

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2024–28



Acadamh Ríoga na hÉireann  
Royal Irish Academy



**The Royal Irish Academy—  
fostering excellence  
and scholarship  
to enrich society**



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# Introduction

Knowledge matters for society. The present global context is one of rapid technological change, scientific and cultural breakthroughs and advancements in knowledge that are shaping a swiftly changing world. These advancements are tempered, however, by an undermining of international norms, a rise in authoritarianism, an exponential growth in poverty, an increase in conflict and a deteriorating climate. Heightened

polarisation, structural inequalities and ruptures in democracy are eroding public trust in core institutions such as academia, government and the media, and in those with scientific expertise. With an ever-increasing amount of information and disinformation available, credible sources of knowledge are critical to support an engaged and informed public discourse. Now, more than ever, a trusted, independent voice is needed.

This strategic plan sets out how, over the next five years, we in the Royal Irish Academy (RIA) will increase our influence as an independent voice and enhance our impact, to build a more sustainable and inclusive future. The RIA is committed to fostering a knowledge-based society by advancing research, shaping policy and encouraging collaboration and public engagement. This strategic plan focuses on describing our priorities for the next five years, rather than providing a comprehensive account of all future RIA activities.

In line with Impact 2030, the Irish government's research and innovation strategy, the RIA is committed to engaged scholarship, to address critical societal issues through recognising, conducting and supporting excellent research. Decision-making should be guided by informed

insights and evidence. Policymakers need access to accurate and relevant information to make decisions and ensure policies align with the needs of society. By convening expertise and sharing information, the RIA can mobilise to offer valuable insights and advice across the spectrum of disciplines. This ensures that policies are well-informed, relevant and capable of realising desired outcomes.

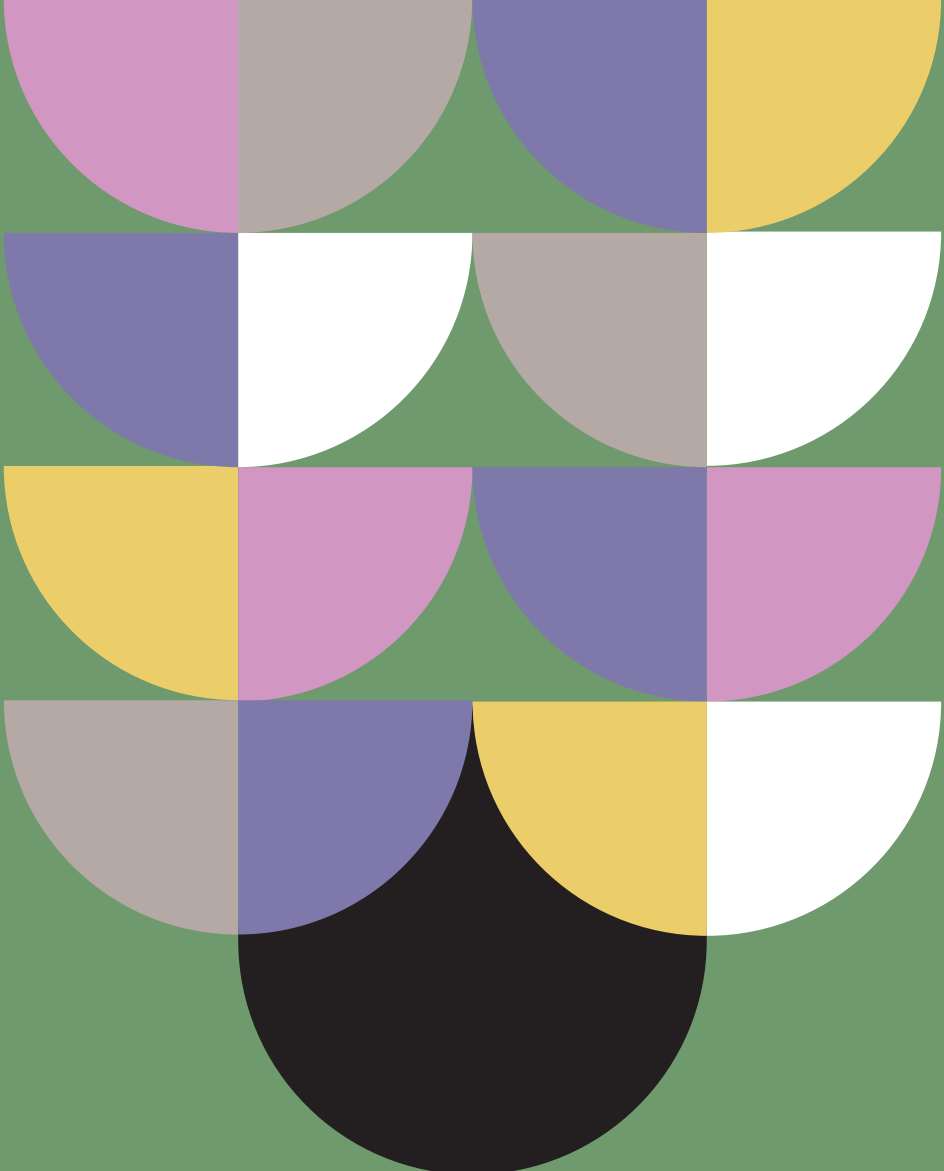
Knowledge is a public good and as such should be available to all. The value of knowledge lies in its accessibility, which underscores the importance of dissemination and openness. Further integration into our operations of technology such as digital platforms will open up our library and its vast archives and collections. This will allow scholars and the public, irrespective of their geographical location, to access the cultural and heritage

