

RESEARCH CHARTER



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

WELCOME

This charter is based around the idea of committing to both a set of core principles that are central to our research philosophy and actions that will allow us to live those principles.

It is the result of a highly consultative process that garnered input from across the Trinity community. The huge level of interest in this process and its outcomes is indicative of the importance of research to us in Trinity.

The charter is not intended to define priority subject areas or determine topics on which we should focus. The purpose of the charter is to enable our researchers to work on their own challenging ideas, to be disruptive in their thinking, to do great research as individuals and collectively, and to excel at what they do.

Our vision is to engage in research with the quality, intensity, depth, diversity, and openness that leads to fundamental breakthroughs, new understandings, key insights, and that can make translational and transformative advances – or, to build a world in which we want to live.

Our mission is to create the research environment that supports our vision by pledging to

- 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

This charter focusses on each of the principles, expanding their meaning, articulating their importance, and setting out high-level goals and actions.



Prof. Linda Doyle
Dean and Vice President for Research

01. CHERISH ACADEMIC FREEDOM, DIVERSITY OF SCHOLARSHIP, AND PURSUIT OF TRUTH

CHERISHING ACADEMIC FREEDOM, DIVERSITY OF SCHOLARSHIP AND PURSUIT OF TRUTH

means supporting our researchers to pursue all avenues of intellectual enquiry, through all forms of scholarship wherever they may lead. It means holding firm to freedom and independence of thought. It means understanding that we develop and disseminate original knowledge for its own sake as a contribution to the body of knowledge, as well as for the purposes of addressing significant challenges facing the world.

It means accepting different research practices as well as different forms of scholarly outputs, being sensitive to the distinctions between disciplines, and supportive of multidisciplinary approaches. It is about appreciating the value of research from the basic to the applied. It is about understanding that research advances can be made by the individual, the group, or the large-scale initiative.

All of this also carries with it a responsibility to recognise not only the privilege this freedom brings, but also the responsibility to strive for excellence. It brings with it the obligation to carry out research ethically and with integrity. It calls for rigorous standards around our research processes to ensure we carry out our work with the highest levels of professionalism.

THIS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE academic freedom is about leveraging the deep curiosity that drives researchers to carry out excellent research. Developing knowledge for its own sake leads to major breakthroughs and unforeseen advances that cannot be orchestrated from a top-down perspective.

We take pride in being research active across all three faculties (Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences; Engineering, Maths & Science; and Health Sciences). Respecting the diversity of scholarship that flows from that, and using all our varied talents to achieve excellence, allows everyone to play to their strengths in a way that can benefit Trinity as a whole. In addition, respecting each other's work is a central tenet of what it means to value community and build camaraderie. Moreover, the ability to interrogate the world through diverse research processes is a powerful means of solving problems, and allows us to speak to the world in different ways and find new forms of communication.

The professionalism and integrity with which we carry out research is crucial in ensuring our research is world class, and that society as a whole can trust in the work we produce.

A HIGH-LEVEL GOAL FOR TRINITY is to be synonymous with a culture of academic freedom, diversity of scholarship, the pursuit of truth, and the highest level of academic standards.

MEASURES THAT CAN BE TAKEN include systematically embedding our commitment to academic freedom, diversity of scholarship, and the pursuit of truth in all our processes (e.g. promotions, literature etc.). By making this part of how we function, we can significantly enhance how we describe and communicate our diversity of scholarship to each other and to the wider world. Celebrating all of our research successes, no matter what the avenue of research, will ensure our researchers feel they belong at Trinity. New policies and systems are needed to support staff in carrying out research to the highest standards of professionalism and ethical research practices. We should foster a culture that views these policies as an opportunity to excel rather than a burden on the researcher.

02. POSITION RESEARCH AT THE HEART OF TRINITY

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means making research integral to all parts of our organisation. On the governance and administrative side, this means taking research into account in how the university is structured, and how it is run. It necessitates a questioning of all decisions we make to determine any impact they may have on our ability to carry out excellent research. It requires that all academic and administrative units have an in-depth understanding of the conditions needed to achieve the levels of research excellence to which we aspire, and that all academic and administrative units are aligned around our research goals.

It also requires the recognition that research and teaching are inextricably linked. Research-led teaching is and will remain a central principle of our activities. It means continuing to promote research-led teaching, and embedding research as part of the educational experience of students from their earliest days at Trinity.

Positioning research at the heart of Trinity is not just about meeting the demands we currently face in delivering on the research mission, but also about thinking longer term and understanding the changes that are on the horizon.

