



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

<https://www.tcd.ie/swsp/>



Research Strategy 2025-2030

School of Social Work and Social Policy

Foreword



We bring depth of expertise across a range of topics including children and youth, criminal justice, homelessness, disability, domestic violence, poverty and welfare, ageing, reproduction policy and rights, social work education and practice, and technology in human services.

Research sits at the heart of the School of Social Work and Social Policy. It shapes who we are, what we teach, and, most importantly, the difference we make. Our work is driven by a shared commitment to research that is excellent in quality, grounded in lived realities, and capable of delivering real impact for individuals, communities, and society.

The School's research strength lies in its reach and relevance. We bring depth of expertise across a range of topics including children and youth, criminal justice, homelessness, disability, domestic violence, poverty and welfare, ageing, reproduction policy and rights, social work education and practice, and technology in human services. Our research is connected through a collaborative culture that is interdisciplinary, methodologically ambitious, innovative and responsive to emerging social challenges.

Research is embedded across our teaching, ensuring that students at undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional levels learn from evidence that is current, critical, and practice-informed.

Our impact is measurable and meaningful. Staff research has been cited in hundreds of policy and practice documents and has informed professional standards, service delivery, and legislative and regulatory frameworks as well as scholarly theory. This influence reflects not only the quality of our outputs, but the strength of our engagement. We work closely with government departments, NGOs, international bodies, and advocacy organisations and citizens because research should not end at publication, it should contribute to positive change, particularly for those most affected by inequality and exclusion.

This strategy sets out an ambitious and practical roadmap for our next five years. Aligned with *Trinity's A Living Research Strategy* and the *Thrive College Strategic Plan*, and *Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy*, it commits the School to strengthening collaboration, enabling and recognising research activity, enhancing visibility, and supporting early career researchers. Through these priorities, we will deepen our research culture, expand our partnerships, and continue to generate knowledge that matters that is rigorous, inclusive, and ready to make a difference.

Prof Catherine Conlon
Head of School

Prof Nicola Carr
Director of Research

School Research Strengths



Research in the School of Social Work and Social Policy is characterised by strong societal relevance and demonstrable impact on policy and practice. The School maintains a vibrant and collaborative research culture underpinned by breadth of expertise, methodological innovation, and close integration between research, teaching, and professional practice.

A defining strength of the School's research is its thematic breadth combined with depth of expertise. Research spans children and youth, criminal justice, homelessness, disability, domestic violence, poverty and welfare, ageing and intergenerational relations, reproductive policy and rights, social work education and professional practice, and technology in human services. The School's research is organised through cross-theme collaboration and active participation in College-wide and interdisciplinary initiatives. This approach enables researchers to leverage shared infrastructure, networks, and training opportunities while retaining flexibility and responsiveness to emerging social challenges. Meanwhile, the School's research reach achieves national and international impact through global networks, funding and impacts we participate in.

Research is deeply embedded in the School's teaching culture with modules across undergraduate, postgraduate and professional programmes directly informed by active research projects.

The quality and reach of the School's research outputs are evidenced through consistent publication performance and strong citation indicators. Staff engage extensively with government departments, NGOs, and international organisations through commissioned research, expert advice, evidence synthesis, and policy development. Research has been cited in hundreds of policy and practice documents across more than 20 countries, contributing to changes in policy frameworks, professional standards, and service delivery. These engagements are supported by a strong commitment to open access and research communication.

Staff engage extensively with government departments, NGOs, and international organisations through commissioned research, expert advice, evidence synthesis, and policy development.

Impact and Engagement

Research conducted by staff in the School of Social Work and Social Policy has been influential in shaping policy and practice. Our research has been cited in policy and practice documents both nationally and internationally. Between 2006-2025, research carried out by staff in our School was cited in 604 documents across 22 countries including in policy documents from governments, non-governmental organisations, international governmental organisations, think-tanks and legislative bodies.