resources in our care. As the organisation that hosts the Digital Repository of Ireland and the National Open Research Forum (NORF), the RIA is committed to making our research outputs, published journals and cultural data freely accessible. We will also seek to increase outreach and engagement and to strengthen our ties with the community through heritage-related activities, as foreseen in the Heritage Ireland 2030 national strategy.

Collaboration is a key enabler to realise the ambitions in this plan, and we will seek to work with other national and international organisations with shared priorities and values. We know from existing key relationships with government departments, sister academies and other cultural and learned institutions that, through partnership, inter- and transdisciplinary collaborations, we can pool knowledge and resources and propel

new ideas. This aim is further supported by creating an inclusive environment enriched by diverse perspectives. The RIA will continue to build on the work already undertaken in relation to equity, diversity and inclusion. Our commitment to inclusive excellence will involve continued efforts to diversify our membership, assessment panels, committees and policy and public engagement programmes, through adopting an intersectional approach to better reflect the breadth of Irish society. The RIA is dedicated to developing and maintaining Irish language resources, and will continue to integrate the Irish language into our activities and communications, thereby realising one of the key aims of the national strategy for the Irish language 2010–30.

Our strategic plan is organised around four key goals, which will enhance our impact on issues of national importance and on



policy through increased mobilisation of our membership and through partnerships with academics, policymakers, enterprise and civil society. Moreover, we will continue to focus on recognising and celebrating excellence; producing, funding and publishing research; and supporting early-career researchers through the Young Academy Ireland and our grants programme.

Detailed, actionable and measurable actions to deliver on our strategic objectives are being developed through an implementation plan. We will regularly review the plan and our progress in meeting the strategic objectives, and adjust our operations as required to realise our aims. We shall invest in organisational capability and focus on aligning our internal structures to ensure we can deliver on this ambitious strategy.

The strategy has been informed by insights from our Council, members, staff, multi-disciplinary committees and key stakeholders. A strategic plan working group, chaired by the RIA Secretary, collated all these inputs and the Executive Director drafted the plan, which was adopted by the Council of the RIA. The group would like to thank all contributors for their valuable inputs and guidance.

Professor Pat Guiry  
President, RIA

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat Guiry". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Dr Siobhán O'Sullivan  
Executive Director, RIA

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Siobhán O'Sullivan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.



# About the Royal Irish Academy

The Royal Irish Academy, established in 1785, serves as an all-island learned society, recognising academic achievement and contributing expertise to enhance the public good. Through its research programmes, grants, publications, library, historic collections and public events, the RIA maintains a long tradition of sharing knowledge and insight across the full range of disciplines in the sciences, humanities and social sciences. Drawing on a diversity

of fields and perspectives, the RIA supports Ireland's intellectual and cultural life, while also working with international learned societies and organisations to raise the profile of Irish research.

In addition to its work on behalf of members, the RIA provides support and mentorship to help nurture the next generation of scholars and innovators by fostering the Young Academy Ireland.

