



TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN  
COLÁISTE NA TRÍONÓIDE, BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH

THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF DUBLIN

# The Role and Assessment of the Humanities

Assessment of University Teachers  
in the Humanities and Social Sciences  
Barcelona 28-29 January 2010

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# Coimbra Group

- European University network since 1985
- 38 universities across Europe
- Historic, traditional universities with a strong Humanities focus
- Research intensive universities
- Outside of capital cities with strong regional focus
- Important role of heritage: *Task Force Culture, Arts and Humanities*





# Mission of CAHTF

- *It is the task of the Culture, Arts and Humanities Task Force to contribute to the reflection of the changing conditions of the Arts and Humanities sector, and to advocate, in the light of present reform processes in education and research and based on experiences of the Coimbra Group Universities, the centrality of the Arts and Humanities for European universities and societies.*
- *Actions: to follow closely and contribute to European policy making in Education and Research and its impact on the Arts and Humanities sector. Special attention will be devoted to research evaluation methods and their applicability to the Arts and Humanities sector.*





1. The value of Arts and Humanities
2. A changing and challenging environment
3. Research Evaluation
4. Open Access
5. Recommendations and Open Questions





# Intrinsic value?

*“[The Humanities] relate to the development of individuals as independent and creative thinkers, the promotion of active citizenship and support for ethical values. They relate to the protection and enhancement of vital tenets of our history and culture, to the search for social justice nationally and globally, to the questioning of authority, to the deepening of our understanding of ourselves and the world around us and the enrichment of our lives [...]. **The intrinsic worth of higher learning for its own sake both to the individual and to wide society is plain.**”*

Irish Minister for Education and Science  
Mary Hanafin TD, October 2006



# Intrinsic value...

The task of the *Culture, Arts and Humanities Task Force* is to [...] raise awareness of the central contribution of culture to processes of identity formation, the self-definition of societies, the reflection of their values and the commitment to cultural and linguistic diversity.

*Mission Statement  
Culture, Arts and Humanities Task Force*





# ...is not enough!

Lisbon Strategy: Europe to become the  
*“most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth and better jobs and greater social cohesion”*

*What can the Arts and Humanities contribute?*



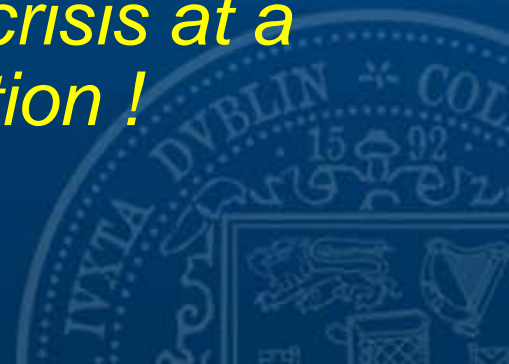


# Value for money!

Focus on:

- ‘Value for money’ and accountability
- Relevance to the problems of today
- Contribution to knowledge society and Innovation
- Job creation and economic growth

*Especially in the current economic crisis at a time of budget cuts in education !*







# Humanities graduates

## *Key generic and transferable skills for the knowledge society*

- critical and analytical thinking
- ability to create and sustain complex argumentation
- oral and written communication skills
- informed understanding of different modes of enquiry and their methodological implications,
- problem-solving, flexibility and creativity



# Key skills for a globalized world

- Cultural awareness
- Ability to 'read cultures'
- Intercultural competence
- Negotiating otherness
- Culture, tradition, and identity are powerful resources for innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship and global advantage





# Employability!

## 2009 European Year of Creativity and Innovation

major areas of growth in economies across the globe in creative industries, such as interactive television, *on-line* educational provision, multi-platform entertainment, computer games, and web design, rely as much on the supply of graduates in the AH as they do on graduates in science, engineering, and technology





