

Royal Irish Academy
Strategic Plan
2019–2023





President's introduction

The founding Members of the Royal Irish Academy promoted scholarship in the humanities and sciences and started a collection of antiquities that would later provide the basis for the National Museum of Ireland. The Academy pioneered academic publishing, archaeology, and ecology in Ireland, as well as preserving, cataloguing and interpreting Irish manuscripts and dictionaries of the Irish language and medieval Latin from Celtic sources, and established prizes for excellence in scholarship. We initiated long-term research projects in areas such as Irish biography, Irish foreign policy, and social geography; engaged with international networks of academic bodies; and, moving into the digital age, founded Ireland's national digital repository.

The last Strategic Plan saw us strengthen our policy and international relations activities, and implement reforms to diversify the membership of Council. We established the Charlemont grants scheme, named for the first President of the Academy, to encourage international networking by early-career scholars. In order to raise our profile as a trusted independent voice on science policy, we embedded ourselves in international networks of academies and consolidated our national panel of experts. By changing the voting regulations, we have elected the most diverse Councils in the history of the Academy.

The fourth Strategic Plan sees the Academy maintaining its links with the past, its all-island character, its independence, and its focus on excellence, while continuing to grow, diversify and modernise.

By virtue of its Charter, the Academy elects its own Members and can therefore maintain its independence. This, in turn, allows the Academy to play a unique role in providing independent advice on public policy as it relates to research and education, culture and heritage. Through our members, national and international networks, we are uniquely qualified to assemble panels of experts to provide evidence-based advice.

Excellence is in our blood. We award prizes and medals for exceptional achievement in scholarship.

Members are elected on the basis of their outstanding contributions to their disciplines. We expect Members to give back to society by volunteering their time to assist the Academy in assessments, policy and educational activities, both nationally and internationally.

Since its foundation in 1785, the Academy has evolved with society.

Some changes happen quickly; others take time. Internationally, academies have struggled with improving the diversity of their membership and adapting to increasingly rapid changes driven by technology. The Royal Irish Academy has made progress in recent years but needs to do more. This Strategic Plan commits us to improving the diversity of our membership; to modernising our business practices; and to a particular initiative, the Young Academy, which will bring a greater number of early-career scholars into our network.

The ambitious vision for the next five years outlined in this Strategic Plan has been developed by a committee chaired by Professor Jocelyn Bell Burnell, and led by Professor Pat Shannon. The committee consulted widely with Members, staff, and stakeholders and went to great efforts to produce a concise and realistic plan. As President, I want to thank the members of the committee for their outstanding work.

We know what must be done and why. Now let's do it.



PETER KENNEDY

March 2019

About the Royal Irish Academy

The Royal Irish Academy (RIA) is an independent, all-island learned society established under Charter in 1785. It has approximately 500 Members, chosen for their distinguished contributions to scholarship and research in the sciences, humanities, social sciences and public service. It is governed by its President and Council who, in accordance with the founding Charter, are elected by the Members at a general meeting held in the spring of each year.

