



**The Irish Research Staff  
Association  
2022 in Review**

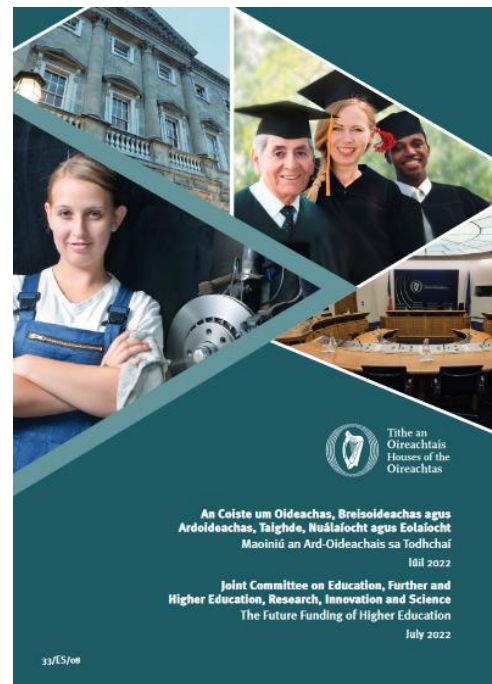


**The Irish Research Staff Association (Irish RSA)** has had a busy and successful year, advocating for researchers and the research profession, promoting and working to support sustainable, inclusive, and rewarding research careers, collaborating with a range of organisations, representing researchers in various initiatives, events, and organisations, and much more. We wish to share some of the achievements and activities of Irish RSA over the last year or so.

## **Advocating for Researchers at the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science**

Irish RSA has been involved in numerous policy-shaping efforts and public policy submissions in 2022, and over the last number of years.

In 2022, Irish RSA made policy submissions to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. Irish RSA submitted written evidence to the Committee, and outgoing Chair, Dr Andrew Allen, gave evidence in person at the Committee hearing. Our written policy submissions are available from the [Oireachtas online](#).



1 *The Future Funding of Education Report*

Irish RSA's [written evidence](#) and Dr Allen's oral evidence before the Oireachtas Committee contributed to shaping the Committee's recommendations to Government. These recommendations included, *inter alia*, recommendations to examine and address precarious employment in research and

academia, to establish ring-fenced funding for independent research (including doctoral and post-doctoral research), and to ensure full public funding of higher education and research as key investments for future social and economic advancement and sustainability. Read here the [press release](#) and the final report of the Committee, [The Future Funding of Higher Education](#).



**RECOMMENDATIONS: RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

16. The issues of Staffing Levels and Precarious Employment in both the traditional and Technological Universities need to be reviewed urgently or by end of 2022 at the latest by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, in liaison with the Universities. Staffing Levels have not increased in line with extra students, courses and increased services provided by Third Level Institutes and, so, there needs to be an analysis / workforce plan of staffing requirements to restore staff levels. In addition, the Employment Control Framework is completely arbitrary and needs to be abolished. The aim must be to ensure there are sufficient staff at all grades to deal with the projected increase of students, extra courses and increased services. Regarding Precarious Employment, the Review should include an examination of Hourly Paid Academic Contracts, Researchers, Postgraduate Workers and outsourcing of Support staff roles.

17. Ring fenced funding should be provided by the Exchequer through the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for independent research, to include doctoral and post doctoral research. The aim of this is to avoid a reliance on funding through short term commercial research projects.

*2 Dr Andrew Allen gives evidence at the Oireachtas Committee; Selected report recommendations*

## Research Careers Forum

Irish RSA held a very successful 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Irish RSA Research Careers Forum that explored:

- sustainable careers for researchers
- mobility
- gender equality, diversity, and inclusion
- open science



*3 2nd Annual Irish RSA Research Careers Forum*

Our line-up of speakers and panellists included

- **Slaven Misljencevic:** Policy Officer (RESAVER pension fund), *European Commission*
- **Gareth O'Neill:** Principal Consultant on Open Science, *Technopolis Group, Belgium*
- **Dr Arjumand Younus:** Co-Director, *Women in Research Ireland (WIRI)*
- **Joseph Twist:** EDI Officer, *University College Dublin*
- **Joan Donegan:** Former General Secretary, *Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT)*
- **Dr Joanne Kenney:** Assistant Professor, *Dublin City University*
- **Dr Máire Brophy:** Dean of Graduate Studies and Research (SALI), *Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest*
- **Tara Hughes:** Research Careers Manager, *University College Dublin*

We look forward to welcoming our membership and the wider research, academic, and policymaking community our 2023 Research Careers Forum, with topics, speakers, and panellists to be announced in the new year.

