



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

Quality Review of the School of Social Science and Philosophy

17-19 February 2025

Review Team:

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2. Professor Amritha Dhillon, King's College London, UK
3. Professor Stefan Wolff, University of Birmingham, UK
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Internal Facilitators:

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1. Introduction

The reviewers would like to thank the faculty, students and staff of the College, Faculty and School for their facilitation of the review process.

The reviewers appreciate the detailed information provided both before and during the review meetings, which greatly assisted them in their task. The reviewers particularly note the willingness of faculty, students and staff in the School and its constituent departments to engage openly and constructively on the whole range of issues raised in the School's self-assessment report.

The reviewers agree that, overall, the School has performed admirably under challenging conditions. This is testament to the ability and resilience of its faculty and staff. Faculty and staff across all ranks appear genuinely committed to the School and to its mission of delivering both outstanding research of an international standing and a transformative learning experience to all its students.

The following recommendations and suggestions, therefore, are delivered in a spirit of constructive feedback with the aim of assisting the College, Faculty and School to build on what has been accomplished to date while also considering changes that can enhance the ability of faculty and staff to further advance outcomes in their individual and collective endeavours and create better working conditions.

The reviewers initially summarise their recommendations and suggestions in section 2 and then elaborate in greater detail on their observations in section 3.

2. Recommendations and Suggestions

i. The School's ability to develop its strategy, focusing both on short-term execution and long-term vision and priorities, in the context of the local operating environment, College strategies, and the wider external environment.

The reviewers recommend:

- Develop a vision for the School and a strategy how to achieve it. This should include a research and a teaching strategy, both of which would also need to reflect on School identity and the added value of the School structure, as well as the relationship between departments and School.

ii. The quality and sustainability of the School's teaching and learning provision, learning environment, and associated resources (particularly in the context of recent College initiatives in these areas) that underpin the delivery of:

a. Undergraduate programmes

The reviewers recommend:

- Set clear expectations of assessment feedback quality and quantity and communicate these to faculty and students alike (this may include, for example, the use of a feedback pro-forma to help standardise feedback).
- Review curriculum structure and delivery, including considering the adoption of caps on student numbers per module (with the possible exception of core modules). Particular attention should be paid to the viability of low-recruiting modules and their place in the curriculum.
- Develop pathways to single honours programmes building on existing modules.
- Develop a workload allocation model (WAM) that incorporates appropriate recognition of differing activity levels according to the scope and scale of duties, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Crucially, such a model should clearly recognise module size (to reflect numbers of tutorial and marking loads). Some existing examples from Birmingham/King's/Keele can be tried.
- If timetabling uncertainty is related to student numbers on modules, set deadlines in previous term and allow one week in the term for changes.

The reviewers suggest:

- Reflect on the weighting of the Capstone module and consider making it equivalent to a double-weighted module to reflect its importance and intensity of supervision.
- While we recognise that the 20-day feedback policy is set centrally, we suggest that the School explore with the College whether there is any flexibility around this, in particular allowing the School to exercise some discretion in granting staff extensions in specific circumstances.

b. Postgraduate taught and research programmes

The reviewers recommend:

- Prioritise research funding applications with built-in PGR bursaries.
- Faculty/College should increase funding envelope for PGRs.
- Consider a research strategy that seeks to identify areas of growth/critical mass to increase PGR intake and funding (including through external funding).

The reviewers suggest:

- Consider the introduction of new PGT programmes in line with a School and/or departmental strategies and market forces, such as a School-wide truly interdisciplinary (rather than just multi-disciplinary) programme.

- c. Other types of provision, e.g., continuous professional development, short courses, etc.

The reviewers recommend:

- The School divest from CPD provision.

The reviewers suggest:

- Should the School decide not to divest entirely from CPD, consider the repurposing of existing 5-credit modules for the provision of micro-credentials to reduce teaching burden of CPD provision.

iii. The quality of the School's research activity and environment, including its engagement with Research Centres, and its participation in College research initiatives; identifying both the supports required to build on existing research capacity and any impediments to research activity.

