
**School of Applied Social Studies
University College Cork**

Strategic Plan 2019 - 2024



UCC

University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

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School of Applied Social Studies

Mission Statement

The School of Applied Social Studies provides an educational and scholarly environment, which promotes a culture of critical intellectual and practice enquiry in the Social Sciences, based upon participation, inclusion and diversity.



Strategic Goals of the School of Applied Social Studies 2019-2024¹

Goal 1: Implement an academic strategy to deliver an outstanding, student-centred learning and teaching experience with a renewed, responsive and research-led curriculum at its core.

Goal 2: Be a leading centre for research, discovery, innovation, and societal impact

Goal 3: Create value for our community through an international outlook and informed and creative engagement on local and global issues.

Goal 4: Attract, develop, support and retain staff of the highest quality, thereby ensuring a diverse staff who are enabled to reach their full potential.

Goal 5: Strengthen our infrastructure and resource base.



¹ As per the five goals of UCC's Strategic Plan 2017-2022.

Goal 1: Implement an academic strategy to deliver an outstanding, student-centred learning and teaching experience with a renewed, responsive and research-led curriculum at its core.

Priority objectives

The School of Applied Social Studies is committed to excellence in research-informed learning and teaching. Our mission is to cultivate a culture of learning and action for students in the School of Applied Social Studies and across the University through the following objectives:

1. Promote and uphold a student-centred, research-led, and best practice approach to learning and teaching.
2. Support staff to pursue excellence in learning and teaching through engaging and innovative continuous professional development.
3. Expand online and blended learning opportunities to respond to the changing needs of our student base, as well as develop flexible CPD opportunities for social professionals.
4. Continue to support the widening of access and participation routes to higher education for mature and non-traditional students by responding to specific learning needs.
5. Develop new partnerships with civil society organisations and employers, while sustaining existing ones, to secure meaningful and educative placements for students.

Key Actions

1. The learning and teaching mission of the School is built around best practice, student-centred teaching. The enhancement of best practice, research-led, and scholarly teaching, will be cultivated by rewarding staff for innovations in learning and teaching, through digital badge initiatives and ongoing training. Through initiatives at School level, as well as those made available through the Office for the Vice President of Learning and Teaching, we will promote staff contributions to the local, national, and international scholarship of learning and teaching, thereby strengthening our teaching profile and practices.
2. Building on previous successes, we will continue to expand flexible and blended learning opportunities. Accounting for our students' needs in relation to accessibility,

employment, and care responsibilities, is central to our mission. We will continue to expand opportunities for students to study at different levels in asynchronous and online environments. We will direct resources to improve the quality and content of the delivery of these programmes to reflect international best practice. This is to include the enhancement of digital skills among staff, towards excellence in delivery of online teaching.

3. The School of Applied Social Studies has been a strong voice and advocate of accessible and alternative routes to university education. Our mission is to continue to increase access routes to support non-traditional students in accessing university and responding to specific learning needs. Through the work carried out by our Student Support Officer, continued outreach, and fostering relationships with the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (ACE), the Mature Students Office, the Disability Support Service, the Skills Centre, the Language Centre, HEAR, and so on, we aim to promote access for students and responsiveness to their needs in the community of learners.

4. With a view to strengthening graduate attributes, we will continue to emphasise experiential learning by strengthening existing relationships and developing new connections with employers and across civil society. Developing practical and real world understandings in all of our programmes, and especially our professionally accredited programmes, is a crucial in the education and training of responsive, engaged, and informed graduates.

The screenshot shows an RTÉ news article. The header includes navigation links for News, Sport, Entertainment, Business, Lifestyle, Culture, Player, TV, Radio, and More. The article title is "Student using beekeeping to teach mindfulness to vulnerable young people". Below the title is a social media sharing bar with icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Email, and Print. The main image shows two people in white beekeeping suits working with a beehive. A caption below the image reads: "The Cork city centre has eight beehives".

The poster is for the "SPEEDS SYMPOSIUM". At the top right is the SPEEDS logo with the tagline "Social Policy Education Enhancing Digital Skills". The central graphic is a brain filled with various digital and educational icons. A banner across the brain reads "TEACHING AND LEARNING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN A DIGITAL WORLD". Below the brain, the event details are: "MAY 9TH, 2019 • 10AM - 4PM" and "CENTRE FOR EXECUTIVE EDUCATION 1 LAPPS QUAY, CORK". The bottom of the poster features logos for several partner institutions: UCC, Institute of Technology Carlow, Trinity College Dublin, CIT, CORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, and UCD. It also includes the logo for the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the text "AN EÚGARAS UM AFD-OIDEACHAS".