## **Irish RSA Research Project on Reducing the Precarity of Academic Research Careers**

Irish RSA is working with Professor Cláudia Sarrico, Professor of Management at School of Economics and Management, University of Minho, to produce a research report for Ireland, in line with the research and results described in the OECD report [\*Reducing the Precarity of Academic Research Careers\*](#).

As a first step, Irish RSA is preparing a country note for the Republic of Ireland, outlining the national context of research careers in Ireland, along with national policy concerns in this area and extant, relevant evidence. Interviews will be conducted with

a variety of stakeholders in the new year to generate new data for this research.

Watch this space!

## **Collaboration and Representation**

Irish RSA and its members regularly collaborate with other organisations, represents researchers and the profession at various fora, and participates in a range of events. For example, Irish RSA members participated in Women in Research Ireland's (WIRI) 'Short-term contracts: A Mental Health Discussion' event. 2022 also saw contributions from Irish RSA to the RIA Young Academy and the *National Action Plan for Open Research*.

### *RIA Young Academy of Ireland*

The Royal Irish Academy's [Young Academy of Ireland](#) (YAI), which launched in July 2022, '[brings] together early career researchers and innovators from the island of Ireland providing an opportunity to work with peers across disciplines on issues of common interest'. The YAI, which is the first of its kind in Ireland, joins a growing global network of Young Academies. Irish RSA has representation on the RIA Young Academy of Ireland Working Group and Selection Committee; Irish RSA's Dr Mikey Creane (University of Galway) and Dr Valesca Lima (Dublin City University) were Early Career Researcher Representatives.



4 National Action Plan for Open Research

## *National Action Plan for Open Research*

As well as a session at our annual Careers Forum, Irish RSA has been involved in efforts to enhance open research practices in Ireland. Irish RSA made contributions to the National Open Research Forum's (NORF) *National Open Research Action Plan 2022 – 2030*. The Action Plan affirms research staff associations as key stakeholders in the continuous monitoring of the impact of the transition to open research on research staff and identifying support structures. The Action Plan was [published](#) by NORF in November.

## **Membership Growth**

Irish RSA has a growing membership and network. Led by the individual HEI research staff colleagues and research staff associations at UCC, TCD, UCD, NUIG, Maynooth University, and RCSI, we are now delighted to have Irish RSA colleagues at Atlantic Technological University, Technological University of Dublin, and Dublin City University. Irish RSA—and indeed the local RSAs—are always happy to welcome new members, be they postdoctoral researchers, research assistants, or other research performing staff. Members benefit from representation, networking opportunities, and opportunities to shape the research profession and research careers of the future.

## **And more...!**

We have been active in many more areas, such as: representing the research profession; promoting research careers, career sustainability and a reduction in career precarity; promoting sustainable and rewarding career pathways for

researchers; promoting inclusion, on international collaboration, and on open science.

## **A Word of Thanks**

The work of Irish RSA would not be possible without the financial support of the Irish Research Council and the administrative support provided by our international affiliate, the [International Consortium of Research Staff Associations \(ICoRSA\)](#). We offer our sincere thanks to both the Irish Research Council and ICoRSA. Similarly, Irish RSA has reached so many milestones thanks to the hard work of institutional research staff associations, the Irish RSA Committee, our collaborators, and the wider membership.

Looking forward to the year ahead!

The Irish Research Staff Association (Irish RSA) operates as a collective voice for research staff from the universities and other higher education institutions across Ireland, including individual researchers and researchers within research staff associations. Irish RSA advocates for their common interests at a national and international level, in particular towards the goal of sustainable research careers.

**[www.irishrsa.ie](http://www.irishrsa.ie)**