# Employability!!

## *Economy of Culture in Europe (2006)*

- Creative and Cultural Industries generated 654 billion Euros in 2003 (EU15).
- automobile Industries generated less than half (271 billion)
- ICT generated significantly less (541 billion).
- The sector grew 19.7% between 1999 and 2003.
- Average qualification in the sector higher than other sectors

*“The growth of creative content and the expansion of the ICT sector are two sides of the same coin”.*

*But how can the impact of the Humanities in these domains be measured?*



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# The traditional research model

- Predominance of the single researcher
- Relative autonomy of the academic field
- Main funding from state through recurrent grant
- Organisation of research along strict disciplinary lines
- Informal peer networks
- Commitment to long-term research themes
- Monograph culture





# New structural trends

## New trends

- Imperative of strategic planning
- Increased competitiveness
- Diminishing core funding
- High-staff student ratio
- Pressure to rationalise
- Increasing interdisciplinarity
- Increasing internationalisation
- Increasing reliance on evaluation





# Project research

- Project driven research funding
- Focus on interdisciplinary research groups
- Demand and result driven research agenda
- Relevance and commercialisation as criteria
- Growing distance between research and research steering
- Funding and evaluation cycles: new conformities and threat to continuities







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# The case against?

- Utilitarian arguments go against the grain of the Humanities: KPIs alien to academia
- The idea that you can objectify and quantify quality and impact of Humanities research goes against its very nature
- Metrics are contentious in any discipline, but particularly in the Humanities: alien and inappropriate measurement tools (from the Sciences) are being imposed on us
- Suspicion how data might be used
- The Humanities community has only to loose by engaging with the debate





# The case for!

- Tax-payers and funding agencies have a right to accountability, transparency and ‘value for money’
- In an increasingly competitive environment, all stakeholders need to know where the best and most influential work is done
- Reliable evaluation of quality and impact of research crucial for informing future strategy of individuals, institutions, agencies, communities, countries
- Research assessment influences research behaviour
- By staying out of the discussion we will leave it to others who do not understand the specifics of our work
- Participating in the debate, leading it is the best chance to control or at least influence the process
- Specific Humanities metrics might provide parity of esteem with Sciences





HERA Feasibility Study January 2008

## The Evaluation and Benchmarking of Humanities Research in Europe

*“Examines the feasibility of establishing a common approach to evaluating the outputs and outcomes of humanities research in Europe, including the possibility of robust benchmarks for cross-national comparison”*

*“At the current time, the accepted methods developed for the use of bibliometrics in evaluation of research performance in the natural sciences cannot be applied with confidence to the field of the humanities”*



### HERA study:

- Compares ex-post research evaluation systems: Germany, Netherlands, Finland, Poland, Australia, Belgium, Slovenia, UK
- Undertakes careful analysis of problems with bibliometrics
- Considers ‘the wider picture’ and recommends “holistic approach” with a combination of elements to measure quality and impact





# Research evaluation

## *HERA feasibility study 2008:*

Bibliometrics, citation analysis as in the Natural Sciences does not work for Arts & Humanities:

- Poor coverage of Arts & Humanities by SCI, ISI, Scopus
- Monographs not included
- Impact slower and more long-term in the Humanities, citation window substantially different
- Perverse incentives
- Seminal or radical works need time for breakthrough
- Disadvantage for Non-English disciplines / countries
- Disadvantage for disciplines with regional or national orientation
- Seminal work addresses a non-specialist audience: History
- Interdisciplinarity is hard to capture



# Research evaluation HERA recommendations

- Combination (clusters) of elements for research evaluation: not only outputs, but also esteem indicators and wider social, cultural and economic impact
- Retain an element of peer-review
- Develop quantifiable KPIs:
  - Research outputs (weighted publication channels)
  - Peer-reviewed research income
  - PhD completions
- Research assessment should be ‘metrics informed’, not ‘metrics driven’
- Sensitivity towards distinctive characteristics of disciplines





# Outreach

- Engagement with society additional imperative
- Local, regional and national focus
- Leadership in public debates of educational, scientific, political and cultural issues.
- Involvement the creative and cultural life of the city
- Contribution to entrepreneurship and innovation in city and region
- Foster civic engagement and volunteering of staff and students

