Dublin. Our research across the spectrum of educational research disciplines informs our teaching, our mentoring and development of early career researchers, our work with policy makers nationally and internationally and our engagement with communities, locally and beyond. High quality research is foundational to the strong international reputation of the School.

The Schools sit within the rich academic environment of the university. The Trinity College Research Charter (2019) sets out seven core principles that underpin research in the institution:

These core principles resonate in the vision of research articulated in this School of Education Research Strategy document. The University Strategic Plan (2020) and Research Excellence Strategy (2019) frame an ambitious and exciting trajectory for the institution as a whole and for research within that. The School of Education Research Strategy draws on this basis to chart a course for our own School with its unique tapestry of research and scholarship. This research strategy will be central to the process of developing the overall School strategy positioning research at the heart of what we do, informing our teaching and learning approaches and engagement with our disciplines and our community.

01
Cherish academic freedom, diversity of scholarship, and pursuit of truth



02
Position research at the heart of Trinity



03
Foster and grow research talent and leadership



04
Harness our collective expertise for the greater good



05
Broaden our local and global impact



06
Engage profoundly with our publics



07
Stand up for research





Yet the context for this document is one of uncertainty at within the academic year 2020-21 where education systems worldwide have faced unprecedented challenges and change. As a school and as an institution we face significant challenges in realising our vision. For over 100 years, the School of Education has led research activity that not only responds to the needs of today but expands the horizons of what could be possible tomorrow. The 2020-2025 strategy harnesses the positive momentum within the School to address the challenges that face us and to strengthen our capacity to conduct research to the highest academic standards that effects positive change in society and within our disciplines. This strategy is the result of a collaborative process in the School through which we articulated our shared vision for research in the School and the high-level goals which underpin this and crucially, the actions that we need to undertake over the coming years to realise this vision.

This strategy document identifies and articulates our research vision and sets out five high level goals required to realise this vision. It also outlines some of the key actions required to achieve these goals. It is intended as a working document, a tool for progressing towards our identified goals. The key actions we have defined may overlap in addressing multiple goals. The dependencies for these actions have been identified so that we seek to address those within our control and lobby for those beyond our immediate control. These actions have been prioritised to address those most critical to the success of the strategy first. In putting this strategy into operation, the primary tool is the Research Strategy action implementation plan through which we can identify responsibilities, evaluate our progress, and importantly, identify what we have achieved.

School of Education Research Vision

OUR RESEARCH VISION:

Research at the School of Education is driven by values that ensure high-quality, inclusive, democratic and equitable education for all, and promote learning opportunities across a broad educational spectrum. The School builds on its established national and international reputation for excellence in research activity and leadership, impacting upon and effecting positive change in society, by bridging the gap between research, practice and policy.

The specifics of how this vision will be realised is set out in the five high level research goals below. The collaborative strategy definition process identifies a number of key characteristics of this vision which are sketched here as a preface to the operational component of this document.

The overarching vision for research in the school is underpinned by a constructive and positive environment and culture within which to work and conduct research. This environment is characterised by mutual respect for the breadth and depth of research

activity in the School. It entails positive working conditions for the School community as a whole, academic and administrative, from late to early career researchers. It is collaborative encouraging inter- and trans-disciplinary research activity as well as individual and specific research focus. It is reflective, offering opportunities to share knowledge and to model best practices in our teaching and supervision activities. It is driven by the goal well-articulated in UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities. This entails a positive impact – whether direct and immediate or indirect and emergent - on the generation of knowledge through scholarship as well as on policy and practice.

In order to realise this vision, we have identified five high level goals. The following sections outline each goal in turn, the context within which this goal must be achieved, and the key actions associated with each goal in the current context. In practice, a number of actions span multiple goals, but they are listed here below the one that is most relevant. Some actions encompass multiple sub-actions. These have been captured in a separate excel spreadsheet for ease of reading.

