

## **ALLEA Academy Portrait**

**The Royal Irish Academy** - Ireland's leading body of experts in the sciences and the humanities.

### **Mission Statement and Work**

#### *Mission Statement*

The Royal Irish Academy champions Irish academic research. One of its principal roles is to identify and recognise Ireland's world class researchers. It supports excellent scholarship and promotes awareness of how science and the humanities enrich our lives.

#### *Our Work*

The Royal Irish Academy is an all-island independent forum that brings together the worlds of academia, government and industry, to address issues of mutual interest through major outreach events and legacy projects. Drawing on the expertise of its Members, the Academy makes a significant contribution to public debate and public policy formation on issues in science, technology and culture. The Academy leads important national research projects, particularly in areas relating to Ireland and its heritage. In addition, the Academy represents the world of Irish learning internationally, maintains and enhances a unique globally-recognised library and is a leading academic publisher.

### **Overview**

The Royal Irish Academy is Ireland's premier learned society. It was founded in May 1785, with James Caulfeild, the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Charlemont, serving as its first president. It was incorporated by Royal Charter in January 1786, with the declared aims of promoting and investigating the sciences, polite literature and antiquities, as well as the encouragement of discussion and debate between scholars of diverse backgrounds and interests. The early academy was concerned to provide an opportunity for the development of antiquarian studies and was the first Irish society to successfully balance the requirements of the sciences and the humanities.

Today, the Academy has approximately 480 Members, divided almost equally between the sciences and the humanities. As an all-island institution the Academy occupies a unique space in Irish intellectual life with its Members representing the best academic expertise in both jurisdictions on the island across science, technology, engineering, mathematics, humanities and social sciences. The Academy acts as a bridge both for and between all disciplines and for academic and policy makers in Ireland. Through its membership of ALLEA and other international bodies, the Academy also works to provide independent, expert, evidence-based advice to those who make or influence policy within the European institutions and to improve conditions under which science and scholarship can flourish in Europe and beyond.

Membership of the Academy is the highest academic honour in Ireland, with those elected entitled to use the designation 'MRIA' after their names. Members assist the Academy in its work by serving on its various committees and working groups, by representing the Academy nationally and internationally and by giving of their expertise to help promote awareness of how the sciences and the humanities enrich our lives and benefit society. Membership of the Academy is by election only in recognition of academic achievement. Approximately 16 new Members are elected annually at a meeting of all the

Academy's Members, which takes place on 16 March. A small number of Honorary Members are also elected each year. This distinction is usually reserved for academics who have made a major international contribution to their respective disciplines, but who are not normally resident in Ireland.

The Academy is governed by a Council (which includes the President), elected from among its Members. Council meets four times per year, and is assisted in the day to day governance of the Academy by the Executive Committee, which is composed of Academy Officers, the Chief Executive and a staff representative. The Academy is based in Academy House which is a beautiful mid-eighteenth century house located on Dawson Street in Dublin's City Centre, with a staff of c. 70 working across its administrative, research and library functions. The Academy's Library is one of Ireland's premier research libraries, housing several major manuscripts, including *The Cathach*, which is the oldest extant Irish manuscript as well as one of the earliest examples of Irish writing.

Some of Ireland's leading scholars and thinkers are included amongst the membership of the Royal Irish Academy:

- **Michael D. Higgins** (President of Ireland)
- **Frances Ruane** (Director of the ESRI)
- **Rose Anne Kelly** (Gerontologist)
- **Patrick Honohan** (Governor of the Central Bank)
- **Nicholas Canny** (Historian)
- **Luke Drury** (Astrophysicist)
- **Noel Dorr** (Former Diplomat)
- **Peter Sutherland** (Lawyer and Banker)

Well-known past Members have included:

- **Seamus Heaney** (Poet and Nobel Laureate)
- **William Rowan Hamilton** (Mathematician)
- **Ernest Walton** (Physicist and Nobel Laureate)
- **W.B. Yeats** (Poet)
- **F.S.L. Lyons** (Historian)
- **Eamon de Valera** (Former Taoiseach and President of Ireland)

### **Policy Activities**

There are three strands to the Academy's policy work:

#### *Reactive*

The Academy responds when approached directly by government departments or international partners and asked to comment on a particular initiative either privately or as part of a wider public consultation.

#### *Proactive*

The Academy identifies strategic issues in which the Academy membership has expertise and which the Academy may usefully engage with in relation to research, education and other areas of public policy.

### *Academy Committees*

The Academy, through its network of 10 multidisciplinary committees, promotes co-operation across and within relevant scholarly disciplines, to advise, contribute and guide Academy policy in these areas and to engage the public on issues of topical interest, on an all-island basis.

### **International Relations**

The Academy engages with agencies involved in the formulation of European science policy, works to inform our European colleagues of activities in Ireland and promotes the influence of Irish researchers. It has strong links with sister academies internationally and participates in significant international networks of learned societies and science academies. These networks provide a means for the collective voice of European scholarship and science to be heard, to provide evidence-informed advice to European and international policymakers and to promote the influence of Irish researchers and scholars. It is a long standing member of the federation of All European Academies (ALLEA) as well as being a founding member of the European Academies Science Advisory Council (EASAC).

Some of the Academy's most notable recent policy activities include:

- Establishment of the **Irish Humanities Alliance**
- Successful engagement with policy advocacy on the issue of **Open Access** (delivery of major workshop on Open Access, initiation of the Academy's Open Access blog series driven by MRIA contributions, significant inputs to the formation of ALLEA's statement on Open Access, partnering with the Digital Repository of Ireland and the Academy's Publications Unit respectively on projects for 2014 by exploring the implications of Open Access to Data and to investigate Open Access and its implications for small academic publishers in Ireland)
- Advocacy, nationally and with the European Commission, on the development of **Horizon 2020** governance structures and work programmes with a particular emphasis on advocacy for the humanities and social sciences
- Successful **delivery of a Dialogue Forum** with ALLEA "Academia-Industry Alliance: joint efforts in science education"
- Successful delivery of workshop '**How to Succeed with the European Research Council**'
- Irish National Contact Point for Societal Challenge 6 on Draft Work Programmes for Societal Challenge 6, September 2013
- Input to Northern Ireland Innovation Strategy
- Submission to EASAC on the draft report 'Risks to Plant Health'
- Submission to EASAC on the draft report 'Nuclear Fuel'
- Submission to ALLEA Standing Committee on Intellectual Property Rights on its draft statement on Open Access
- Submission to ALLEA Permanent Committee on Science and Ethics on its draft statement on Ethics Education in Science
- Response to Senator Sean Barrett on draft Science Foundation Ireland Bill (February 2013)
- Submission to the Teaching Council consultation February 2013

- Submission to the Irish Universities Association (IUA) on draft principles for research integrity (January 2013)
- Submission to the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) Call on Open Access, September 2013.
- Academy Advice Paper: 'Response to the consultation by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment on the review of Junior Cycle Science' (January 2014)
- Academy Advice Paper: 'Response to the Seanad Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2014' (April 2014)
- Academy Advice Paper: 'Submission to the National STEM Review Group' (June 2014)
- Academy Advice Paper: 'Response to the consultation by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment on the Draft Primary Language Curriculum, (July 2014)