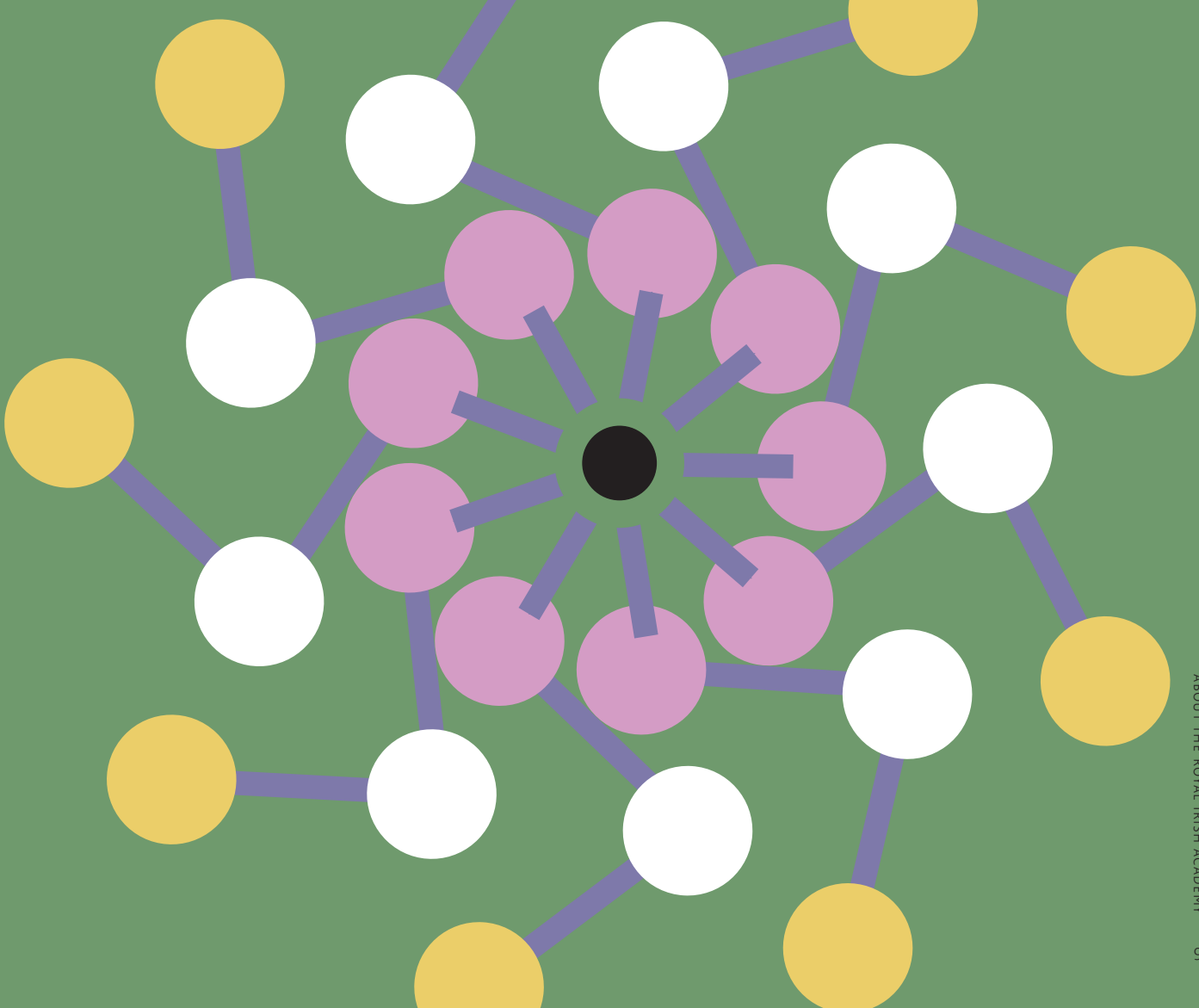
Through its multi-disciplinary committees, the RIA engages with the wider scholarly community in Ireland and promotes co-operation within and across disciplines. The RIA advances knowledge through its research programmes and its publications, which reach a global audience. The RIA's library holds unique print and manuscript resources, of major research importance, in Irish history and cultural heritage. It facilitates academic research and public access, thus promoting a deeper appreciation of Ireland's rich heritage.

The RIA serves as an independent forum where academia, government, civil society and the private sector can come together to address issues of mutual interest through discussion and knowledge exchange. By exercising our convening power, we leverage the knowledge and expertise of our 670-plus members and

our international networks to enhance informed discourse and evidence-driven decision-making.

The RIA acts as a centre for the dissemination of knowledge, by publishing scholarly journals and academic volumes, organising conferences and providing platforms for researchers to share their findings with the broader academic community and the public. The RIA actively engages with the public to communicate the value of research and scholarship, including through educational programmes, public lectures, and efforts to make research findings accessible and understandable to a wider audience.

The Royal Irish Academy's multifaceted activities intertwine to fulfil its overarching mission of fostering excellence, advancing scholarship and enriching society.





# Royal Irish Academy Strategic Plan 2024–28

The Royal Irish Academy with its proud tradition of excellence stands as a testament to centuries of academic achievement and scholarly contribution. As a learning institution we are committed to embracing new ideas—fostering a culture of creativity, curiosity and

innovation—and ensuring our approaches remain relevant and impactful. This document serves as our roadmap, guiding the RIA's journey forward as an institution that evolves to ensure we continue to contribute meaningfully to scholarship and society in the years to come.