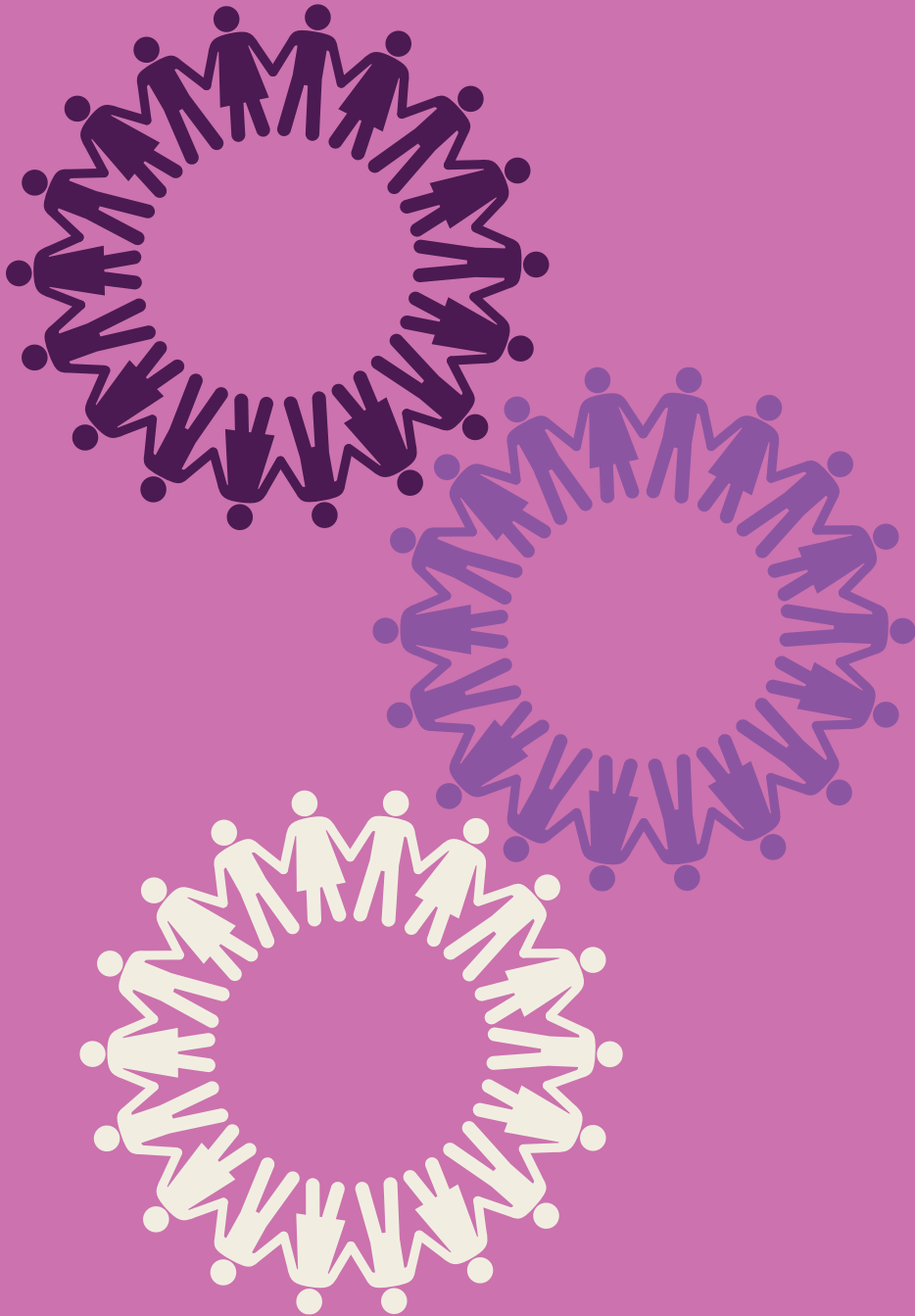
Our role

The three main strands of the RIA's role are to:

- 1 Recognise and foster excellence in research to advance the public good.
- 2 Be an independent voice on higher education and public policy.
- 3 Represent the world of Irish scholarship internationally.

Our purpose

The RIA is Ireland's scholarly academy, an independent and strong voice serving the public good through debate and analysis in research and higher education.



Our Values

INDEPENDENCE

Since its foundation in 1785, the Academy continues to demonstrate its independence, through its peer-reviewed election of Academy Members; its own research projects, particularly in areas relating to Ireland and its heritage; and its ability to engage with external stakeholders while maintaining its independence of thought and action.

EXCELLENCE

The concept of excellence is at the heart of all Academy activities. Through its election of Members, awards and grants schemes it recognises and celebrates the excellence of individuals within the all-island research community of Ireland. Academy Members' knowledge and insights inform all aspects of its activities and engagement with wider society.