School of Social Work and Social Policy staff engage with a wide range of policy makers in relation to research. This includes governmental departments, non-governmental organisations and international governmental organisations. Engagement ranges from provision of research, including evidence synthesis, provision of policy advice and input into policy and legislation as well as novel conceptualisation of policy constructs shaping new ways of imagining society. We are very motivated to engage with policy makers in order to see real world outcomes that result in positive social change, particularly for people from marginalised communities and positionality.

The disciplinary and research topic areas of staff in our School, particularly lends itself to policy engagement. Some of these engagements are built on long-standing relationships over many years, including with alumni from our School. Outcomes of engagement are multi-faceted. Examples range from shaping thinking, inputs into training (e.g. judicial training, continuous professional development options) through to direct impacts on regulator frameworks, government policy and legislation (e.g. family law proposals, inspection standards and youth homeless strategy) or acting as expert advisors or contributors to fora including Oireachtas Committees.

604 policy documents from 178 different sources

Overton 2025

Australia	119
UK	91
Canada	24
Sweden	20
Germany	8
New Zealand	4
Belgium	3
South Korea	1

Ireland	112
USA	53
Finland	24
Norway	12
Netherlands	7
Peru	4
Denmark	2

IGO	94
EU	27
Spain	20
Switzerland	9
France	4
Austria	3
Czech Republic	1

Our Research Vision

The School of Social Work and Social Policy shares its ambition for excellence in research with Trinity's *A Living Research Strategy* (Trinity College Dublin, 2021), *Thrive College Strategic Plan* (2025-2030) and with Ireland's *Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy* (Government of Ireland, 2022). The School builds on the expertise of its academic staff and the quality of their publications, the calibre of early career researchers, the diversity of research areas investigated, its policy and practice impact, and a positive research culture to accomplish its vision.

The vision for research of the School of Social Work and Social Policy is to conduct research that:

- is regarded as excellent, innovative and rigorous;
- is connected to *real world* issues;
- is collaborative and inclusive of persons with lived experience of the issues investigated;
- informs policy and practice nationally and internationally;
- promotes knowledge exchange to achieve inclusive societies.

**informs
policy and
practice nationally
and internationally**



Strategic Plan

To accomplish the research vision of the School of Social Work and Social Policy four strategic goals and corresponding activities have been identified.



1 Strategic Goal 1. Increase internal and external research collaboration

To strengthen and expand internal and external research collaboration by proactively creating and sustaining interdisciplinary and cross-sector partnerships within the School, across Trinity, nationally, and internationally, engaging academic and non-academic stakeholders to enhance research quality, impact, and societal relevance.

2 Strategic Goal 2. Recognise and enable research activity

To recognise, support, and enable high-quality research activity by providing time, skills development, methodological expertise, administrative infrastructure, and appropriate recognition, while strengthening the integration of research and teaching to sustain a vibrant and inclusive research culture.

3 Strategic Goal 3. Improve visibility of School of Social Work Social Policy Research

To enhance the visibility, accessibility, and public impact of School of Social Work and Social Policy research by developing a coherent and actively maintained digital and institutional presence, positioning the School's platforms as a central hub for research activity, and strengthening public engagement and knowledge exchange.

4 Strategic Goal 4. Increase Supports for Early Career Researchers

To strengthen and sustain research capacity by providing targeted, ongoing support for early career researchers - including new staff, postdoctoral researchers, and PhD students - enabling them to disseminate their work, build research expertise, and develop sustainable careers.

Pillar One:



Increase internal and external research collaboration

Aim:

To strengthen and expand internal and external research collaboration by proactively creating and sustaining interdisciplinary and cross-sector partnerships within the School, across Trinity, nationally, and internationally, engaging academic and non-academic stakeholders to enhance research quality, impact, and societal relevance

Actions:

- Establish a School Seminar Series showcasing staff and postgraduate research.
- Host regular research engagement meetings with external stakeholders (policy makers, NGOs, advocacy groups).
- Lead and participate in interdisciplinary research initiatives and external collaborations.
- Work with and leverage the support of Trinity Research to develop research grant profile and impact.

Expected Impact:

Greater awareness of and participation in research across the School and enhanced collaboration opportunities with external stakeholders.

