

Research and Innovation Bill 2024

Irish Humanities Alliance Position Paper, February 2024



Introduction

Humanities research is vital to Irish society and our shared intellectual, social, and cultural life, including the dynamic resources of creativity in the economy. The Irish Humanities Alliance (IHA) was formed in 2013 to support the humanities in the context of a higher education policy landscape and to explain its key role.

The IHA has an all-island remit that transcends its member institutions; is efficient at producing consensual position statements; and can be used as liaison and sounding board between the AH community and the new emerging agency, Taighde Éireann / Research Ireland, as Science Foundation Ireland and the Irish Research Council transition.

In its 2019 statement of strategic vision, *By Imagination We Live*, the IHA asserts its commitment to advocate for:

- parity of esteem between disciplines
- support for research excellence at all stages of academic career development in the humanities
- secure and adequate funding of humanities research, informed decisions on the distribution of government funding, and transparency of research governance.

Research and Innovation Bill 2024: Core Recommendations

Drawing on these strategic objectives, this position paper responds to the recently published '[Research and Innovation Bill 2024](#)' (hereinafter referred to as 'the Bill') to provide for the establishment and functions of a funding body to be known as Taighde Éireann / Research Ireland.

[The Research and Innovation Bill](#) is scheduled to be heard by the Joint Committee on Education on 28 February 2024. Below is a distillation of four positions taken by the Irish Humanities Alliance's working group, focusing on parity of esteem for all disciplines, and involvement of active researchers in the governance of the new agency.

Four proposed amendments to the Research and Innovation Bill 2024:

1. To ensure a balanced, vibrant and internationally competitive research ecosystem for the long term there is a need for an addition to **Objects of Agency (Section 8, p. 9, line 7)**, to be inserted after **section (b)**, namely:

- To support and promote research for the discovery of new knowledge in all disciplines and fields

2. The IHA maintains that there is a need for an additional point to be included under **Functions of Agency (Section 9, p. 9, line 36)** after **section (d)**, namely:

- promote research and innovation which supports social, cultural and environmental sustainability and human well being, and to so do in cooperation and collaboration with the bodies to which section 48 applies and such other persons and bodies in the higher education and research system or the research and innovation system as the Agency considers appropriate.

3. To ensure that the principle of parity of esteem between disciplines (in particular between AHSS and STEM) is fully articulated, we recommend an amendment to the **Objects of Agency (Section 8, p. 9, line 17)** with an object inserted after **section (e)** as follows:

- to advance the principle of parity of esteem between disciplines with regard to opportunities to undertake research and innovation and in the undertaking of that research and innovation.

4. It is essential that active researchers in different disciplines, both national and international, are involved in the governance of Research Ireland. This is a feature of research funding agencies across the world, yet the provisions in the Bill for the composition of the board are lacking adequate specification to ensure the appropriate researcher representation. **Membership of the Board (Section 16 (1), p. 13, line 19)** should be amended as follows:

- S (16) (1) “The Board shall consist of the following members:

(a) a chairperson;

(b) 11 ordinary members, a majority of whom shall be active researchers from a wide range of disciplines, including representatives from each area of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Further information

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