The reviewers recommend:

- Align research and PGR strategies.
- Recognise impact more clearly as a fundamental aspect of research and promote it in line with research strategy.
- Increase and make more transparent and consistent the provision of research funding (personal allocations, etc.).
- Review the baseline expectation of four peer-reviewed output equivalents over four years and introduce a stronger quality over quantity indicator in the determination of research activity. Take cognisance of the different discipline-specific standards in this determination. Research inactivity should be treated as performance issue rather than be 'punished' with additional teaching.

(iv) The School's use of currently available resources to deliver on its academic mission (Financial, Facilities, Human), taking account of the challenging financial environment that Irish HEIs operate in.

The reviewers recommend:

- Seize the opportunity of this external review to reflect and articulate clearly a well-integrated School strategy that draws together research, staffing/recruitment, and teaching strategies.
- Draw up an implementation plan with clear goals and timelines as a basis for a dialogue with Faculty and College to mobilise the required resources to enable the School to deliver a strategy that can contribute to the realisation of the College's strategic priorities.
- Review use of PGTs as TAs in light of student and faculty feedback concerning the learning and teaching experience and quality.
- Streamline allocation and communication of teaching offered to TAs
- Improve training for TAs.

The reviewers suggest:

- While we recognise that this falls outside its remit, we suggest that the School should consider engaging with the College about the possibility of introducing a career pathway for teaching fellows that would remove the requirement to be research active in exchange for a contractually agreed higher teaching load. Such a career pathway should still include a time allocation for scholarship to allow faculty in this category to keep up with research in areas in which they teach and to contribute to pedagogical innovation and its dissemination via publication.

v. The effectiveness of the School's governance, management and organisational structures in delivering and supporting the achievement of its goals.

The reviewers recommend:

- Improve collection and use of student feedback. This should include improvements to the use of student reps, such as articulate clear role expectations, allocate time and opportunities for them to feed back in committee meetings, consider the formation of a dedicated staff-student forum. Reach out to international students from outside Europe and North America that appear not to be represented in the students reps.
- Each committee needs to have greater clarity of its purpose and role, including in terms of horizontal (school/department) and vertical (Faculty/College) integration of strategies and their delivery. Reduce duplication of roles and improve communication between vertical layers.
- Consider ways to improve the effectiveness of mechanisms of engagement with the Faculty and College to articulate resource needs and the case for investment in strategic areas in which School, Faculty, and College priorities are well-aligned.
- Provide opportunities to PS staff to meet across departments as well as vertically to benefit from personal connections to speed up processes.
- The trend is towards professionalising some student facing services such as personal tutoring as staff have too many students to give the kind of attention needed.
- Develop a clear, transparent, and accountable model of workload allocation (WAM) that takes into account factors such as module size, scope of different admin roles, and individual circumstances.

- The reviewers suggest:

- Consider ways in which PS staff concerns about lack of promotion and progression opportunities in the School can be addressed without losing experienced staff that are key to delivering operationally for the School and its constituent departments.

- Consider ways in which promotion becomes exclusively merit-based rather than be constrained by available funding envelopes. This might include decoupling of promotion in rank from associated salary increases or 'cost-neutral' promotions in rank on the same salary scale.
- Consider the sustainability impact of activities across the overarching School strategy and its operational delivery.
- Consider leadership training for senior faculty (and PS staff), especially faculty in leadership roles (e.g., heads and directors) to increase skills and capacity and create and nurture a pool of talent to minimise risks to overall resilience associated with faculty (and staff) in key positions leaving. Develop long-term succession strategies and mid-term succession plans to facilitate smooth transitions in key leadership roles.

3. Observations of Quality Review Panel

In line with their Terms of Reference, the reviewers have the following observations to make which are provided as an analytical assessment from which the subsequent recommendations and suggestions are derived.

