

SCHOOL OF APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2022



“I can imagine nothing we could do that would be more relevant to human welfare, and nothing that could pose a greater challenge to the next generation of psychologists, than to discover how best to give psychology away.”

Miller, G. (1969). Psychology as a means of promoting human welfare, *American Psychologist*, 24, 1063–1075

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OVERARCHING ASPIRATION FOR SCHOOL

To be recognised internationally as a centre of excellence in Applied Psychology, with research and educational programmes that impact on community and societal challenges in ways that also innovate ideas about, and practices in, the application of psychology.



CONTEXT AND OPPORTUNITIES

CURRENT CONTEXT: RESEARCH AND TEACHING EXPERTISE

The School of Applied Psychology's ethos and mission is founded on the two pillars of Excellence in Teaching and Research Innovation. Both came under pressure over the period of the last strategic plan (2012-2017). Thanks to the unstinting efforts of staff in the School and the

support of the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences in recruitment and programme development, we face into this strategic plan (2017-2022) with a much-strengthened staff complement, a significantly-revised portfolio of programmes, rapidly increasing community engagement, including with healthcare agencies, through our teaching and research, and the opportunity to make a significant research impact as a School.

While established firmly within the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences, Applied Psychology is unique in straddling the boundaries between the natural and social sciences, health, and the humanities. Our strategic plan reflects the desire of the School to accommodate and honour the different traditions that have brought us this far while simultaneously looking towards the future of the discipline. This is reflected in a portfolio of programmes that from September 2018 will recruit students into the following areas:

- At undergraduate level:

CK120 BA Applied Psychology, CK121 BA Psychology and Computing, CK111 BA Early Years and Childhood Studies, as well as significant contributions to programmes in School of Applied Social Studies.

- At postgraduate level:

MA Applied Psychology (Mental Health), MA Applied Psychology, MA Work and Organisational Psychology/Behaviour, MA

Applied Psychology (Positive and Coaching Psychology), HDip Applied Psychology (conversion course), Doctor of Clinical Psychology, and a structured PhD programme.

This portfolio entails involvement with all four Colleges in UCC, strong interdisciplinary opportunities, extensive community engagement through community-based research, placements and service delivery. It also includes a number of accredited programmes of international importance for student employment. The teaching on these programmes is always research-led and often research-based and provides a critical opportunity to deepen School impact in community-engaged, research-led teaching.

Our research activity, though based in the discipline of Psychology, is often interdisciplinary and either community-based or community-facing. As a School of Applied Psychology, one of our inspirations in research and postgraduate teaching is George Miller's (1969) Presidential Address to the American Psychological Association in which he called on psychologists to provide an intellectual lead in the search for improved personal and social arrangements that would improve human welfare at a time in which we face urgent problems. Still timely, still challenging: motivating a focus on real-world challenges in research, teaching and engagement, that is consistent with the specific strengths recognised in very

impressive performance by the School in two Research Quality Reviews.



REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PRIORITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

We respond to a number of regional, national and international factors in this strategic plan.

The *Cassells* reports asserts the value of higher education as intrinsic, as well as a significant contributor to cultural and civic engagement, social development and economic development. It also identifies the following four ways in which higher education delivers value: high quality student experience; support for innovation and upgrading; the knowledge and capabilities of graduates; increasing access and participation in higher education. The report's nuanced approach to the value of education and the identification of ways in which it creates value has influenced our thinking about the increasingly close relationship between teaching, research and

community and about the potential of the School of Applied Psychology to sustain commitment to the most coherent variety of excellent educational experiences possible with the resources made available.

The *National Skills Strategy 2025* emphasises the importance of breadth of learning opportunities to enable the development of transferable skills, enhance employability and nurture an interdisciplinary mind-set. It also identifies key skills for future public service and economic development in Ireland. The School will recruit to a number of research-based programmes in 2018; some new, some still working with their first student cohort, and others significantly revised. Each programme is built around the following commitments:

- i. To immerse students in Applied Psychology, an intellectually and practically challenging discipline;
- ii. To programmatically emphasise transversal skills such as digital literacy, professional and career development, critical and analytic thinking and communication;
- iii. To embed transversal research skills in research-based curricula e.g. maintaining high ethical standards, communicating to academic and non-scientific audiences, creative openness to new ideas and other disciplinary approaches, self-development as a researcher;

iv. To develop specific skills in, design, development and evaluation of information and communication technology, healthcare particularly for mental health services, and selection and assessment. Many of these skills are identified as essential for future economic development in Ireland's *National Skills Strategy 2025* and the National Skills Council's 2017 report *Winning By Design*.