# Mission

Our mission is to recognise and foster academic excellence, and to create, curate and share knowledge for the good of society.

# Values

INDEPENDENCE

CURIOSITY

RIGOUR



INTEGRITY

OPENNESS

# Purpose

- We are committed to **advancing and recognising excellent scholarship** on an all-island basis, across the disciplines of the sciences, humanities and social sciences.
- We undertake and promote **innovative and excellent research**.
- We facilitate interdisciplinary dialogues, embracing the transformative power of **critical thinking and curiosity**.
- We lead **trusted and independent dialogue and analysis** for the benefit of society.
- As a repository of Irish cultural heritage of global importance, we are dedicated to **preserving our nation's rich history** and making it accessible for future generations.

# Strategic priorities







# 1. Recognise and nurture excellence

At the core of the RIA's mission is our commitment to promoting a culture of excellence. Our understanding of excellence is broad and goes beyond numerical metrics; it includes collaboration, inclusion and impact, both in the short- and long-term. It encompasses academic achievements as well as the processes and outputs that define our work.

We recognise and nurture significant contributions from scholars and innovators across all disciplines. Excellence is recognised through election to membership and the allocation of grants and awards, administered via robust, transparent and fair processes. Our commitment to supporting a diverse range of early-career scholars underscores our focus on sustainability of excellence and the need for interdisciplinary collaboration to address global challenges.

We are committed to playing our role in building capacity in research systems and culture. We will work with others to secure a vibrant research ecosystem in which excellence at all levels can thrive.

## Strategic objectives:

- **Recognise scholarship and innovation:** Champion outstanding contributions in scholarship, original research and intellectual leadership, and cultivate a diverse and engaged membership to enrich societal and cultural knowledge.
- **Shape research futures:** Spearhead discussions and initiatives that define the future landscape of research, emphasising the importance of a research culture underpinned by integrity, curiosity and inclusivity.
- **Foster Interdisciplinary collaboration:** Actively encourage collaborations across disciplines to address societal challenges, ensuring that research is impactful and relevant, serves the public interest, and contributes to the common good.
- **Support early- and mid-career researchers:** Through the Young Academy Ireland, identify and bolster emergent researchers and innovators, highlighting the importance of diversity and collaboration in advancing interdisciplinary dialogue and public engagement for the benefit of society.
- **Advance strategic grant allocation:** Cultivate a grants programme designed to maintain a diversified portfolio that aligns with the RIA's strategic goals, thereby ensuring sustainability and excellence in research.