- i. **The School's ability to develop its strategy, focusing both on short term execution and long-term vision and priorities, in the context of the local operating environment, College strategies and the wider external environment.**
 - There is an implicit recognition that the College strategy is about being a global top-100 research intensive university with an international reputation. School/departments/faculty try to implement this in their teaching and research activities.
 - The School's governance strategy is perhaps best-aligned with College priorities (vertical integration), but there is no clearly articulated vision for the School as a whole, what it wants to be known for, etc. (horizontal integration).
 - There appears to be no distinction between vision and strategy.
 - A School identity is not obvious.
 - It seems unclear what the role and purpose of the School is, although economies of scale are perceived as an important reason for creating schools.
 - Individual committees seem to lack a strategy regarding their own goals and how to operationalise them.
 - Faculty and staff do not have the time to step back and reflect on broader issues as they struggle to cope with high SSRs, teaching and admin loads.
 - There seems to be duplication of roles and, moreover, department roles seem underprovided for, e.g., HoDs do not have much admin support.
 - There is also no clear strategy for articulating demands vis-à-vis the Faculty and College.

- **RECOMMENDATION:**

- Develop a vision for the School and a strategy how to achieve it. This should include a research and a teaching strategy, both of which would also need to reflect on School identity and the added value of the School structure, as well as the relationship between departments and School.

ii. The quality and sustainability of the School's teaching and learning provision, learning environment, and associated resources (particularly in the context of recent College initiatives in these areas) that underpin the delivery of:

a. Undergraduate programmes

- The School hosts a number of well-recruiting programmes that deliver good learning outcomes for students. Students are of a high calibre, and they overall seem to enjoy their learning experiences.
- SSR is an issue that exercises faculty and staff to a high degree and was the most consistently raised concern.
 - There is a general sense that SSR is too high, compared to other Schools and the Faculty and University average.
 - This results in high levels of faculty and staff discontent at every level (TAs, TFs, junior faculty, senior faculty, administrative staff).
 - Students also reflected negatively on this in terms of tutorial and lecture sizes and the fact that the School increasingly makes use of Masters students as TAs. This affects both the teaching experience of staff and the learning experience of students.
- Joint honours/student identity/belonging
 - There is a striking lack of single-honours/department/discipline-based programmes in the School.
 - Joint honours programmes reduce the level of control that faculty have over student numbers, while students, especially in Y3 and Y4 often find that module cohorts have very different level of prior knowledge, which impacts negatively on their learning experience.
- There is a recognition that TAs and TFs lack in sufficient training opportunities.
- TAs and TFs noted shortcomings in the planning, allocation and communication of teaching loads.
- Assessment loads were often seen as unbearably high, negatively affecting the quality and timeliness of feedback. In particular, a 20-day deadline for feedback seems very short given the teaching demands.
- Space issues seem to be pressing, with timetabling also very uncertain until the last minute in many cases.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Set clear expectations of assessment feedback quality and quantity and communicate these to faculty and students alike (this may include, for example, the use of a feedback pro-forma to help standardise feedback).
- Review curriculum structure and delivery, including considering the adoption of caps on student numbers per module (with the possible exception of core modules). Particular attention should be paid to the viability of low-recruiting modules and their place in the curriculum.
- Develop pathways to single honours programmes building on existing modules.
- Develop a workload allocation model (WAM) that incorporates appropriate recognition of differing activity levels according to the scope and scale of duties, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Crucially, such a model should clearly recognise module size (to reflect numbers of tutorial and marking loads). Some existing examples from Birmingham/King's/Keele can be tried.
- If timetabling uncertainty is related to student numbers on modules, set deadlines in previous term and allow one week in the term for changes.

- **SUGGESTION:**

- Reflect on the weighting of the Capstone module and consider making it equivalent to a double-weighted module to reflect its importance and intensity of supervision.
- While we recognise that the 20-day feedback policy is set centrally, we suggest that the School explore with the College whether there is any flexibility around this, in particular allowing the School to exercise some discretion in granting staff extensions in specific circumstances.

b. Postgraduate taught and research programmes

- Postgraduate Taught Programmes

- Broadly well-received PGT portfolio and delivery, with the exception of lack of appropriate teaching space and facilities.

- **SUGGESTION:**

- Consider the introduction of new PGT programmes in line with a School and/or departmental strategies and market forces, such as a School-wide truly inter-disciplinary (rather than just multi-disciplinary) programme.