International developments such as Brexit, which will make additional strategic demands of the University, may also create opportunities for increased international recruitment, which are explored in below.

Unprecedented national and international attention is being given to psychologically informed interventions to meet contemporary societal challenges. These include, for example, an ageing population, mental health and disability and their impact on the economic and social health of the nation, infant mental health and early intervention with at risk groups, chronic long-term health conditions, and challenges of migration and marginalised communities. The School research portfolio already speaks to these priorities and further explicit synergy and growth therein is planned. The School's education pathways, centring around *Applied Psychology* and increasingly embedding the skills referenced above, are equipping graduates and postgraduates to engage with new and developing workforces, such as the HSE additional investment in Clinical

psychology education and training, and in training through a pre-qualification assistant psychology workforce.

SYNERGY WITH UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC GOALS

Although the School is responsive to the developing context in which we operate and keen to explore opportunities that arise, our strategic plan is appropriately aligned with the University Strategic Plan. The University Strategic Goals are as follows:

1. Implement an academic strategy to deliver an outstanding, student-centred teaching and learning experience with a renewed, responsive and research-led curriculum at its core.
2. Be a leading university for research, discovery, innovation, entrepreneurship, commercialisation and societal impact.
3. Create value for our community through an international outlook and informed and creative engagement on local and global issues.
4. Attract, develop, support and retain staff of the highest quality, thereby ensuring a diverse staff who are enabled to reach their full potential.
5. Strengthen our infrastructure and resource base.

These are the areas around which this School of Applied Psychology Strategic Plan has developed its Goals and Actions, paying particular attention to the distinctive contribution that can be made by our School with its signature identity and tradition composed of:

- A discipline, staff, curriculum, and research portfolio that accommodates social and natural sciences as well as influences of the humanities;
- Commitment to real-world application in education and research which has inevitably involved building connectivity across the university (e.g. collaboratively designed and developed programmes running in three Colleges) and between the University and the wider community to which we belong (e.g. strong postgraduate placement programme, education for roles in mental health service provision, extensive history of community-based research);



- Responsiveness to the skill needs identified nationally as reflecting the changing and diverse needs of people, society and economy, and critical for sustainable employment of our graduates (e.g. IT and service design and social innovation, scientific analysis of behaviour and experience, work and organisation, and a range of transversal skills).

- Responsiveness to the wellbeing of the community in which we work and live.

In this School Strategic Plan, our ambition for the next five years in research, teaching, community engagement and other plans distinctively responds to the lead of the University Strategic Plan in terms of the particular strengths that our signature identity and tradition afford.

SCHOOL OF APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY STRATEGIC PLAN

GOALS

1. Create a sustainable culture of teaching-learning excellence “in the lecture hall, lab, tutorials, research process and supervision, and by the involvement of staff with scholarship, students and outside stakeholders, staff morale and their willingness to contribute to the collective as well as pursue their individual careers” (Cassells: Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education, p.60).

2. Increase provision of practice-informed teaching which relates to both staff expertise and profile and also collaboration in teaching with community partners (including service users and employers). Where possible and appropriate, seek internationally meaningful accreditation.

3. Re-formulate and prioritise our research activity towards 3 key (overlapping) themes and societal challenges: Healthy Development and Aging, Mental Health and Wellbeing, and People and Technology. All three research themes will be inter-professional and collaborative with health and other community agencies and be informed by patient and public involvement throughout.

4. Increase the international impact of the School’s research and the level of sponsored/funded doctoral and post-doctoral staffed research activity.

5. Create an infrastructure and resource base to support the School as a centre of excellence in Applied Psychology in research, research-based teaching, practice, CPD, and relationships between them. As a specific example, explore pathways to promote the School as a centre for CPD in psychological interventions and training for external workforces in the community (e.g. HSE and other organisations).

6. Further enhance reciprocal transformative relationships with community partners, including health and social care agencies, so that pathways from research to policy and

practice are clearly established while community partnerships enhance research-based teaching, placement opportunities and outreach activities.