THIS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE the in-depth level at which we engage in research is an essential part of our identity at Trinity. One-third of our income comes from research. Research-led teaching is one of the aspects of our curriculum that makes us stand out nationally and internationally. The quality of our research contributes significantly to our reputation at home and abroad.

The ability to continue to grow our research depends on ensuring the university is structured appropriately for research. Balancing the wider demands of university life with time for research has implications for attracting and retaining great researchers, as well as having implications for the quality of our students' education.

Positioning research at the heart of Trinity is also important because as the research landscape shifts due to such drivers as open scholarship, or the evolving nature of work, we will be in a position to leverage opportunities, adapt to change, and continue to excel.

A HIGH-LEVEL GOAL FOR TRINITY is to fully reflect the research intensity of the institution in our governance, structures, and operational practices.

MEASURES THAT CAN BE TAKEN include building exceptional levels of communication across academic and administrative units to create a culture of inclusivity around our research goals. We can look to update research governance to reflect the ever increasing intensity with which we engage in research. We can ensure that the operationalisation of research follows policy rather than vice-versa. We must tackle the dynamics that can lead to the disincentivisation of research, and make sure that the system more thoroughly incentivises research activity. It is vital to rethink how we can better manage space to accommodate research growth. We need to work with HR to deal with issues relating to the efficient hiring of academic and research staff (policy, process, commitments), and look to open up new ways to include more pre- and post-award support. We should develop new ways to expose students to research from early on, and always seek to leverage our own research outputs to find solutions. All of this we must do in a way that is robust but still open to change.

03. FOSTER AND GROW RESEARCH TALENT

FOSTERING AND GROWING RESEARCH TALENT AND LEADERSHIP means nurturing and providing support for researchers throughout their research careers in Trinity.

It is about supporting researchers to be the best they can be, in whatever shape or form their scholarship takes. It is about fostering leadership and talent in all roles relating to research – academic and administrative.

It is about attracting the best talent from the wider world to Trinity as well as training and preparing researchers for life beyond Trinity.

It is about being part of high-profile national and international networks so that our researchers and research support staff learn from and work with the best.

THIS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE developing, hiring, retaining, and rewarding research talent is essential to maintaining our place as a leading university in the world.

The most strategic thing we can do as a university is to grow and hire talent, because from great talent comes great things. Excellent researchers attract excellent research students. Excellent researchers help keep the teaching curriculum on the cutting-edge and expose students to the latest concepts and ideas. Excellent research support staff help deliver on our ambitions.

A substantial part of our reputation is embodied in our researchers – those who work in Trinity and those we send around the world.

Attracting and retaining talented researchers in Trinity ensures we are partners of choice in international research networks. Participating in high-quality research networks means that we are challenged, and that we learn from and contribute to the best research and research practice around the world.

A HIGH-LEVEL GOAL IS FOR TRINITY to develop the kind of research environment that attracts and nourishes the very best research talent, and allows our researchers to excel at all stages of their career.

MEASURES THAT CAN BE TAKEN include working with the faculties to explore new options for protecting time for research, and developing comprehensive mentoring and training for all staff and all career stages. Internal mechanisms can be developed for individual funding. Researchers must be supported to ‘reinvent’ themselves at different stages of their careers and, above all, we must strive to preserve collegiality and a supportive community in the pressurised world of research.

From a hiring perspective, measures include building on successful central approaches, as well as streamlining our hiring processes to be able to respond to new hiring opportunities.

On the networking side, measures include expanding our strategic networks with other top institutions worldwide. We need to be more effective at connecting and communicating with our own research alumni, and we must continue to develop our infrastructure to ensure that we have a constant stream of world-class research visitors to Trinity, and a flow of researchers from Trinity to the best institutions in the world.

04. HARNESS OUR COLLECTIVE EXPERTISE FOR THE GREATER GOOD

HARNESSING OUR COLLECTIVE EXPERTISE FOR THE GREATER GOOD is about building critical research mass and leveraging diverse and in-depth expertise to address multifaceted research problems, and to solve major societal challenges that defy categorisation or cannot be addressed from one perspective alone. It is about respecting individual knowledge while understanding that certain research challenges call for collective responses.

It is about building on a rich history of multidisciplinary research in Trinity that draws on the different forms of scholarship we have across our three faculties. This history is evident in our Themes, in our Institutes, and in the various Research Centres in the University. It requires sensitivity to different disciplines and the ability to communicate across research domains.

It is also about harnessing our collective expertise to address issues and challenges we face as a university and using our own research and creativity to find solutions.