To generate and sustain a positive and coherent research community with staff and students



To maximise our time for research



To foster, revitalise and develop stimulating and productive research collaborations



To maximise impact and be excellent at communication



To remain a touchstone for high quality research in education





1. Generate and sustain a positive and coherent research community

Quality research requires a positive and coherent research community where ideas are exchanged, and debates and research strategies developed. It is essential that the research community with staff and students in the School is fully supported to allow individuals and research groups to excel in their work and further their expertise.

The School of Education has a vibrant community of full-time and part-time staff. Over 500 students are enrolled in a range of programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate programmes positioned at levels 5, 8, 9 and 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Programmes include:

- **Certificate in Arts, Science and Inclusive Applied Practice (level 5)**
- **Bachelor in Music Education (B.Mus Ed) (level 8 post-primary teaching qualification)**
- **Postgraduate Certificate in 21st Century Teaching and Learning (Level 8)**

- **Professional Master of Education (PME) (level 9 post-primary teaching qualification)**
- **Masters in Education (level 9)**
- **Doctorate in Education (D. Ed.) (level 10)**
- **Structured Ph. D (level 10)**

On the administrative side, the School has a specific role dedicated to providing administrative support for postgraduate research programmes, for staff research and for research events. Another important role includes support for communicating the activities of the school, including research activities, across a range of media and stakeholders.

On the academic side, the staff are all intensely research active. The research outputs from the school have followed a consistently upward trajectory over the last 10 years. We are however a relatively small school, and this brings challenges. In relation to administrative load, the structures of the school and programmes are distributed across a limited number of staff which lead to high administrative demands on staff.

Furthermore, while the breadth of our programmes offers choice and interest to the student body, that also puts demands on staff in terms of teaching and supervision load. Against these constraints, people are striving to progress their research and their careers within extremely demanding university progression structures. Despite these challenges, the School is well known in the university as a highly collegiate environment.

In order to build and sustain a positive school community, in particular in relation to research, we need to take action both in addressing the time constraints on staff (goal 2) but also specifically to construct a positive research community that supports individuals to excel. This includes considering our physical space, our support structures for research and progression and activity to foster an even stronger sense of community in the School.

Note 1 :

The actions relating to progression and fellowship listed below are designed to provide support only, as it is the staff member who determines when and how to apply for progression or fellowship

Note 2:

Some of the actions listed below are beyond the remit of the Research Strategy specifically but are noted here as School-level actions because they are critical to the success of this strategy.

KEY ACTIONS

Workload and Administrative Load

- 1.1 Maintain a workload model to balance load across the school and support work-life balance, well-being and collegiality (School-level action).
- 1.2 Set up and populate a central shared space or use an existing shared space for key School policy documents (read-only) (e.g. MS Teams School of Education Committee space) (School-level action).
- 1.3. Define a list of roles and committees in the school (membership and timeframe, current holders and timeframe for completion), maintain as a read-only document in a shared space (School-level action).

Career Development

- 1.4 Establish internal mentoring between people at different stages of their career path, and beyond, to support individuals in identifying their own personal career pathway and plan to approach the college progression processes over the long term (School-level action).
- 1.5 Set up a fellowship development group on a voluntary basis for anyone interested which uses College supports to encourage and support people to apply for fellowship.

Physical Spaces

- 1.6 Assess the current locations across College for staff and doctoral students and seek feedback on their suitability and fitness for purpose and actively lobby College to improve provision (School-level action).

Social Opportunities

- 1.7 Particularly in relation to the current Covid situation, identify and trial mechanisms used in other schools or organisations to maintain collegiality and cohesion in the absence of any physical interaction.
- 1.8 Post COVID, reinstate and grow the Wednesday coffee morning, including PhD students. Consider the location of the coffee to maximise attendance (e.g. move the coffee out of 3104 to TCPID or elsewhere at regular intervals).