SCHOLARSHIP

The Academy has always valued most highly the scholarly achievements of its Members, and elects to Honorary membership very distinguished international researchers.

The Academy Library contains a unique collection of medieval Irish manuscripts, national treasures and substantial holdings of later and contemporary materials. The

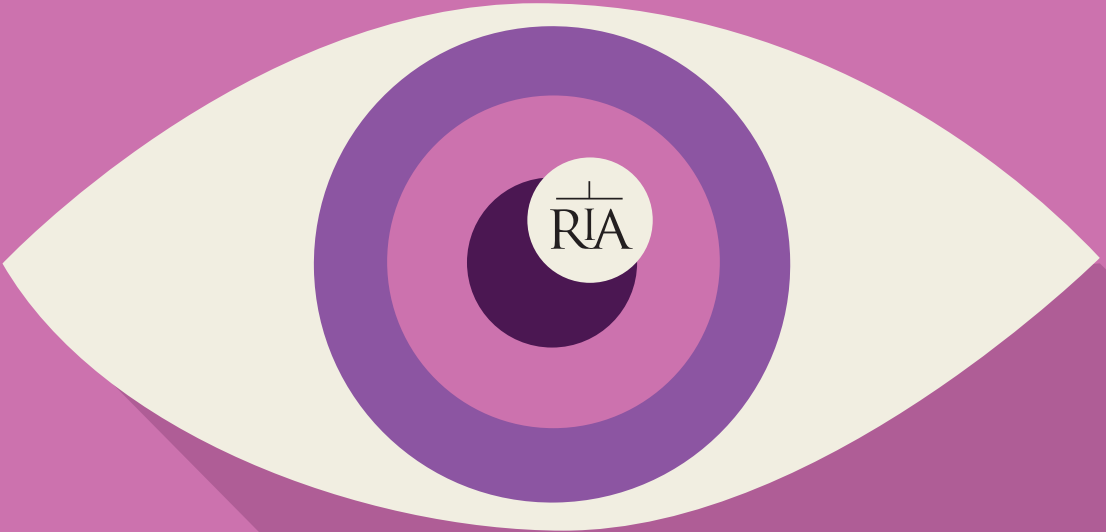
Library is widely used by researchers nationally and internationally and is increasing its access and engagement through lunchtime exhibitions and digital initiatives.

Through its own major research projects, the Academy plays a key role in producing and disseminating new insights into our history and heritage to the world-wide scholarly community. Through its active publishing of scholarly books, journals, maps, pamphlets and reports, the Academy communicates widely its research results.