- Postgraduate Research Programmes

- Difficulty in recruiting sufficient numbers of PGRs as a result of limited funding (including differential fee levels between EU and non-EU students that the School has to absorb).

- The high fees for international students decrease the incentives to recruit them which works against the “internationalisation” strategy of the university.
- Insufficient PGR recruitment has an effect on SSRs because faculty have to cover tutorials previously taught by PGRs, or, alternatively, PGTs are drafted in as TAs to teach (subsequently increasing burden on faculty to train and supervise curriculum delivery).
- **RECOMMENDATIONS:**
 - Prioritise research funding applications with built-in PGR bursaries.
 - Faculty/College should increase funding envelope for PGRs.
 - Consider a research strategy that seeks to identify areas of growth/critical mass to increase PGR intake and funding (including through external funding).

c. Other types of provision, e.g., continuous professional development, short courses, etc.

- Despite significant investment, CPD offerings did not generate a sustainable income stream for the School. This makes them a high-cost but low-return activity.
- **RECOMMENDATION:**
 - The School divest from CPD provision.
- **SUGGESTION:**
 - Should the School decide not to divest entirely from CPD, consider the re-purposing of existing 5-credit modules for the provision of micro-credentials to reduce teaching burden of CPD provision.

iii. The quality of the School’s research activity and environment, including its engagement with Research Centres, and its participation in College research initiatives; identifying both the supports required to build on existing research capacity and any impediments to research activity.

- Research activity and quality is generally highly valued and considered as aligned with the College’s status as an internationally recognised research-intensive institution.
- Engagement with research is a high-priority for faculty staff at all levels and the research culture appears vibrant. However, it is less clear there is an overarching strategic vision that staff are aware of or working towards.
- There are already four reputable research centres in the School and successful ERC grants in some of the departments.
- The joint undergraduate programmes with Paris and Columbia are very creditable, as are the public lectures.

- Research performance is impeded by a relative misalignment between College priorities and the allocation of adequate resources, e.g., travel funds for conferences seem low relative to comparable research-intensive universities In UK.
- High teaching and admin loads are felt to encroach on research time.
- Given the multi-disciplinary nature of the School, a key challenge is the recognition and operationalisation of disciplinary differences.
- There was a noticeable lack of infrastructure for research support, especially pre- and post-award support (e.g., no dedicated grant writing staff for large EU bids).

- **RECOMMENDATIONS:**
 - Align research and PGR strategies.
 - Recognise impact more clearly as a fundamental aspect of research and promote it in line with research strategy.
 - Increase and make more transparent and consistent the provision of research funding (personal allocations, etc.).
 - Review the baseline expectation of four peer-reviewed output equivalents over four years and introduce a stronger quality over quantity indicator in the determination of research activity. Take cognisance of the different discipline-specific standards in this determination. Research inactivity should be treated as performance issue rather than be ‘punished’ with additional teaching.

(iv) The School’s use of currently available resources to deliver on its academic mission (Financial, Facilities, Human), taking account of the challenging financial environment that Irish HEIs operate in.

- There is a general perception that the School is under-resourced in comparison to others in the College and so cannot deliver adequately on College priorities. This is despite the School’s significant and above-average financial contribution to the Faculty and College. This misalignment generates a significant level of grievances among faculty and staff.
- Related to this, the current financial model of resource allocation is perceived as disadvantaging the School, including in light of the objective space and staffing constraints for further expansion (i.e., above-budget line performance). This has created a tension between the need to increase available resources and the demands of delivering financial sustainability.
- Faculty and staff appear to be working hard yet are genuinely overwhelmed with the day-to-day operational requirements to deliver a broad set of activities within the existing resource constraints and, therefore, do not have sufficient opportunity to consider ways of aligning their own School strategies to the priorities of the College and make a case for necessary investment on this basis.