What does this look like when it is achieved

- The School has implemented and reviewed a workload model and identified areas for development of the model if needed. (1.1)
- School level policy documents are maintained in an MS Team or Sharepoint directory accessible to all school staff as read-only documents (1.2)
- The school has a clear and up-to-date document on a shared space (e.g. MS Teams) with school roles and their allocation for specified timeframe and continuity planning in place for roles up for change in 1 year. (1.3)
- There have been applications for fellowship from within the school and/or there is a fellowship development group operational in the school. (1.5)
- Coffee mornings (virtual or face to face) are consistently well attended by a breadth of staff (and students if relevant). (1.7 and 1.8)



2. Maximise our time for research

As noted above, the School of Education faces many challenges as it is a small school operating in an institution managing very constrained financial circumstances due to years of public funding cuts as well as a pandemic-led economic crisis. In this difficult situation, it is vital to continue to emphasise the importance of being a research active School, for the individual staff members, and the school as a whole. For this reason, it is very important that we still have time to focus on research within the context of the wider responsibilities on staff, much of which will inform and enrich all other activities in the school. The time will allow staff to lead and be involved in national and international cutting-edge education research, generating knowledge and providing research evidence which will have impact across the broader academic community, and for policy development in the coming years. This, however, can only happen if staff have the time and capacity to engage in the research process.

Time is precious. There are two mechanisms to maximise our time for research within the context of our wider responsibilities:

- 1) Secure time for people explicitly through our policies e.g. the sabbatical policy;
- 2) Streamline our processes so that when we do have time, less of it is wasted.

There are many research related processes which are outside of the direct control of the school but have been identified as actions within the College Research Excellence Strategy under the “Make it easier to do research” action (noted as College Level below). The School Director of Research will continue to lobby for updates on these actions through the University Research Committee.



KEY ACTIONS

Secure Time for Research

- 2.1 Review and implement the sabbatical policy in light of the current school context and constraints and with a view to supporting staff to avail of sabbatical leave and maintain the document in a shared central space, actively engaging staff with sabbatical planning (School-level).
- 2.2 Maintain guidelines for negotiation of time for research using research funding while ensuring all staff continue to engage with teaching and supervision (e.g. buy-out of assessment/teaching)
- 2.3 Maintain a policy on the allocation of research overheads for externally funded projects. The policy should outline a transparent, realistic and equitable algorithm for allocating overhead between College, School and Principal Investigators/Research Groups that reflects the needs of all parties.

Maximise Time for Research

- 2.4 Set up and populate a central space for Research process and policy documents (MS Teams Research Committee Team) (COMPLETE).
- 2.5 Optimise communication of targeted research funding opportunities to researchers
 - a) Ensure that school researchers can subscribe to the weekly Research Office research focus newsletter where they circulate details of relevant research calls: <https://www.tcd.ie/innovation/research/local/support-services/research-focus.php>
 - b) Maintain a list of doctoral funding opportunities and deadlines [with the Research Project Officer]
 - c) Circulate calls of particular relevance as they arise
- 2.6 Collect completed and successful funding proposal samples in the MS Teams Research Committee shared space, organised by funding call type. This is purely voluntary but may support colleagues in drafting e.g. budgets, impact statements, etc. These proposals will be tagged by topic, funder and call and year. [The College RPAMS system can facilitate this process]

- 2.7 Maintain a process to encourage the alignment of master student research projects more closely to research focus of academic staff while recognising the value of integrating students' interests in order to build coherent student research communities as well as maximising research time for staff
- 2.8 Maintain lightweight processes for the following research related activities:
 - a) The process for setting up a research event (COMPLETE but review)
 - b) The process for communicating a research moment (COMPLETE but review need to align with TCD Communication strategy)
 - c) Refine and operationalise the process for research webinar set-up, advertising and follow-up, including youtube release (UNDERWAY)
 - d) The process for dealing with visiting researchers (from contact, through pre-arrival, arrival, to completion, reporting, and tracking)