COLLABORATION

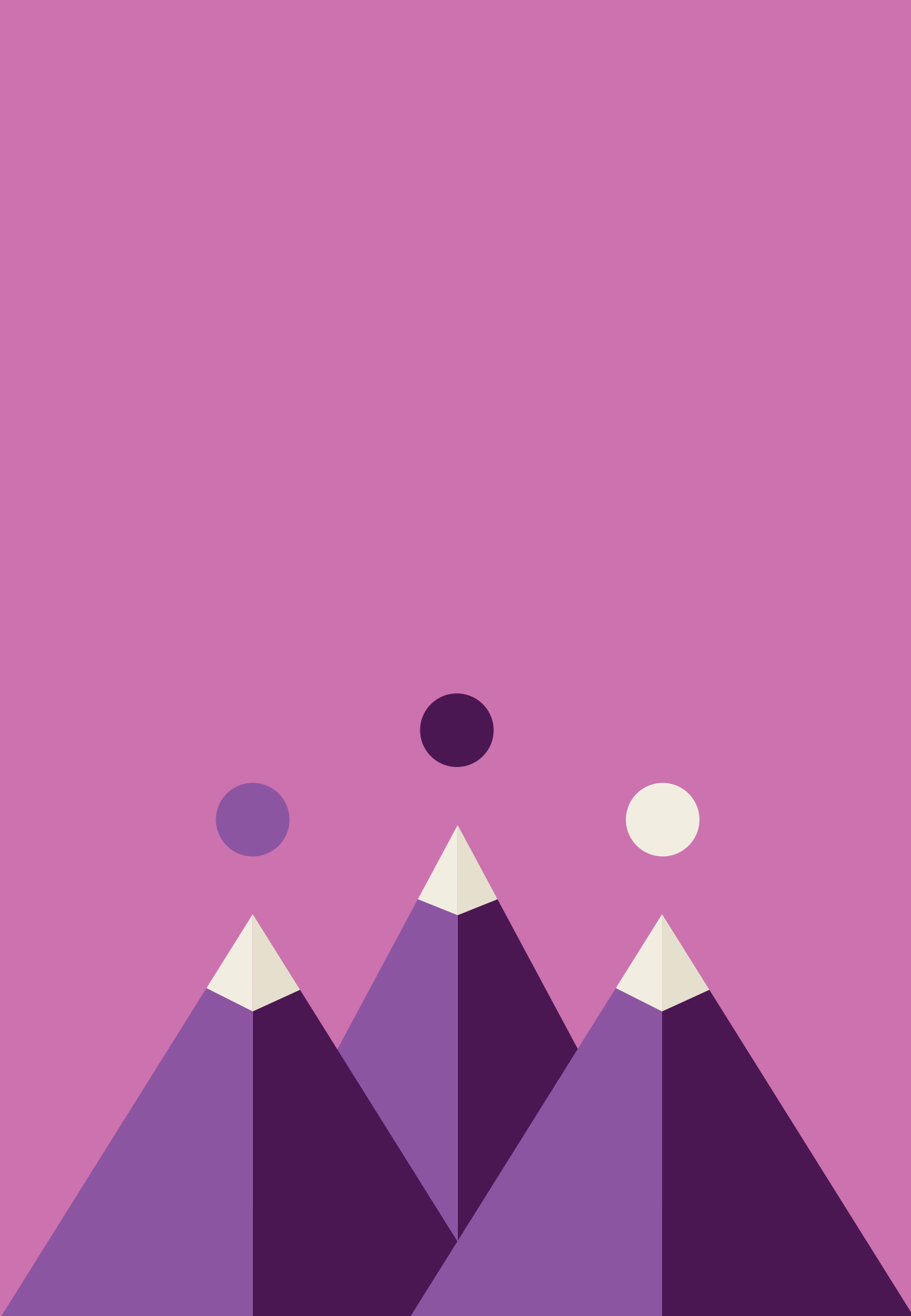
The Academy has an extensive range of partnerships within and across the academic community, government and the private sector. These partnerships extend across scholarly and geographical boundaries to advance knowledge and address issues of concern to the island of Ireland and its citizens.

The Academy operates within an all-island and international context. It is strongly all-island in terms of its elected membership and is building on the work of its North-South Committee to create stronger links and enhanced north-south engagement. The Academy works in close partnership with other national Academies and global academic networks, contributing its expertise to international scholarly and policy initiatives.



Strategic Goals

- 1 Serve Ireland**
and the public good through the Academy's research and scholarly resources and by drawing on the knowledge and insight of its Members.
- 2 Represent Ireland**
by engaging and leading in activities that strengthen international recognition of the Academy's scholarship.
- 3 Build a Modern Academy**
by increasing diversity and providing new impetus to the life and work of the Academy.



Strategic Goal

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Serve Ireland and the public good through the Academy's research and scholarly resources and by drawing on the knowledge and insight of its Members.

MAJOR OBJECTIVES:

Strengthen the Academy's contribution to debate on key issues of higher education policy in Ireland.

Enhance the Academy's contribution to public policy formation.

Promote north-south collaboration to foster a dynamic and collaborative all-island higher education and research ecosystem.