Pillar Two:



Recognise, Enable, and Support Research Activity

Aim:

To recognise, support, and enable high-quality research activity by providing time, skills development, methodological expertise, administrative infrastructure, and appropriate recognition, while strengthening the integration of research and teaching to sustain a vibrant and inclusive research culture.

Actions:

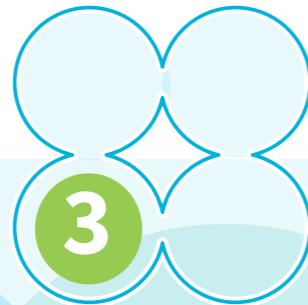
- Continue to implement sabbatical opportunities in line with Faculty policy.
- Run targeted research information sessions and methodological workshops.
- Develop a business case for dedicated research administration resource and appoint to this role.
- Ringfence research related income to build and expand capacity in professional and administrative support resources for research.

Expected Impact:

Increased grant capture, publications, research expertise, and enhanced recognition of staff/student contributions.



Pillar Three:



Improve visibility of School of Social Work Social Policy Research

Aim:

To enhance the visibility, accessibility, and public impact of School of Social Work and Social Policy research by developing a coherent and actively maintained digital and institutional presence, positioning the School's platforms as a central hub for research activity, and strengthening public engagement and knowledge exchange.

Actions:

- Host an *Annual Public Lecture* in Social Work/Social Policy.
- Maintain and regularly update the *School Research Website* as a hub of research activity.
- Develop school research communications through use of multi-media resourced by dedicated professional support.
- Collaborate with TCD Communications to systematise School-level engagement.
- Partner with the TCD Community Engagement Unit to expand collaborative activities.
- Advertise public engagement activities widely and encourage staff participation in seminars and knowledge exchange initiatives.
- Encourage open scholarship and use of repositories (e.g., TARA).
- Ensure accurate reporting by supporting staff to update RSS and institutional databases.

Expected Impact:

Improved public visibility of research, stronger community connections, and enhanced institutional reputation.

Pillar Four:



Increase Supports for Early Career Researchers

Aim:

To strengthen and sustain research capacity by providing targeted, ongoing support for early career researchers—including new staff, postdoctoral researchers, and PhD students—enabling them to disseminate their work, build research expertise, and develop sustainable careers.

Actions:

- Provide structured *mentoring* for new staff and postdoctoral researchers.
- Highlight research of early career researchers on the School website and communications channels.
- Deliver *Publication Workshops* for postgraduate researchers.
- Provide *research space and adjunct status* for PhD graduates.

Expected Impact:

Increased research income, activity and outputs, stronger career trajectories for ECRs, and enhanced contribution to the University's research culture.



Implementation & Monitoring

Leadership:

- Director of Research, Head of School, School Manager, Course Committees, School Executive and Research Committee.

Review Process:

- Annual review of progress against strategic priorities at the School Research Engagement Meeting.
- Regular reporting to Faculty on research outputs, grant capture, and public engagement activities.

Indicators of Success:

- Increase in research funding applications, awards and outputs.
- Higher levels of collaboration with external stakeholders and scholarly networks.
- Increased number of research-led teaching modules.
- Positive feedback from staff and PhD students on recognition and support.
- Greater visibility of SWSP research through public lectures, website activity, media engagement and metrics.



Acknowledgements

The development of the strategy was undertaken in a phased approach. In the first phase, input was gathered from staff and PhD students through SWOT analysis, a survey of research areas and methodological approaches, an assessment of research impact, and an assessment of research funding. This served to inform the development of strategic goals and actions.

This work was led by Dr Edurne Garcia Iriarte and involved staff, PhD students and working group members in an iterative process of feedback and refinement of strategic goals and actions. Key to the development of the research goals and actions were workshops on articulating and measuring research impact, facilitated by the College's Director of Strategic Engagement and Impact Assessment, including research staff and students as participants. We thank everyone for their input in the development of this strategy.





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School of Social Work
and Social Policy

Trinity College Dublin,
The University of Dublin.
College Green, Dublin 2,
Ireland

T: +353 1 896 1000