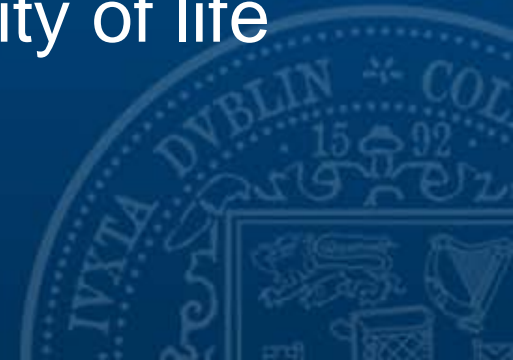






# Impact? UK REF 2010

- The new imperative: “to deliver demonstrable benefits to the economy, society, public policy, culture or quality of life” (*UK REF consultation document*)
- Measuring ‘reach’ and ‘significance’
- by ‘impact statement’ to describe interaction with research users and case studies:
- Impact in fields like economic, social, public policy, environmental, cultural, quality of life





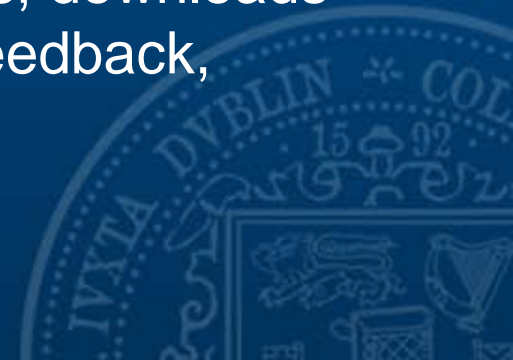
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## Hope for the development of more comprehensive metrics with Open Access

- Self-archiving of (peer-reviewed) publications in institutional digital repositories
- Immediate availability increases access, dissemination, impact
- Significantly reduce impact times and citation cycles
- Online availability increases print sales
- Direct link between OA and rankings
- Universities and funders should mandate/incentivize Green OA
- Developments of web tools for measuring hits, downloads
- Increase scholarly exchange over the web: feedback, comments





# OPEN ACCESS 2

## Ireland

### *Irish examples*

- TARA: Trinity Access Research Archive
  - Linked to RSS: CV with profile and publications
  - Export of research profile to Expertise Ireland portal
- IREL-Open: National Research portal
  - HEA-SFI funded, IUA managed, EI hosted
  - Harvested from university repositories
  - Includes all disciplines
  - Harvests data for citation analysis





## Development of Cyberinfrastructure

- Investment in CI for humanities strategic priority
- Develop public and institutional policies that foster openness and access
- Promote cooperation between public and private sector (commercial data analysts, publishers)
- Encourage digital scholarship
- Develop and maintain open standards and robust tools
- Create extensive and reusable digital collections





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# Recommendations

- Internal funding allocation mechanisms that do not structurally disadvantage the Humanities
- Research evaluation systems appropriate for A&H
- Institutional Open Access policies
- Research sabbaticals
- Train and incentivize research proposal and funding application writing
- Institutional support for researchers through research offices
- Incubation and knowledge transfer strategies for Cultural Industries
- Strategies for interaction between Humanities and the Sciences
- Links to creative and cultural environments in the City





# A special responsibility?

- Arts and Humanities at the forefront of European Universities since their foundation
- Preservation of a wide range of subjects fundamental to comprehensive universities
- Strategic planning and ‘critical mass’ essential in the international competitive environment of today
- Growing role of strategic collaboration







# Squaring the circle?

*Can European universities today do both:*

- Defend the intrinsic value of the Humanities
- *and*  
demonstrate their key role in the formation of our knowledge societies
- Defend and facilitate long-term commitment to research themes and the ‘magisterial study’
- *and*  
promote and enable new collaborative and interdisciplinary research areas in key fields of relevance and innovation?





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***Thank you!***