What does this look like when it is achieved

- The School has implemented and reviewed a workload model and identified areas for development of the model if needed. (1.1)
- We have an up-to-date sabbatical policy and rota and staff sabbaticals occur regularly. (2.1, 2.2)
- All research relevant policy documents are stored and accessed in the MS Teams Research Committee Team with clear version history. (2.5)
- The School has a clear and reviewed document on negotiating research time linked to research funding. The guidelines are used consistently and are compatible with the School workload model. The guidelines have been reviewed as part of the periodic review of the school workload model. (2.3)
- The School has a clear and reviewed policy on research overhead allocation that is reliably used in allocating research overheads and is reviewed by the Research Committee periodically. (2.4)
- There is an up-to-date listing of doctoral and post-doctoral funding opportunities on the MS Teams Research Committee (2.6)
- Researchers in the School receive timely communications regarding research funding opportunities through TR&I (2.6)
- The School makes use of reporting from College RPAMS system to identify expertise in the School with particular research funding streams (once RPAMS 2 is launched in mid-2021) (2.7)
- In the Research Committee MS Team, the School maintains a set of exemplar proposals for the most used research funding streams. (2.7)
- The School has an agreed, flexible process for alignment of masters research projects with school expertise and student interest which is used as appropriate within the PME and M Ed programmes and is reviewed periodically. (2.8)
- The MS Teams Research Committee shared space maintains and uses a process document for each of the following processes and resources, and reviews them periodically setting up live research events, setting up online research webinars, communicating a research moment, hosting a visiting researcher. (2.5, 2.9)





3. Foster, revitalise and develop stimulating and productive research collaborations

Research of all kinds can be stimulated through the planned and the serendipitous interactions that arise through collaboration with others. Research is driven by individuals, but some challenges are of a scale to require collective effort and some researchers thrive in that context.

Collaboration comes in many forms from planned, sustained and consistent research activity, to fleeting conversations that spark a research trajectory by generating new ideas and curiosity or solving conceptual or operational problems. The School of Education research community engages in enriching and productive interactions and collaborations inside the School, across the University and across the globe. Collaboration may be structured or unstructured. Like any human relationship it is an organic process which can emerge, grow, mutate and die. This goal considers how best to support this organic process allowing for emergence and change and capitalising on opportunities to extend local, national and international collaborations.

Within the School of Education research community, there are established collaborative structures in place. There are two Trinity Research Centres:

- **CAVE: The Cultures, Academic Values in Education (CAVE) research centre focuses on the area of higher education both nationally and internationally.**
- **CRITE: The Centre for Research in Information Technology in Education (CRITE) is a research centre collaboration between the School of Education and the School of Computer Science and Statistics.**

In addition to these formal University structures, there are four research groups active in the School:

- **Arts Education and Society (AERG)**
- **Inclusion in Education and Society (IES)**
- **Research in School Education (RISE)**
- **Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics: Education, Research and Communication (STEM-ERC)**

These were established and have developed over a period of years, while the researchers in the School and the context within which we work and conduct research have also changed dramatically. The School is also engaged with Marino Institute of Education through discussions about the proposed Centre of Excellence in Initial Teacher Education as well as through existing research collaborations between individual staff of MIE who are research fellows associated with research centres/groups in the School. The start of this strategy offers an opportunity to revisit the collaborative structures within the school and to explore opportunities for growth within and beyond these structures. The strategy will also seek to operationalise this by facilitating shared collaborative research bids which can harness the research interactions on-going between colleagues.

KEY ACTIONS

- 3.1. Initiate and maintain a process of renewal (that can be re-invoked as needed) for research groups and centres to revitalise the groups and reflect the changing members and focus of the school. Within this consider the leadership structure within groups and possible alternative structures that may also represent the research alignment well (STRANDS/ THEMES)
- 3.2 As part of the induction of new staff members include an explicit process to learn about and join a research centre or group facilitated by the Research Project Officer.
- 3.3. Maintain a system for communicating and coordinating collaborative research funding calls led by the Research Project Officer and/or Director of Research to facilitate shared bids for relevant funding calls.
- 3.4 Expand our international collaborations with partner universities to create more awareness of the possibilities to avail of the many international programmes that College is part of (Erasmus, Coimbra, CHARM-EU, etc.)
- 3.5 Expand our international collaborations using broader global funding mechanisms (using TR&I supports), e.g. US, UK funding streams.
- 3.6. Engage with staff in Marino Institute of Education through the proposed Centre of Excellence for ITE to develop new and existing research collaborations in the field of Initial Teacher Education
- 3.7. Make use of doctoral and post-doctoral funding schemes to facilitate shared supervision opportunities between collaborators or within groups