## **2. Create, convene and share knowledge for the public good**

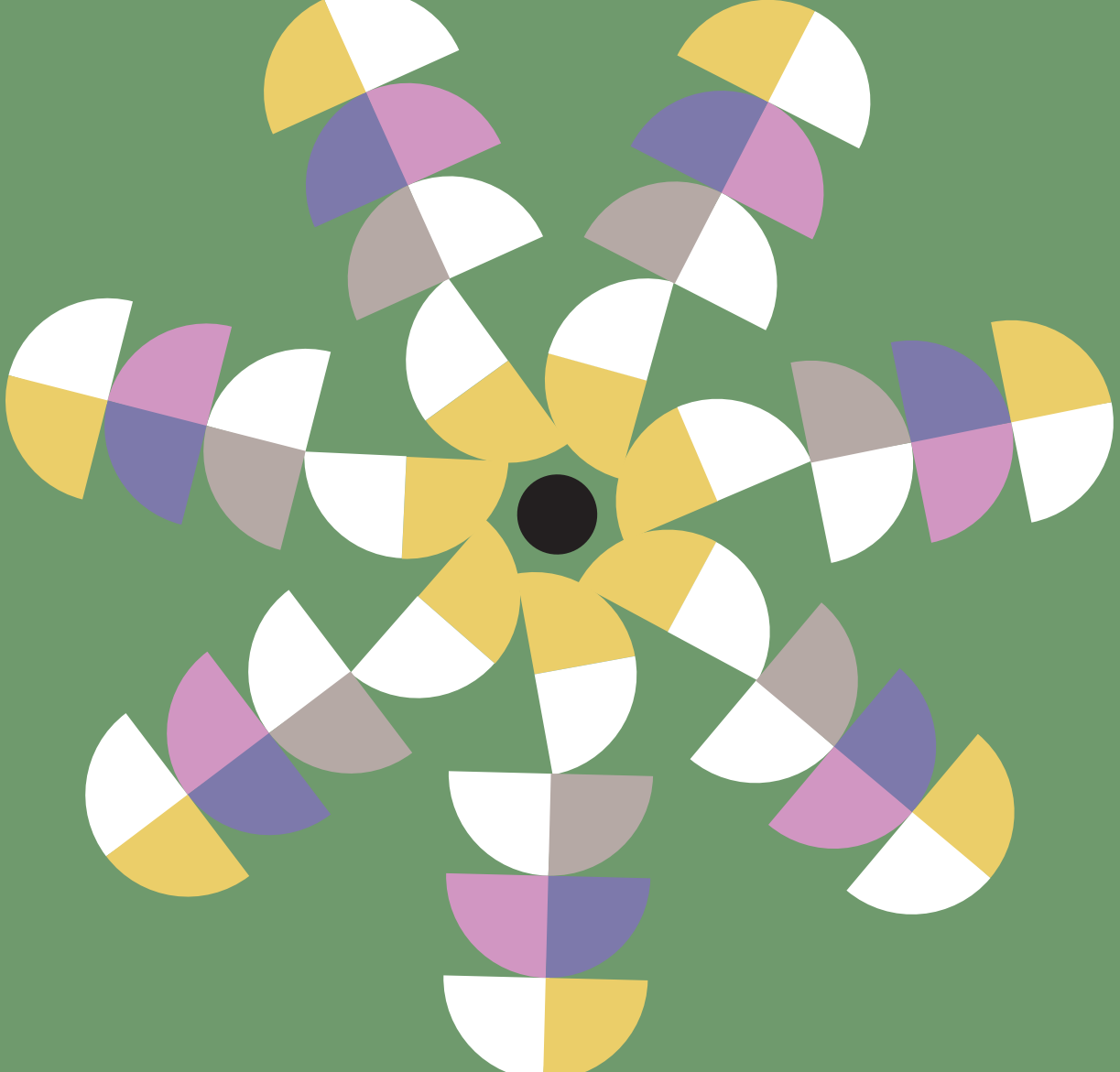
As an all-island academy we serve as a pivotal hub, uniting diverse scholarly expertise to impact upon societal debates and inform policy decisions. In our role as knowledge broker, we aim to create a space for robust and respectful discourse. Using our convening power to leverage the knowledge and expertise of our networks and members, we promote the adoption of evidence-based mechanisms and research to ensure policy decisions are informed by relevant, up-to-date information.

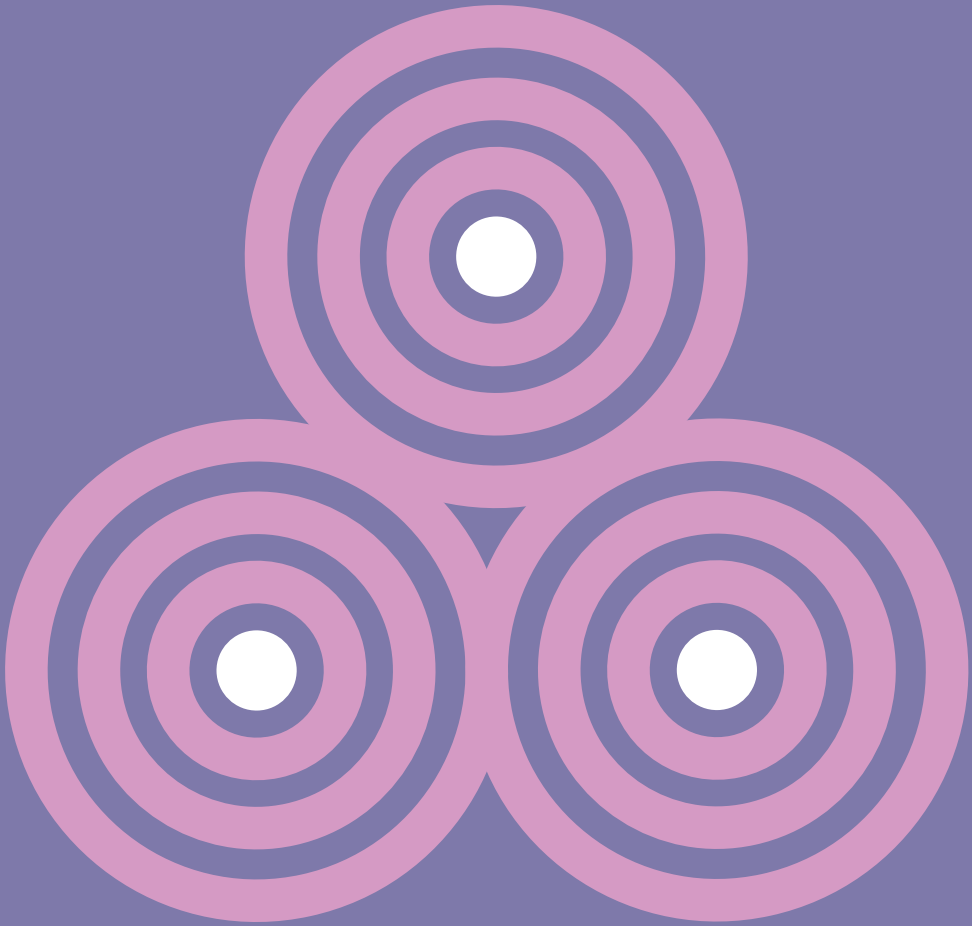
We actively draw on knowledge from our members and our research initiatives to inform and shape policy debates. This requires an engaged, diverse and connected membership and staff. Through collaboration with other national academies and international networks, we are ideally placed to engage in horizon