- The School has great need for using TAs for the delivery of the UG curriculum and makes use of both PGR and, increasingly, PGT students to do so.
 - TAs reported general dissatisfaction with the contract (precarity), training, workload expectations, non-standard pay across departments, planning and communication of teaching loads, etc.
 - TAs, especially PGRs, lack consistent, predictable financial research support (e.g., conference travel).
- **RECOMMENDATIONS:**
 - Seize the opportunity of this external review to reflect and articulate clearly a well-integrated School strategy that draws together research, staffing/recruitment, and teaching strategies.
 - Draw up an implementation plan with clear goals and timelines as a basis for a dialogue with Faculty and College to mobilise the required resources to enable the School to deliver a strategy that can contribute to the realisation of the College's strategic priorities.
 - Review use of PGTs as TAs in light of student and faculty feedback concerning the learning and teaching experience and quality.
 - Streamline allocation and communication of teaching offered to TAs
 - Improve training for TAs.
- **SUGGESTION:**
 - While we recognise that this falls outside its remit, we suggest that the School should consider engaging with the College about the possibility of introducing a career pathway for teaching fellows that would remove the requirement to be research active in exchange for a contractually agreed higher teaching load. Such a career pathway should still include a time allocation for scholarship to allow faculty in this category to keep up with research in areas in which they teach and to contribute to pedagogical innovation and its dissemination via publication.

v. The effectiveness of the School's governance, management and organisational structures in delivering and supporting the achievement of its goals.

- The School and departments are efficiently run and deliver well on the day-to-day operations.
- There is, however, a certain degree of duplication of functions, owed in part to the multi-disciplinary nature of the School and its department-based teaching delivery.
- There are some key areas in which the centralisation of capacity at the School level, while delivering some efficiencies of scale, has led to the deprivation of administrative support at departmental level, notably the lack of direct support to heads of department.

- Despite the school level centralisation of administration, processes for managing research integrity need to be streamlined (or moved to PS staff) to reduce burden on the head of school.
- Professional services staff noted the lack of skills and career development opportunities (including a lack of promotion opportunities within the School). This creates problems with recruitment and retention of staff. They also perceive a lack of formal spaces to exchange ideas with other departmental and college level staff.
- Facilities, especially space, IT, and library resources, are falling short of staff, student, and faculty expectations and impede the delivery and expansion of core business in relation to teaching (e.g., expansion of student recruitment) and research (e.g., lack of access to Oxford Scholarship Online).
- The current WAM is too vague, lacking in transparency, and differs between departments (due to discretion).
- There is also a perceived lack of transparency for faculty promotion criteria (e.g., maternity leave impacts) and staff reported several delays in the process.
- There is a recognition of the importance of EDI efforts, and these are implemented through a dedicated EDI committee. However, EDI seems narrowly focused on gender issues (e.g., current strong focus on Athena Swan), while other forms of inequality, including those based on race, ethnicity, age, class, or disability, receive considerably less attention. This also includes inequality issues experienced by students (e.g., lack of ethnic and racial diversity among student reps). Access to quality data on inequalities further hampers a broader consideration of EDI issues.
- The role and purpose of individual committees, which are generally well run, is not always clear, including to members of the committees. This appears to create an environment that is strong on generic governance indicators yet lacks clear purpose and alignment with strategic priorities.
- Personal tutoring is done on a voluntary basis leading to unequal loads across faculty.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Improve collection and use of student feedback. This should include improvements to the use of student reps, such as articulate clear role expectations, allocate time and opportunities for them to feed back in committee meetings, consider the formation of a dedicated staff-student forum. Reach out to international students from outside Europe and North America that appear not to be represented in the students reps.
- Each committee needs to have greater clarity of its purpose and role, including in terms of horizontal (school/department) and vertical (Faculty/College) integration of strategies and their delivery. Reduce duplication of roles and improve communication between vertical layers.
- Consider ways to improve the effectiveness of mechanisms of engagement with the Faculty and College to articulate resource needs and the case for

investment in strategic areas in which School, Faculty, and College priorities are well-aligned.

- Provide opportunities to PS staff to meet across departments as well as vertically to benefit from personal connections to speed up processes.
- The trend is towards professionalising some student facing services such as personal tutoring as staff have too many students to give the kind of attention needed. Alternately the “teaching track” career path is another option for such services.
- Develop a clear, transparent, and accountable model of workload allocation (WAM) that takes into account factors such as module size, scope of different admin roles, and individual circumstances.