Goal 2: Be a leading centre for research, discovery, innovation, and societal impact.

Priority objectives

The School of Applied Social Studies will be a local, national and global leader in social science research. Our ambition will be realised through the objectives of:

1. Centre of Excellence for Research Scholarship & Training: The School will further enhance its doctoral educational experience, inclusively promoting doctoral opportunities across the cognate discipline. The School will strengthen doctoral pathways through enhanced competitiveness in achieving scholarships, integration of students in to the scholarly life of the School, and ensuring graduates can meet the demands posed by contemporary societal challenges.

2. Public Scholarship & Impact: The School will continue to make an important contribution to critical policy-oriented research at regional and national level. As a partner of choice for research-community partnerships, the School will be responsive to the needs of local and regional communities facing societal challenges. The School will build on its success in integrating research and practice through the provision of practice-oriented research programmes, public engagement, and continuing professional developmental activities with the social professions and the wider community. The School will continue to support pluralistic models of research dissemination and outreach that span international academic outputs and community outreach initiatives.

3. Diversifying Research Funding: The School will build on its success in attaining prestigious international and national funding awards that enable the School to make an international contribution to scholarship. The School will continue its commitment to pluralistic models of sustainable research by valuing and promoting non-funded critical research that aligns with the School's core values.

4. Enabling Researchers to Achieve Critical Mass through Infrastructural Supports: As co-founder of the Institute for Social Science in the 21st Century (ISS21), the School will continue to play a lead role in developing the centre's national and international reputation as a leader in social science research through continued research cluster activity and success in attaining prestigious funding awards. The School will harness the synergies within research-led teaching and learning. Staff members will continue to make important scholarly contributions in the fields of social policy, social work, and youth and community work through publication, editorial and advisory roles. The School will review and consolidate infrastructural supports at committee level and administrative needs to maximise research potential within the School.

5. Interdisciplinarity & Harnessing Opportunities in Emerging Areas: Building on the success of ISS21 in generating interdisciplinary capacity, the School will identify and target untapped opportunities within emerging areas of research. Recognising the important contribution of the social sciences to STEM, the School will forge sustainable networks with STEM partners to strengthen capacity to research complex societal challenges. The School will continue to recognise the importance of mobility and networking by supporting staff to lead and participate in international and trans-disciplinary projects through intra- and inter-institutional collaborative relationships.

Key actions

The School has transformed its research culture in the last ten years, significantly increasing research output and impact by developing a specific research strategy while strengthening our commitment to the School's mission. The School has enhanced its strong European and international reputation, evidenced by involvement in EU projects, publication in international journals, membership of editorial boards, and invitations to participate in international events. The scholarly and public impact of the School of Applied Social Studies' research-related activities is evident in the wide circulation and academic citations of our many research outputs, together with extensive media coverage and references to these activities in public policy discourses. Between 2008 and 2018, SASS has been highly successful in attracting external research funding, securing over one million euro in this period.

Building on these strengths, Goal 2 will be realised through the key actions of:

1. Research Scholarship & Training:

- Identify pathways into doctoral education across the cognate areas of study within the School.
- Support students to enhance their competitiveness in funding and scholarships.
- Maximise participation of students within the scholarly life of the School including opportunities to participate and attend seminars, workshops and other activities.
- Develop a culture of dissemination at all levels of study to support students to create outputs and impact from their research.

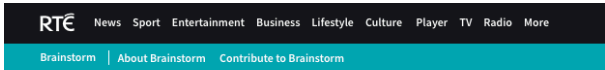
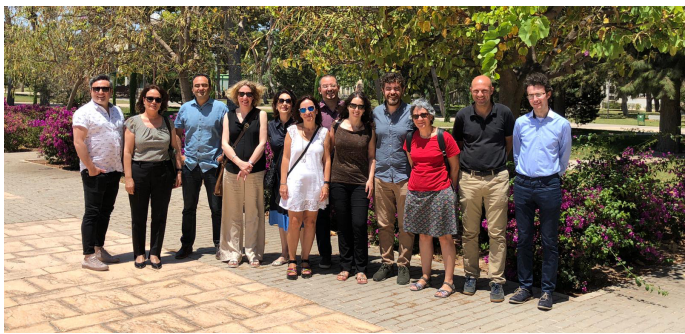


Critical Welfare State Studies Conference
Critical Perspectives on Stigma, Shame and the Irish Welfare Imaginary
Registration Open!