scanning, which allows us to anticipate and address emerging challenges, ensuring that relevant research influences current and future policymaking.

## Strategic objectives:

- **Act as an independent convener for knowledge brokerage:** Amplify our role as an impartial convener, leading discussions that draw on diverse disciplines to frame questions and generate and share knowledge for the betterment of society as a whole.
- **Mobilise the membership in the public interest:** Enhance the diversity and engagement of our membership to ensure that a broad spectrum of insights and expertise informs the public interest.
- **Strengthen national and international collaborations:** Develop Irish and international partnerships to tackle global challenges, sharing knowledge and insights across borders.
- **Conduct horizon scanning:** Draw upon our national and international networks to identify the emergence of new information and policy issues. This will allow us to equip decision-makers with impartial, diverse and rich evidence, facilitating informed policymaking to build societal resilience.
- **Build all-island capacity:** Develop our capacity to achieve scholarly and policy objectives in an all-island context. Foster constructive and inclusive dialogue and a comprehensive programme of research to create stronger links and enhanced north–south engagement.





### **3. Preserve and promote Irish cultural heritage and language**

The RIA plays a vital role in safeguarding and enhancing Ireland’s cultural heritage and language for future generations. Through a focus on long-term research initiatives, the building and sharing of extensive national resources, and the preservation and interpretation of our collections and holdings, we will conserve and responsibly steward this island’s cultural assets. We will ensure their accessibility to scholars and the public through digital and virtual means.

The RIA is actively working to make our published journals and research resources available online in open-access formats, enhancing the reach of our scholarship.

The integration of the Irish language in our communications underpins our cultural identity, promoting inclusivity and enriching the national cultural fabric.

## Strategic objectives:

- **Support and disseminate research:** Amplify the impact of the RIA's research programmes by supporting their work and ensuring wide dissemination of their outputs.
- **Engage with communities:** Expand the RIA's engagement with wider communities through educational and outreach programmes, promoting Irish cultural heritage and language.
- **Enhance digital accessibility, openness and preservation:** Develop digital tools and resources to enhance the accessibility of the RIA's holdings, and preserve and safeguard our library and its collections to ensure their longevity for future generations.
- **Champion the Irish language:** Enhance our cultural richness and identity by continuing to facilitate and disseminate Irish-language research and scholarship nationally and internationally. Create a supportive environment for the use of Irish in RIA communications and activities.
- **Drive the transition to open access:** Achieve open access for RIA-published journals and research resources by 2026, ensuring widespread availability and impact of scholarly work.



## 4. Build a sustainable Royal Irish Academy

The need to build a sustainable Royal Irish Academy requires actions to continue to strengthen governance, integrate digital innovations, enhance efficiency and further diversify funding sources.

Building on our rich history, we recognise the critical need to secure our future for the long term, safeguarding a space where scholarly activities and knowledge dissemination that serve the public good can be facilitated. Central to this priority is the commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion, ensuring that these principles permeate the RIA's operations, policies and culture. We recognise that genuine sustainability encompasses environmental, social and governance concerns, alongside financial considerations.