- **SUGGESTIONS:**

- Consider ways in which PS staff concerns about lack of promotion and progression opportunities in the School can be addressed without losing experienced staff that are key to delivering operationally for the School and its constituent departments.
- Consider ways in which promotion becomes exclusively merit-based rather than be constrained by available funding envelopes. This might include decoupling of promotion in rank from associated salary increases or ‘cost-neutral’ promotions in rank on the same salary scale.
- Consider the sustainability impact of activities across the overarching School strategy and its operational delivery.
- Consider leadership training for senior faculty (and PS staff), especially faculty in leadership roles (e.g., heads and directors) to increase skills and capacity and create and nurture a pool of talent to minimise risks to overall resilience associated with faculty (and staff) in key positions leaving. Develop long-term succession strategies and mid-term succession plans to facilitate smooth transitions in key leadership roles.

Response from School of Engineering to the Reviewers’ Report

The School of Social Sciences and Philosophy (SSP) welcomes the Quality Review Report and appreciates the Review Panel's collegial and constructive engagement throughout the process. We are especially encouraged by the recognition of good practices and commendations related to our robust research culture, high-quality teaching, and positive student experience. These strengths reflect the dedication and professionalism of our staff and students, and the solid foundation on which the School continues to build. We accept the Review recommendations as a valuable framework to support further development. The report arrives at an important juncture for the School, and we are committed to responding with purpose and ambition. The School is proud of its strong national and international reputation, as reflected in its current high ranking within College and beyond.

Our forthcoming strategic plan will be pivotal in enhancing the School's profile further, reinforcing its distinctive identity and positioning SSP for future growth and impact. In early Michaelmas Term 2025, the School will initiate a focused programme of work to consider how best to implement the Review's recommendations, with the aim to present a proposed implementation plan by November 2025. In preparation, the School will begin consultations and internal planning, with the following areas identified as priorities:

- **Developing a School-Wide Strategic Vision:** The School will begin work on articulating a shared strategic vision and plan, bringing together teaching, research, and staffing priorities. This process will include structured consultation with departments, professional services staff, and students, and will also examine the distinctive role and identity of the School as a structure within College.
- **Reviewing Workload Allocation and Curriculum Frameworks:** We plan to initiate a School-wide review of the workload allocation model to ensure it is transparent, equitable, and reflective of the full range of academic responsibilities. Alongside this, a curriculum review will be scoped to examine module structures, low-enrolment viability, assessment practices, and the potential to develop single-honours pathways.
- **Promoting Research Excellence and Supporting Staff:** The School will prioritise the development of a research environment that supports staff to excel despite high student-staff ratios and associated teaching demands. This includes exploring ways to protect research time, provide more consistent access to funding, and offer targeted support for grant writing and impact-related activities. As part of this work, we will also consider how postgraduate research (PGR) strategy can be better aligned with areas of research strength, with a view to expanding PGR enrolments and funding through external and internal mechanisms. Efforts will focus on enabling staff at all career stages to thrive as researchers contributing meaningfully to SSP's research profile.
- **Improving Governance and Engagement Structures:** A review of School-level committees will be undertaken to clarify remits, reduce duplication, and improve vertical integration with Faculty and College governance processes. We will also seek to enhance student engagement through better-defined representative roles and more inclusive consultation mechanisms, particularly for international students.
- **Recognising and Supporting Professional Services (PS) Staff:** While career progression structures are a matter for College, the School will act locally to support PS staff by promoting

professional development, fostering cross-departmental collaboration, and creating opportunities for engagement and local recognition. We will also continue to advocate within Faculty and College for reinstatement of promotions, improved progression pathways and retention measures.

- **Reviewing Teaching Assistant (TA) Structures:** The School intends to undertake a review of how TAs are recruited, trained, and allocated. In doing so, the School will actively engage with College supports such as the Centre for Academic Practice to enhance TA training and professional development, ensuring consistent and high-quality support for both PGT and PGR TAs across all departments. We will also be exploring opportunities to improve consistency across departments, develop standardised communications, and enhance training and support for both PGT and PGR TAs.