University College Cork, 20th September 2019.
Keynote speaker: Professor Imogen Tyler, Lancaster University.

The conference is free to attend and includes lunch and refreshments throughout the day. Registration closes on the 13/09/2019. Spaces are limited so early registration is advised. For full details please visit cwssnetwork.com and click on the registration tab.




How Ireland has failed 760,000 people living in poverty

Updated / Tuesday, 28 May 2019 12:32



"The poor need not always be with us"; photo by Derek Speirs of an anti-poverty march in Dublin as featured in the Combat Poverty Photographic Exhibition at Dublin's Civic Offices in 2007.

By **Joe Whelan**
 UCC

GENOVATE
making steps towards gender equality

THE GENOVATE HUB: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/iss21/genovate/> @GENOVATE_UCC

2. Public Scholarship & Impact

- Value social and community research through delivery on the School's commitment to community-academic research in line with Objective 3.1 Engaged Research of the UCC Civic Engagement Plan 2017-2022.
- Build on the role of SPEEDS in public engagement and scholarship. Utilise SPEEDS to enhance visibility and critically inform public and media debate through increased engagement with diverse forms of media.
- Provide a critical voice within current research agendas in line with the core values of the School.
- Support staff to publish research and maximise impact of their research.

3. Research Funding

- Support staff to be competitive in prestigious international funding opportunities particularly at European level.
- Based on a strong track record of collaboration, harness the potential of the School's research relationships with a wide range of national and international public and voluntary sector bodies in strengthening research funding applications.

4. Infrastructure

- Identify opportunities to maximise the potential of all scholars in the School and examine structural barriers to strengthening collective research capacity within the School.
- Integrate School research activities with ISS21 to ensure the School retains a lead role in the promotion of ISS21 as an internal centre of research excellence.
- Consolidate infrastructure for research through a review of committee structures; these include the School Research Committee, the Graduate Studies Committee, the School Ethics Committee, and the School Seminar Series.
- Review future requirements for School-based Research Support Services in line with increasing project management complexity including scoping the need for a designated research administrative role.
- Integrate research activity with the needs of the social professions and develop platforms to facilitate closer collaboration with practice.

5. Identify & expand opportunities for interdisciplinarity

- Identify untapped opportunities for collaboration with STEM.
- Bring social sciences skill-set to large-scale STEM research projects.
- Enable staff to participate and lead transdisciplinary projects at international level.

Goal 3: To create value for our community through an international outlook and informed and creative engagement on local and global issues.

Priority objectives

As identified in our [Community Engagement Strategic Plan](#), we commit to further developing our social justice-oriented participation as active citizens in our communities – locally, nationally and globally – through:

1. Continuing to promote a culture of critical intellectual and practice inquiry in the social sciences, as upheld in the School's Mission Statement, by expanding our activities – based on participation, inclusion and diversity – further beyond our School and UCC and into the communities that we serve;
2. Further developing collaborative, co-operative partnerships with local groups, community-based organisations and wider society, in ways that support an exchange of knowledge and ideas that is reciprocal and mutually beneficial;
3. Expanding our activities through a range of creative approaches including community-based learning, community-based research, public scholarship, and volunteering;
4. Continuing to open our School to local communities through teaching, research, student support, and outreach activities;
5. Continuing our tradition of widening access and lifelong learning opportunities through establishing more flexible entry and progression routes, and utilising online/ distance learning platforms in our programmes;
6. Contributing to public scholarship through teaching, research, activist and civic engagement activities that shape critical perspectives on local, regional and national development, regeneration, democracy, and social progress;
7. Supporting our students' development as active, engaged citizens in our approaches to professional education, training, student placements, teaching and learning, and outreach activities;
8. Improving our practices through the promotion of sustainability and the 'green' campus agenda;
9. Developing our public engagement activities and increasing our traditional and online media outputs in the interests of communicating the significance and impact of our research and teaching more broadly;

10. Formally recognising staff members' civic and Community Engagement activities by including these in future strategic plans and in academic workload distribution models, and;

11. Continuing to advocate for appropriate resource allocation that facilitates the promotion of meaningful civil and Community Engagement activities.