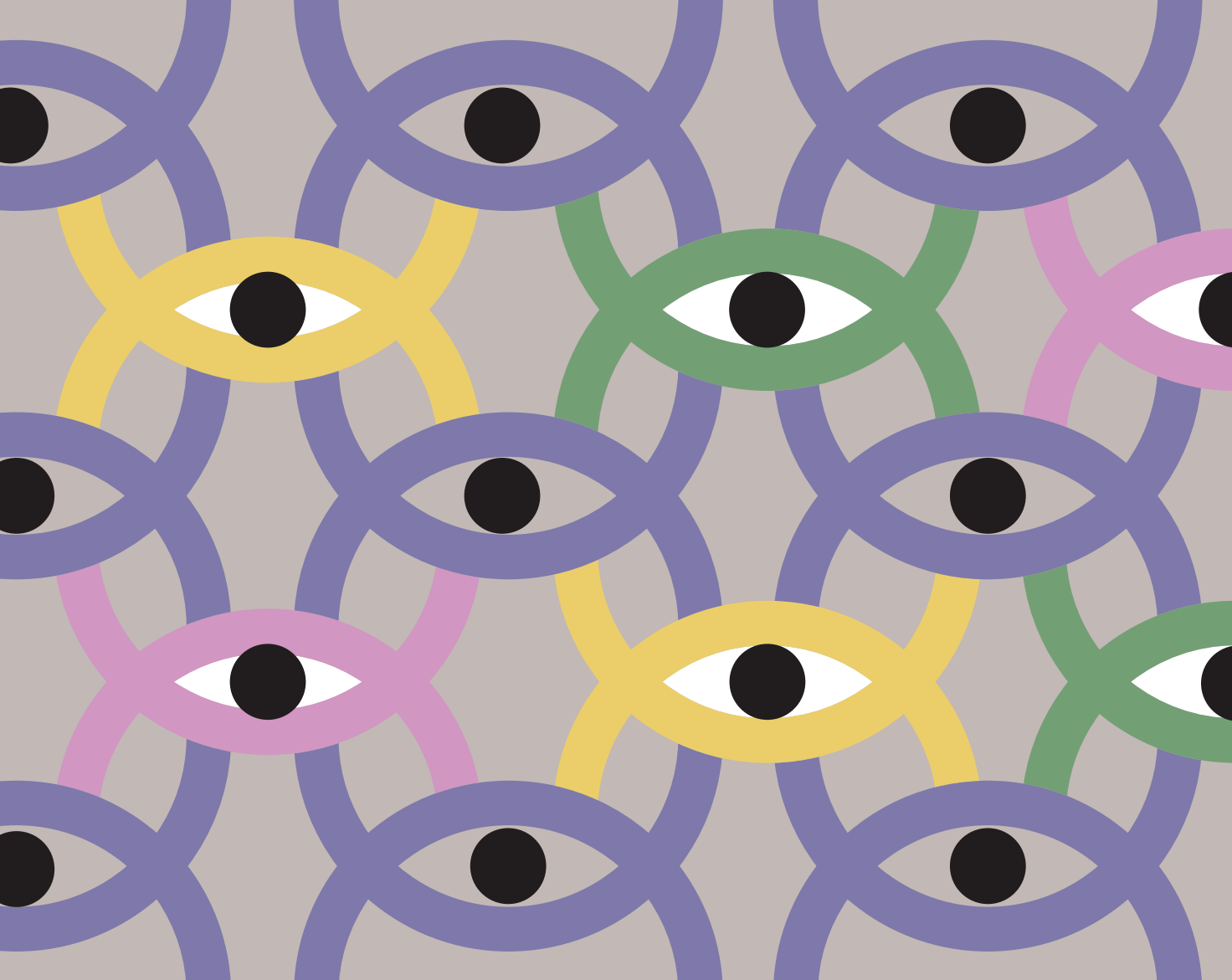
Our commitment extends to our staff, in terms of investing in professional development to foster an inclusive, supportive work environment. By recognising the importance of sustainable infrastructure, we will work to ensure our facilities are accessible and welcoming, aligning with our mission

and values, and continuing our legacy of excellence and societal contribution.

## Strategic objectives:

- **Advance work on inclusive excellence:** Embed equity, diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation, ensuring these principles guide all activities and decisions.
- **Enhance organisational effectiveness:** Strengthen governance and management to bolster organisational effectiveness and mission alignment.
- **Harness digital and data-driven tools:** Utilise data and digital solutions to improve organisational practices and systems, ensuring efficiency and adaptability.
- **Integrate sustainable practices:** Commit to sustainability in all policies and events, reflecting our dedication to environmental responsibility.
- **Diversify funding and develop financial management:** Diversify funding sources and strategically manage finances and investments to ensure a sustainable and more resilient future.
- **Develop staff and create a supportive working environment:** Invest in our staff through professional development, creating a supportive, growth-oriented work culture.
- **Invest in sustainable infrastructure:** Invest in a sustainable, accessible and welcoming building that reflects our mission and values.