7. Nurture the School culture of inclusivity, diversity and equality of opportunity through participation, access, fair treatment and exploring initiatives such as applying for Athena Swan recognition.



ACTIONS

1. Plan for prioritisation of research quality, including identification of indicators of quality including relevant high impact journals and conference proceedings, role of monographs, quality of impact in society (e.g. national/international reports), applied impact.

2. Clarify a limited number of priority research foci and challenges and focus School effort and recruitment in those areas.

3. Consider the development of research excellence incentives.

4. Simplify processes to enable research (e.g. reduce number of modules as appropriate, simplify administration processes as appropriate, advocate in University for simpler processes at the highest level appropriate (e.g. College Office rather than School Office) and no duplication).

5. Prioritise strong and potentially strong areas of research for School financial and infrastructural support.

6. Facilitate all staff to relate their personal research activity to the thematic priorities for the school as a whole.

7. Systematically identify funding opportunities for these priority areas (and others) and pursue them strategically through focused team-generated applications.

8. Use these priority research areas to develop research leadership in the School and to support opportunities for applications from staff of the School for awards such as European Research Council Awards.

9. Support research training and formalise mentoring for research-active staff at all stages of their careers.

10. Build (on) connectivity among research and taught programme clusters (e.g. informal research grouping, health service colleagues, community groups, industry), making boundaries as permeable as

possible, to create opportunity for multi-layered collaboration in research that would deliver impact in society.

11. Build capacity to make strong grant applications through seed-funding pilot studies and other grant application development activities, networking, research collaborations within and beyond the School, and by publications and research impact statements.

12. Build stakeholder networks to support applications through profiling research in our extensive community engagement, cross-College teaching, international engagements, and by strategically appointing further Adjunct Staff.

13. Further enhance community-engaged research, including in health and social care, with local and international partners (e.g. commercial organisations, external partners & NGOs) and disseminate findings within the relevant communities as well as in academic fora.

14. Further enhance synergies between School programmatic research and teaching and research supervision.

15. Continue to develop activities such as Psychslam, Culture Night and our Transition Year Programme as a means of engaging with communities to communicate about psychology and psychological research.



16. Ensure all research activity is locatable at a minimum by books of abstract hosted on School website as part of a commitment to research integrity and open science.

17. Ensure impact frameworks inform research developments and dissemination and further develop networks with community and healthcare partners, including service users and carers, to ensure such is woven into research and education portfolios at the earliest stages.

18. Develop Applied Psychology indicators of research impact, aligned with disciplinary norms and referencing, for example, local, national policy, and intra-disciplinary impact; disseminate through resources such as UCC Impact Case Study Template.

19. Sustain and, where possible, improve the excellent quality of PhD education and supervision (RQR, 2015).

20. Strengthen structured training of PhDs formally inducting and continuously involving them into the professional, collegial, ethical, and productive culture that is part of doctoral education.



21. While being careful to maintain quality, increase Doctoral student numbers (including DClin Psych) to 10% of total student number.

22. Promote PhD opportunities through professional networks, engagement with School final years and Masters students, and profiling existing PhD student achievements.

23. Ensure PhD students and potential applicants are aware of all appropriate funding opportunities and that they are well prepared by supervisors and PhD tutor to make applications.

24. Explore the potential for further and/or increased-value PhD studentships.

25. Embed PhDs in research teams tackling specific research challenges.

26. Improve IRC PhD and post-doctoral performance by ensuring applicants are well prepared, start early, and work on their applications with supervisors.

27. Continue rollout of innovative interdisciplinary undergraduate (e.g. Psychology and Computing) and postgraduate programmes that deliver innovative curricula and extend opportunities for student engagement with the community and for placements.

28. Enhance quality of student experience (programmes, assessment, feedback, tutorials, etc.) to be evaluated through systematic annual review of programme pathway feedback.

29. Develop a template for annual programme review that will include impact indicators eg. Student experience indicators, retention rates, variety of teaching modalities across programmes, social inclusion, internationalisation, facilities for students.

30. Develop quality systems and practices regarding assignments, due dates, students feedback, examination processes, etc.

31. Implement an explicit educational contract with students that feedback on

assignments will be given within 4 weeks of submission date.