Key actions

1. Embedding Community Engagement in the life of the School: Given the mission of the School, Community Engagement is embedded in our everyday practices as educators, researchers, and community advocates/ activists. Further enhancement of the School's Community Engagement activities depends on staff members' continuing energy, resources, and availability. We aim to manage and direct these resources in several ways.

2. Supporting Community Engagement at School, College and University Level: With regard to formal structures within the School, the Community Engagement Subcommittee will meet regularly to monitor implementation of the Community Engagement Strategic Plan (2016-2020) and Goal 3 of the UCC Strategic Plan (2017-2022). Representatives from the School will continue to sit on relevant university committees, including the CACSSS and UCC Community Engagement Committees, and the School will maintain its active participation in college and university level activities and events.

3. Engagement with Community Partners: With a view to strengthening links in the local community, we aim to examine how some community groups feel towards or experience the university as a whole. We will explore ways of better valuing and recognising community representatives' contribution to the university. For example, we will explore ways of employing services users and people with lived experience relating to issues we examine in our learning and teaching and research activities.



4. Profiling our Community Engagement Activities: We will continue to promote our community engagement activities and to find better ways of extending our reach through traditional, new, and social media. Several staff members have engaged in accredited training on public scholarship and media engagement through SPEEDS and we will continue to share good practice with colleagues. Furthermore, while we recognise that the university is important in contributing economically to our communities, we aim to better articulate to the public how we add *social value* through our activities.

5. Community Engagement and Experiential Education: We will continue to promote experiential education and learning outside the classroom, encouraging students to develop their disciplinary and practice-oriented knowledge, skills and understanding through engagement with and service within the community. This emphasis on community-based and community-informed learning is central to our applied programmes, as represented by four professionally accredited programmes delivered through the School: the Bachelor of Social Science (Youth and Community Work); the Postgraduate Diploma in Youth Work; the Bachelor of Social Work; and the Master of Social Work. It also impacts on each of our academic programmes in different ways. Supporting this kind of learning demands that we maintain positive, supportive, and meaningful links with community-based organisations and stakeholders into the future.

6. Community Engagement in the EU and International Context: We believe that our engagement at local and national levels is strong. However, a key commitment for the next five years will be to re-energise our international outlook, which will require additional resources. Our activities will be underpinned by a commitment to challenge neo-liberal approaches to internationalisation by emphasising the principles of equality, equity, and access - which are central to our School's mission - through targeted support. We aim to invest in the recruitment of international students. We also aim to expand formal links with international programmes to support student and staff exchange, including Erasmus opportunities. We aim to fortify connections with existing networks and to connect with new European and international networks, with particular attention to global challenges, including migration, climate change, sustainability, and environmental and social justice.

Goal 4: To attract, develop, support and retain staff of the highest quality, thereby ensuring a diverse staff who are enabled to reach their full potential.

Priority objectives

Since its establishment in the early 1990s, the School of Applied Social Studies has pursued a proactive staffing strategy informed by student demand, the resource requirements of academic programmes, research priorities, staff promotion and career development opportunities, and planning for the future. In aligning with the strategic goal of the university in relation to staffing, the School of Applied Social Studies strives to be an inclusive and stimulating place to work where academic, administrative, and research staff at various career stages have opportunities for career progression, professional development and personal fulfilment.

While the School is mindful of wider university policy and strategy in relation to staffing (especially in the areas of staff recruitment and progression), it is best placed to devise a staffing strategy based on its own assessment of current and future needs.

Our objectives to achieve this strategic goal are to:

1. Value and include all categories of staff in a collegial manner working in the best interests of our students, the university, and the wider community.
2. Develop and retain the staff of the School by providing them with a positive and safe working environment.
3. Work to attain secure and stable contractual employment arrangements for staff in the School.
4. The School will continue to promote gender equality as an important aspect of its core values.
5. Promote improved career structures for research staff to ensure security and continuity of employment.