THIS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE building the world in which we want to live increasingly requires us to tackle messy and multidimensional problems that will not be solved by viewing them through singular perspectives. As drivers such as Sustainable Development Goals, Horizon Europe Missions, and Grand Societal Challenge programmes increasingly come to the fore, it is crucial to advance our ability to work at these scales and levels of complexity.

It is important because it is about building critical mass in areas in which we excel, or in new areas which we deem important for the future of our university. It is important because working in this way can also be about the establishing of new disciplines that redefine research fields and challenge norms.

It is important because it often allows us to work at a scale that makes Trinity even more visible internationally.

Working together across disciplines is also a powerful means of building key collaborations with other academic institutions, with agencies, with industry, with civil society and third sector parties.

A HIGH-LEVEL GOAL is for Trinity to be bold in defining and taking the lead in multidisciplinary initiatives or emerging fields of research that leverage our expertise for the long-term benefit of humanity.

MEASURES THAT CAN BE TAKEN INCLUDE building better methodologies for understanding and planning future research directions that play to our strengths. Identifying ways that new ideas can be seeded, piloted and explored will add to our ability to test the water. Measures can also include mechanisms for constantly improving our supports for and governance of existing Trinity multidisciplinary initiatives that cross disciplines. Processes for responding to multidisciplinary calls in an agile and transparent manner that allow all the relevant researchers in Trinity to become involved are needed. Events that seek to challenge where we go as researchers and promote opportunities for us to question our work, and reimagine our research paths are required to ensure we remain dynamic and at the forefront of our fields. We can look to better understand the future of research more generally, from open scholarship and future of work perspectives.

05. BROADEN OUR LOCAL AND GLOBAL IMPACT

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is about building an in-depth understanding of what it means to make an impact. It is about appreciating that impact is built on excellent research and realising that it is not about limiting the research we do to certain topics, certain types of research, or certain timescales and horizons. Instead, it is about understanding that impact can come from planned and unplanned quarters, that it can be educational, economic, societal or cultural, and that it can manifest itself in very different forms across these domains. It is about recognising the different and sometimes lengthy paths that might lead to impact.

It is about making a significant difference in Ireland and further afield.

Extending our impact locally and globally calls for building collaborations and partnerships of strategic importance to realise that impact, whether that be with other academic bodies, agencies, industry, cultural institutions and more.

THIS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE to build a world in which we want to live we need to translate and transform our research into tangible benefits and we need to do that in Dublin, in Ireland, and further afield. It is important because impact is the way our research takes effect and changes the world for good.

It is of consequence because many of those who fund research understand research through impact, and continue to fund on the basis of the impact that is generated. It is therefore incumbent on us to ensure that impact, whether at the local or global level, is understood in its fullest form and that we take the lead on articulating what it can and should be. Creating impact aligns with educational activities in Trinity that focus on innovation and entrepreneurship. These are increasingly becoming a distinguishing feature of our undergraduate education with Trinity highly rated in Europe for educating entrepreneurs. The importance of opening different career paths for researchers by equipping them to start commercial and social enterprises enhances the Trinity experience.

Trinity's role at the heart of Ireland's capital city in creating economic, social and cultural impact is becoming increasingly important.

A HIGH-LEVEL GOAL is for Trinity to identify and deliver opportunities for local and global impact that exemplify the diverse forms of scholarship that are part of the Trinity research landscape, and drive impact to new heights.

MEASURES THAT CAN BE TAKEN INCLUDE

expanding our understanding of the kinds of impact that are, and can be, made by researchers in Trinity. We must support researchers in articulating the great impact they are already making. We can further embrace emerging approaches to research that engage stakeholders. We can expand forms of impact by embracing open scholarship concepts. By working with LERU and other networks to promote an enriched understanding of impact, we can set goals for generating impact that draw on this enriched understanding. We can build strategic partnerships with agencies, industries, and networks, and leverage the expertise of our alumni network in developing the tools to deliver meaningful impact. We can enhance support structures within Trinity to aid our staff in translating their research into impact. And we can continue to expand and diversify our research funding so that we can maintain our focus on high quality research – one prerequisite for powerful impact.

06. ENGAGE PROFOUNDLY WITH OUR PUBLICS

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primarily means recognising that we have a wide range of audiences to whom we need to communicate our research. It means being aware of our responsibility to communicate the value of our research, and it means understanding the need to approach that communication in different ways for those different audiences.

It means being skilled in dealing with expert audiences as well as in public discourse with general audiences, and always answering questions with objective, unbiased evidence, in language that is understandable and accessible.