ACTIONS:

- Cluster Academy research and policy work on specific emerging societal and sectoral themes.
- Adopt proactive and responsive approaches to policy-makers and initiatives.
- Enhance engagement with government, higher education institutions and national agencies.
- Develop and pursue focused national research projects, policies and strategies while building upon the Academy's long-term research projects.
- Continue to build opportunities for Academy engagement in north-south thought leadership.
- Prioritise and implement an active programme of discourses, conferences and workshops on topics of national and international relevance.
- Improve the visibility of the Academy and its membership through an expanded focus on communicating its activities and contributions.

Strategic Goal

2

Represent Ireland by engaging and leading in activities that strengthen international recognition of the Academy's scholarship.

MAJOR OBJECTIVES

Enhance the Academy's global reputation by initiating and contributing to international education and research policies and scholarly projects.

Foster collaboration with European and other academies and learned societies on mutually important issues.

Showcase the work of the Academy both nationally and internationally.

ACTIONS:

- Develop and enhance links with learned societies and other academies through collaborative research and policy-based initiatives.
- Pursue opportunities to enhance its leadership role within international academy alliances and unions.
- Play a stronger role in the committee work of international unions, working to ensure that Irish perspectives contribute to strategic initiatives.
- Develop a strategic programme of opportunities to showcase the research, output, unique collections and treasures of the Academy to a wide audience through national and overseas exhibitions.
- Support a programme of Academy publications and activities (e.g., digital initiatives) that reflect an appropriate blend of scholarly and topical subjects across the breadth of the sciences, humanities and social sciences.
- Ensure that the Academy's unique collections are protected and are available internationally and nationally.

Strategic Goal

3

Build a Modern Academy by increasing diversity and providing new impetus to the life and work of the Academy.

MAJOR OBJECTIVES:

Support talented scholars and researchers throughout Ireland through closer links with the Academy.

Increase the diversity of the Academy's membership.

Broaden the geographical reach and impact of the Academy's activities through the establishment and support of regional networks.

ACTIONS:

- Develop a 'Young Academy' for talented, early-career researchers and scholars.
- Ensure greater gender, disciplinary, institutional and overall diversity among Members of the Academy and Academy committees and working groups.
- Review Academy activities to identify and respond to changing priorities.
- Increase the number of regional Academy events and develop local and international networks to act as the loci for Academy activities.
- Develop a long-term plan for Academy location(s).
- Enhance and modernise organisational systems and practices.

Underpinning the Strategy

PEOPLE

The work of the Academy is carried out through our staff, our Members and our multidisciplinary committees, working groups and boards, in partnership with our external partners. This Strategic Plan will build an inclusive and modern Academy that values and develops our membership and staff. Research-mindedness and excellence will permeate all our activities. An enhanced communication plan will support the Academy's activities externally and internally.

RESOURCES

We will make optimum use of our facilities and our infrastructure to enable us to meet the needs of the Academy. We will examine in detail all our activities, with the specific goal of maximising our relevance and impact within our areas of expertise. We will seek ways to generate additional funding streams, appropriately aligned with our core values, to strengthen our financial sustainability and allow us to achieve our strategic goals. In all our activities, we will adhere to the highest standards of governance, management and oversight.



In conclusion

The Strategic Plan 2019–23 is ambitious in its goals. Because it is based on the strength of the Academy's core values and on its unique role as an independent voice grounded in scholarly excellence and trust, we are confident that the plan will enable the Academy to serve the needs of modern society. It provides a robust platform on which to build a strong and sustainable Academy, in which excellence in scholarship and learning are paramount. We believe that in five years' time, the implementation of the plan will have resulted in a lively 'Young Academy', greater engagement of the Academy across Ireland, and an enhanced international reputation. The vibrant and inclusive Academy envisaged in the plan will be a strong advocate and leader in the third-level sector, in public service and in representing Irish scholarship nationally and internationally.

Joelyn Bell Burnell

JOCELYN BELL BURNELL

Chair, Strategic Plan Committee

Pat Shannon

PAT SHANNON

Secretary, Royal Irish Academy