What does this look like when it is achieved

- The School has implemented and reviewed a workload model and identified areas for development of the model if needed. (1.1)
- The School maintains an overview of the research areas of all members of staff and all research centres and groups and where relevant the relationships between them, this is well represented on the School research webpages. (3.1)
- All School research centres and groups demonstrate their on-going and engaged activity through up-to-date web presence, relevant research events and regular interaction between members. (3.1)
- All School research centres and groups maintain a list of current doctoral students and graduates on their websites (and something re funding calls). (3.1)
- All School research centres and groups have a brief and up-to-date “join-us” document that articulates the vision and expertise and role of the group/centre that can be shared with incoming staff and doctoral students. This document can be the website but must clearly articulate what the benefits (and if relevant) requirements/demands of joining the group.(3.1)
- The Research Project Officer maintains a process document on the research group joining process (e.g. mailing lists to update, website modifications to be made, etc) so that all new arrivals are integrated within their groups. (3.2)
- The School holds an annual research event for the research centres, groups and individuals to share understanding of our research areas and facilitate researchers aligning themselves to groups as appropriate to their current research trajectory or new groupings to emerge over time based on developing research interests of staff. The invitation to the event can include students and external collaborators if relevant in a given year.
- There is a standing item on the Research Committee agenda for upcoming collaborative funding opportunities. (3.3)
- The School has engaged actively with submission of research funding/tender applications that stems from the School-internal process to communicate and coordinate collaborative funding calls. (3.3)
- The School has hosted a workshop on opportunities for mobility and international network building, funded opportunities available within college and through the EU, etc (e.g. Erasmus, COST, visiting professor, etc) [facilitated by International Director and the Global Office]. (3.4, 3.5)
- The Research Committee regularly discusses international collaboration and mobility opportunities with input from the International Director or Global Office (3.4, 3.5)
- The number of mobility applications (e.g. Erasmus staff mobility) from academic staff has increased from 2020 base (3.4)
- The number of international collaborative funding applications involving global mechanisms has increased (e.g. US, UK and philanthropy avenues such as Gates Foundation) (3.5)
- The proposed TCD-MIE Centre of Excellence in ITE has a clearly articulated research vision statement (3.6)



4. Maximise impact and excel at communication

Given the nature of educational research, it is imperative that the School engages with multiple audiences in our dissemination strategy. In this era of online dissemination, the School can work to maximise the impact of the research being undertaken on academic and policy audiences in addition to practitioners and community.

To maximise impact of our research and to facilitate the capture, evaluation and communication of that, it should be built in through our research processes. Impact planning is a key component of most research funding proposals and improving our knowledge base and processes here can improve both established and new research initiatives. In achieving this we must identify, record and extend opportunities for impact. The new College Research Impact Office can provide support in this endeavour. Action 4.1 below is one action which will be expanded to include the detail of the structured impact assessment process which the Research Impact Office have designed to support schools. The School will engage with the current College Communications strategy to facilitate and optimise our efforts in tackling actions 4.2-4.5.

KEY ACTIONS

- 4.1. Engage in the Maximising Research Impact process with the College Research Impact Office
- 4.2. Revitalise web presence at all levels - school, group/centre, individual. Video, Image, Accessibility, Static and Dynamic content (ON-GOING)
- 4.3. Identify, cost and complete useful video staff profiles for the school (include possible low-cost options) (UNDERWAY)
- 4.4. Establish a communication calendar for research (COMPLETE) within a school communication calendar. And thereby ensure research comms is central in all the Schools comms strategy
- 4.5. Set-up a system for mailing list organisation, tagging, use with subscribe and unsubscribe functions (Engage with the alumni office on integrating alumni within this) (Underway)
- 4.6. Internal impact: Programme board meetings regularly discuss how recent research conducted by SoE staff can inform programme design and renewal
- 4.7. National Impact: Engage pro-actively with national policymakers to bring our research to relevant parties in an accessible way (UNDERWAY)