Key actions

1. Staff Planning:

- The School will engage in a constant review regarding the profile of the staff group to ensure effective forward planning takes place to meet future needs.
- Staff planning will aspire to proportionate distribution of staffing grades in line with national equality targets and in the context of University and national policies.
- The School will actively engage with relevant university offices in relation to its staffing needs and will ensure vacancies and opportunities are advertised and processed in a timely manner.
- The School will adopt a strategic approach to negotiation of new posts with the university.
- New post proposals in our disciplinary areas will demonstrate strategic justification for their discipline in line with the strategic plans of the School and University.
- Workloads will be reviewed periodically by Course Directors and/or by the Head of School to ensure workloads are balanced across the School.

2. Employee Precarity and Security:

- The School will review how to transition from an hourly-occasional staff framework to full-time posts where desired. The School shall consider undertaking a scoping exercise of relevant staff, who will be encouraged to avail of staff development training or career development initiatives where possible to improve skills and competencies for future positions.
- The School will continue to address precarity on a case-by-case basis. However, the School recognises that the issue of precarity, inequality and casualisation is part of a wider UCC and societal challenge. The School will consider becoming a leader in UCC in terms of representing concerns and structuring the conversation on this matter to HR and UMTO, and supporting staff regarding unionising.
- Research staff may be employed under a time-limited contract but they need to be recognised as valued members of the School community. The School will support research staff regarding professional development plans and opportunities through the post-doc development hub in conjunction with HR.

3. Gender Equality and Fairness

- Subject to an internal consultation exercise, the School will examine the possibility of applying for an Athena Swan Award, in terms of added benefit and time commitment.
- The School will continue to support family-friendly policies, whilst delivering a student-centred curriculum.
- The School will work to avail of university and national level opportunities, which address the issue of gender inequality in third level institutions. The School recognises that precarity is a gendered issue.
- The School will link to the valuable work of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Unit in UCC.

4. Staff Career Progression and Leadership Development

- The School will continue to use its Sabbatical Research Leave Rota to support academic staff to take paid leave to further their research, on a cost neutral basis.
- Staff will be facilitated by the School to strengthen leadership and management capacity through participation in training and CPD initiatives offered at college and university level.



Goal 5: Strengthen our infrastructure and resource base.

Priority objectives

Our vision under Goal 5 is to ensure that the School of Applied Social Studies operates in an environment where our infrastructure meets the needs of academic, research, and administrative staff. These needs include appropriately appointed and equipped spaces for all staff, student engagement, teaching and learning infrastructure, online and IT capacity.

We will work to ensure that the infrastructure and financial resource base underpinning the School is adequate, sustainable and diverse. We will identify appropriate opportunities to strengthen these from college, university and external sources.

Key actions

1. Buildings and Physical Infrastructure

- Continue to develop, maintain and upgrade our staff offices /workspaces and classrooms in conjunction with our digital learning infrastructure and strategy.
- Engage at college and university level for a dedicated Social Sciences Building, as set out by the CACSSS Infrastructure Plan.
- Engage with relevant college and university offices to ensure that expansion of programmes and student numbers is matched by space and infrastructure provision.
- Effectively utilise facilities for researchers and post graduate students at school and college level.
- Continue to liaise with relevant university offices to ensure our facilities are universally accessible.
- Review the School's physical footprint with a view to identifying spaces for re-designation as a meeting /common room for staff, course teams, etc.

2. Learning and teaching infrastructure

- Sustain the School's position as a leader in Social Sciences learning and teaching through continued investment in infrastructure and equipment.
- Identify opportunities for further development of our digital learning through participation in college, university, national and international Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) opportunities.

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- Assess existing and new programmes for blended and/or online delivery.

3. Online and IT capacity

- Ensure all staff of the School can avail of opportunities to acquire and update their skills in digital learning and information technology.
- Review and, when appropriate, upgrade IT supports and services for students especially in Crossleigh Computer Laboratory.
- Identify projects across the School suited to IT-based management.

4. Ensuring an adequate, sustainable and diverse resource base

- Ensure the School has robust systems in place to guarantee the full drawdown of financial entitlements based on our student intake and FTE allocation.
- Avail of college and university level opportunities and initiatives to strengthen the resources available to the School.
- Identify and access opportunities for resources at national and EU level, such as HEA targeted initiatives, which align with our core values and ethos, and contribute to the delivery of our mission and sustainability of the School.
- Explore how we can generate additional resources (financial and otherwise) to progress the mission of the School through engagement with CPD, philanthropy, local authorities, community partners, and other relevant parties.