Increasingly, it is about recognising that our different publics can be research collaborators – active participants and co-creators – in our research, and therefore it means acquiring the communication skills to work at this deeper level of two-way engagement.

THIS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE as a publicly funded institution we have a duty to communicate the general value of research, and the specific value of the research we do, to our different stakeholders. It is also important because through sharing objective interpretations of research findings and discussing their potential implications, we can help to support informed decision-making. Indeed, Trinity has a proud tradition of this kind of engagement and it is one we will continue to grow. It is a fundamental part of our commitment to education and lifelong learning.

This profound engagement is not just about dissemination but also about the two-way flow of ideas. It is important because it has the potential to guide research through gaining insight into public concerns, and through offering new ways to collaborate. Trinity recognizes the need to be at the forefront of new forms of research collaborations with our publics – and is already beginning to work in this capacity.

Finally, it is an essential part of building and maintaining our reputation nationally and internationally which affects our reputation and international standing.

A HIGH-LEVEL GOAL is for Trinity to be a world leader in how we communicate our research to our multiple audiences.

MEASURES THAT CAN BE TAKEN INCLUDE promoting existing research-related public engagement activities across Trinity in a much more comprehensive and effective manner. We can build on existing skillsets to radically rethink how we communicate research through various media to different audiences, and execute large-scale public engagement programmes (such as Trinity-based citizen-science initiatives or public defined research challenges). We can work with our alumni, collaborator and employer networks to communicate the strength of Trinity's research. We can expand new and emerging practices with the public as a collaborator, and leverage the unique aspects of Trinity such as the Library, the Science Gallery and the Douglas Hyde Gallery in our engagements.

07. STAND UP FOR RESEARCH

STANDING UP FOR RESEARCH means being actively involved in how research policy is formed in Ireland and Europe.

It means explaining in an accessible manner how the research ecosystem works and what it takes to really sustain it. It means explaining the value of research and standing up for investment in research.

It means consistently voicing our ideas and reasoned opinions about research policy in the public arena.

It means regularly engaging with decision-makers at all levels on research issues.

THIS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE the university sector in Ireland has seen and continues to see long-term underinvestment in research. Ireland needs to grow the percentage of GDP it contributes to research as it is well below the OECD average. Such underinvestment has implications for the Irish economy and its long-term resilience. A thriving research sector in Ireland is an important asset in a country for educating talent, attracting inward investment, building an international reputation and more.

It is important to stand up for research not just to make a case for greater investment but to also make a case for how that investment is made. A thriving research ecosystem is one that is founded on excellence. It is an ecosystem that is balanced across basic and applied research, across different disciplines, across all stages of a research career and across individual and collective efforts.

From a Trinity perspective, national sustained and balanced support for research is needed to continue to retain and attract new talent, to compete at an international level, to fly the flag for Ireland as its premier research university, and to carry out the very best research.

A HIGH-LEVEL GOAL is for Trinity to be a champion for a balanced research ecosystem with excellence at its foundation in Ireland and Europe, and to influence how research policy is developed to achieve this.

MEASURES THAT CAN BE TAKEN include developing clear messages around research policy, and developing a profile as a university with a credible and articulate voice on that research policy. Running a 'Standing Up for Research Campaign', and working through the IUA or with other HEIs in Ireland would strengthen our ability to influence research policy. We must encourage all our researchers to contribute to open constructive debate on research policy, and continue to work proactively with LERU and other research networks on key research policy issues. We can leverage advances we make in better communicating our research to be effective and efficient so that we can foster a deep understanding of the issues affecting research.

CONCLUSION

This charter is purposely brief, and is based on the ideals of how we seek to carry out our research here in Trinity. The seven principles are recast as a set of high-level goals:

- To be synonymous with a culture of academic freedom, diversity of scholarship, the pursuit of truth, and the highest level of academic standards.
- To fully reflect the research intensity of the institution in our governance, structures, and operational practices.
- To develop the kind of research environment that attracts and nourishes the very best research talent and allows our researchers to excel at all stages of their career.
- To be bold in defining and taking the lead in multidisciplinary initiatives or emerging fields of research that leverage our expertise for the long-term benefit of humanity.
- To identify and deliver opportunities for local and global impact that exemplify the diverse forms of scholarship that are part of the Trinity research landscape and drive impact to new heights.
- To be a world leader in how we communicate our research to our multiple audiences.
- To be a champion for a balanced research ecosystem with excellence at its foundation in Ireland and Europe, and to influence how research policy is developed to achieve this.

The principles in this charter and the high level goals are the foundation of our Research Excellence Strategy.