# Delivery and review

In order to deliver on our strategic objectives, we will ensure that our ambition is aligned with our resources (structural, staff and financial). We shall seek to strengthen finance and knowledge-management systems in an efficient, sustainable and transparent manner, in order to provide full oversight of the delivery of this plan. We will support and grow staff capabilities and skills development via ongoing professional

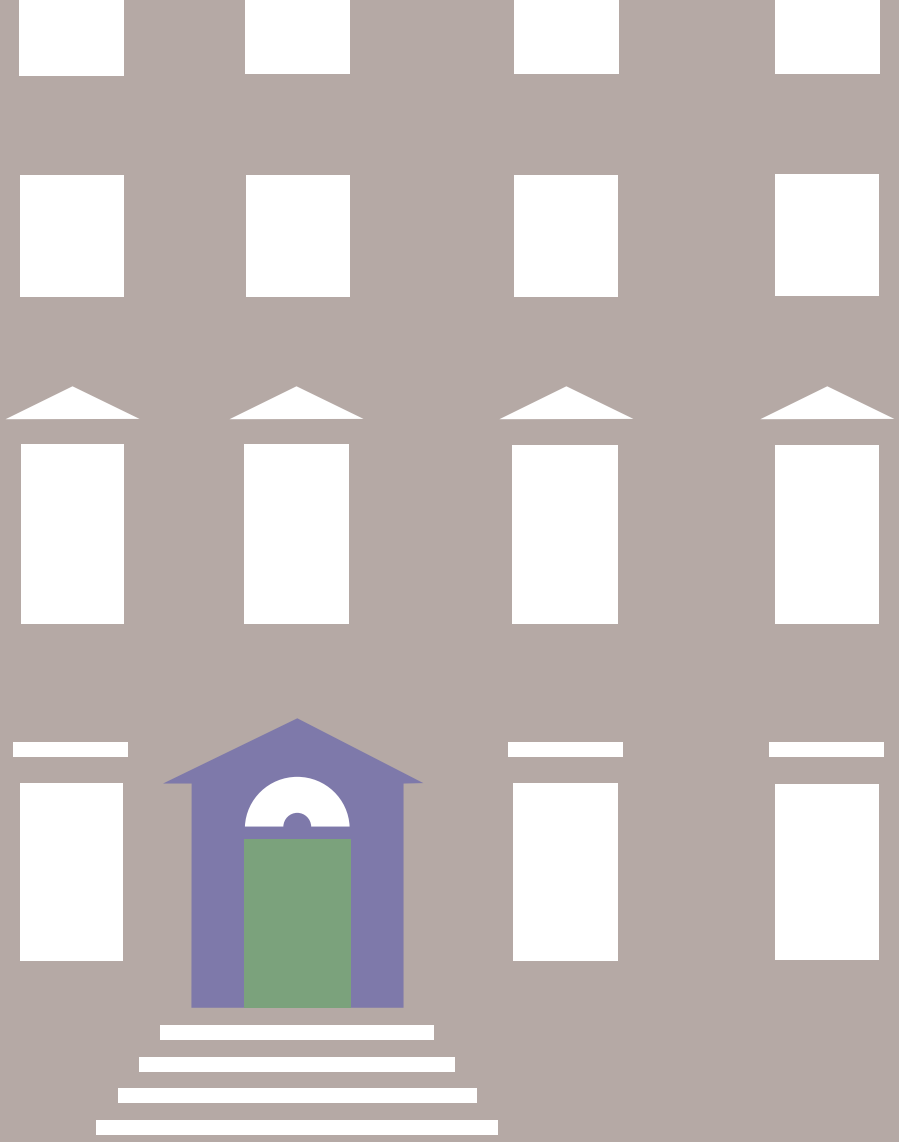
development opportunities that nurture and promote positive career trajectories. Our objective is to ensure long-term sustainability along with the highest standards of professionalism.

As part of the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2024–28 we will develop high-level key performance indicators that are purposeful, actionable, continuous and trackable. The Council, in partnership with

the senior management of the RIA, will be responsible for delivering the strategic objectives outlined in this plan. The Executive Committee will report bi-annually to Council on achievements and developments in respect of the strategic plan.

Our strategic plan for 2024–28 is a dynamic framework, designed to adapt to the changing landscape of scholarship and societal needs. Through periodic reviews, the RIA will respond to new challenges and opportunities, ensuring the plan remains aligned with our mission to advance knowledge and contribute positively to a knowledge-based society.

The future direction of our goals, and their realisation, depend heavily on the active participation of our members, supported by our dedicated staff. The strategic plan for 2024–28 builds upon the previous strategic plan, while also responding to a changing world and new academic and societal contexts and imperatives. This plan articulates an inclusive and impactful vision, for the generation, dissemination and utilisation of knowledge to support a flourishing, sustainable knowledge-based society.



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