32. Develop transparent, consistent (across assignments) marking rubrics for assignments that include opportunities for narrative feedback.

33. Take steps to encourage students to take greater responsibility for their learning, in line with the School, College and the University providing excellent environments and supports for learning.

34. Maintain professional accreditation status and attain full accreditation for the new Doctor of Clinical Psychology programme.

35. Further develop provision of professional accreditation and placements on postgraduate programmes.

36. Increase postgraduate student numbers to 40% of school student numbers by 2021, insofar as appropriate staffing is in place to meet SSR requirements for accreditation.

37. Embed internationalisation sustainably into the School culture by increasing the quantity and diversity of international students in the School, and ensuring cultural diversity in curricula.

38. Explore further innovative approaches to learning including blended learning, professional development, practice placements while maintaining strong quality assurance on learning and community engagement that is entailed.

39. Enhance teaching on community engagement, research and practice.

40. Explore the phased development of a centre for psychological health and well-being in collaboration with community and HSE partners and stakeholders. This will include a CPD portfolio, a psychological assessment and consultancy service and inter-disciplinary research centre.

41. Follow up with MA graduates to know their employment trajectories for five years post-graduation and open opportunities for research, practice or community engagement relationships with alumni where appropriate.

42. Encourage staff, students and community partners to use SoAP and UCC social media, blogs and websites to highlight community engagement activities.

43. Increase enrolment of international students by actively engaging with the international office recruitment processes

44. Develop a mechanism to support international students who can feel isolated and difficult to socially integrate in the School and University.

45. Add a 'community engagement' button to the SoAP website to link to University community engagement pages.

46. Promote equality, diversity, and inclusiveness in all the School's areas of activity.

47. Increase media visibility and public awareness of SoAP activities and research through enhancing our social media presence through Facebook, Twitter and the School Website, in addition to preparing releases to print and other media.

48. Strengthen leadership development by maximising participation in a dedicated leadership programme across the university and by supporting individual leadership.

T A R G E T S

1. 50 registered Doctoral students including DCLinPsych students by 2020.

2. PhD students to complete within 3 years after transfer for candidature.

3. At least one collaborative research proposal (not including IRC PhD scholarship applications) in each research area each year (see 2 above).

4. At least one successful grant proposal in the School each year.

5. All PhD students submitting to IRC and other grant providers for Scholarships and other research supports in partnership with supervisors, and with strong support from the School.

6. At least two successful PhD applications for external funding each year.

7. Document and increase the impact of school research using both traditional

publication metrics and by narrative research impact statements.

8. At least 1 blog a year written by international students that can be posted to the SoAP website and shared with international office recruiters as material in student recruitment.

9. Establish a baseline of the current numbers of international students registered in SoAP and increase numbers by 5% per year.

10. At orientation days, create a time limited (e.g. 6 week) 'buddy system' between international and Irish students so that International students have a peer point of contact for their settling-in period.

11. Disseminate by publishing all suitable research by peer reviewed publication in high impact publications and working papers on open science sites, by profiling research activity and outcomes in public media and in research blogs, by organising and hosting research seminars and conferences and by developing and distributing narrative impact statements.

12. Postgraduate (MA) students to submit papers on their research within 12 months of completion and to be made available by publication in research journals, or by other formal dissemination methods including open science sites e.g. PsyArXiv.

13. Postgraduate (PhD) students to publish results of the research as part of PhD by

publication or to be made available by publication in research journals, or by other formal dissemination methods including open science sites e.g. PsyArXiv.

14. Abstracts of all research outputs, including conference presentations, by postgraduate students (MA and PhD) and staff, to be or in searchable book of abstracts hosted on School website.

15. Have a directory of placement providers and partners, from across the various programmes. As well as helping to identify opportunities across programmes, this could help with routinely collecting data for impact indicators – e.g. service research that informs / changes practice – increasing access of service users – providing impetus to new quality initiatives in the organisation – student as bridge to further research and educational networks etc.



“Our responsibility is less to assume the role of experts and try to apply psychology ourselves than to give it away to the people who really need it — and that includes everyone”

Miller, G. (1969). Psychology as a means of promoting human welfare, *American Psychologist*, 24, 1063–1075



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UCC

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Síceolaíocht Fheidhmeach