What does this look like when it is achieved

- The School has developed an impact report and some impact case studies from the impact process (4.1)
- The School research web presence is maintained and up-to-date, accessible and well organised (4.2)
- The school research webpages includes a most recent publications list which is regularly updated drawing on RSS (4.2)
- The School staff profiles effectively communicate research interests to potential research students and collaborators (e.g. including short video profiles or Q&A text format for more personalised perspective) (4.3)
- The School maintains a communications calendar with outline planning in place for each academic year which integrates the School research calendar and is easily updated by appropriate staff. (4.4)
- The School research mailing list is up-to-date, allows users to subscribe and unsubscribe easily and includes members from all relevant policy bodies (4.5)
- The School research seminars, webinars and events are consistently well attended and include audience members from relevant policy bodies. (4.5, 4.7)
- The School regularly invites relevant policymakers to research events (as members of mailing list or targeted invitations). (4.7)
- The School maintains a list (drawn from RSS) of policy bodies that school staff have contributed to. (4.1, 4.7)
- The School hosts periodic policy-focused research events with invited participants from relevant policy bodies to discuss research by SoE staff. (4.7)
- The School programmes include a clear process (e.g. agenda item on programme boards or programme review meeting) to draw on research activity of the school to inform our programmes (4.6)



5. Continue to be a touchstone for high quality research in education

The School has a well-established reputation for high quality research. The research conducted at the school covers a breadth of disciplines, sectors and contexts of education. Through our commitment to the empowerment and holistic development of individuals, the social, economic and cultural well-being of society and the highest academic standards, we will ensure that our research, whether basic or applied, is consistently characterised and acknowledged as ethical, sustainable, democratic, transformative, critical, evidence-based, and trustworthy. Through the term of this plan we will recognise, preserve and nurture our existing reputation within the developing context of Open Scholarship.

This goal is dependent on the success of the previous four goals which sets the environment to attract and retain excellent researchers that broaden and deepen the research activity and culture in the school.

KEY ACTIONS

- 5.1. Re-engage with the Chair process within college, including possibilities to secure alternative funding (e.g. SALI process, philanthropy, etc)
- 5.2. Ensure our processes are robust to ensure we remain synonymous with conducting research to the highest ethical standards (CONTINUOUS AND UNDERWAY re College Ethics Working Group)
- 5.3. Identify the opportunities available through Open Scholarship and develop a School position on this, e.g. working paper repository for early stage research and/or masters level work within Tara
- 5.4. Record, celebrate and communicate (where appropriate) the measurable outcomes that contribute to reputation



What does this look like when it is achieved

- The school has engaged with College with a view to securing a Chair of Education (5.1)
- The School has submitted a competitive application for a female professorship under SALI scheme [complete] (5.1)
- School of Education representatives are called upon to engage across the institution and beyond in relation to ethics processes (e.g. representation on Research Ethics Policy Committee, on REPC working groups, on Faculty or other school Research Committees, as external advisor to other bodies) to ensure the School is a strong voice for sound ethical processes as well as values. (5.2) [Complete and on-going]
- The School presence on the TARA open access platform is well curated and the School has considered and (if relevant) instigated a working paper repository within TARA for early stage research and/or masters level work (5.3)
- There is a mechanism in place to record the following measures of “reputation” (drawing on reporting from RSS, RPAMS and PIQA where needed and on the outputs of action 4.1 in Goal 4) (5.4):
- Alumni network is engaged and developed
- The areas of research expertise and reputation are used positively in marketing programmes. (5.4.)
- Template powerpoint is developed to capture the measures of reputation. This is updated annually and presented to the School in a research committee meeting and externally as needed (5.4)



Trinity College Dublin

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