These initiatives will form the foundation for the School's proposed implementation plan, which will be developed during Michaelmas Term and submitted by November 2025. We look forward to working collaboratively with Faculty, College, and our wider community as we move forward with this important process.

Professor Paul O'Grady
Head of School
School of Social Science and Philosophy

Response from the Faculty Dean to the Reviewers' Report

As one of the largest and most productive Schools in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy (SSSP) plays a vital role in advancing the Faculty's academic mission. Its achievements in teaching, research, and civic engagement are a credit to the strong and effective leadership of the Head of School, the dedication and professionalism of the School Manager, the Heads of Disciplines, and the expertise and commitment of both academic and professional staff. The School's diverse and engaged student body also contributes significantly to its vibrant intellectual culture. This collective effort underpins the School's national and international reputation for excellence and its valuable contributions to the wider College community.

I wish to begin by warmly thanking the Review Panel, Professors Maurice Crul, Amritha Dhillon, Stefan Wolff, and Anthony Wrigley, for their collegial, thoughtful, and rigorous engagement throughout the Quality Review of the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy (SSSP). Their report is comprehensive, fair, and constructive, offering valuable external perspective on the School's strengths and challenges alike.

I also acknowledge and commend the School's timely and proactive response to the report, and in particular its commitment to engaging fully with the recommendations and translating them into a focused and achievable plan of action. The School's clear recognition of the value of the review, and of the need to act with purpose at this important juncture, is welcomed and supported.

The Panel rightly highlights a number of areas of strength within SSP. They identify a vibrant and committed academic culture, an impressive record of internationally recognised research, a high-quality student experience, and a staff community characterised by professionalism and resilience. These achievements reflect a great deal of dedication, especially under the sustained pressures of high student-staff ratios and resource constraints. They also speak to the School's strong national and international profile, and its contribution to the Faculty's and the College's academic mission and reputation.

The Review also surfaces a set of structural and strategic challenges that merit serious reflection and coordinated action. In particular, the absence of a clearly articulated School-wide vision, the strains on staffing and workload allocation, the need for more consistent support for research activity and PGR supervision, and the resourcing and integration of professional services, all point to the importance of planning for a more sustainable and strategically aligned future.

I am encouraged that the School has identified the development of a new strategic plan as a priority and will begin structured consultations across its departments, professional services teams, and student body in early Michaelmas Term. This inclusive approach is critical, not only for articulating a shared vision, but for building a clear and implementable roadmap that reflects the distinct identity of the School and its place within the Faculty and College.

Importantly, several of the Review Panel's recommendations and suggestions align closely with the priorities of the forthcoming university strategic plan. This institutional alignment provides a timely opportunity for the School to embed its strategic ambitions within a wider College framework, supporting more coherent development across teaching, research, staffing, and governance, while also strengthening its case for targeted investment and support.

The Faculty stands ready to work in close partnership with the School as it undertakes this important next phase. This includes supporting the articulation of an integrated School strategy, advancing reforms in workload and curriculum structures, strengthening research planning, PGR support, and funding access, enhancing clarity and communication in governance; and ensuring more coherent support and development opportunities for both academic and professional services staff. The School's commitment to reviewing TA structures, improving feedback processes, and building a more inclusive and representative student engagement model are also important and timely steps forward.

The School's intention to produce a detailed implementation plan by November 2025 is welcome and will provide a key opportunity for continued Faculty engagement. This Review presents a significant opportunity for strategic renewal, and I am confident that with the momentum it has already demonstrated, SSP is well positioned to move forward with clarity, ambition, and purpose.

On behalf of the Faculty, I wish to thank the School leadership, staff, and students for their constructive engagement with this process. I look forward to supporting the next phase of development as SSP continues to strengthen its identity, expand its impact, and contribute meaningfully to the academic mission of Trinity College Dublin. The Faculty remains committed to supporting SSP as it addresses these priorities and I look forward to seeing the positive developments that will result from this Review.



Professor Carmel O'Sullivan
Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences