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# POLITICAL SCIENCE IN IRELAND IN THE EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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***Abstract***

Although political science in Ireland got off to an earlier start than almost anywhere else (with a first chair appearing in 1855, and the oldest current established chair dating back to 1908), it has faced the same challenges as those encountered elsewhere in Europe. These include a difficulty in establishing autonomy in relation to adjacent disciplines, and a problem in maintaining its own integrity given the diversity of its subfields. Nevertheless, the discipline was able to record steady progress from the 1960s onwards, as the number of staff members grew and the infrastructural support base improved. Especially since the economic crisis that began in 2008, however, the discipline has come under stress, with many of the best qualified and most mobile young academics leaving for posts abroad in a context of domestic austerity. The discipline has survived this development, though, and has been significantly reinforced by links at European level. These have helped in the development of the political science curriculum (notably, as a consequence of the "Bologna process"), and in encouraging research (an area in which the European Consortium for Political Research played a big role). The capacity of the discipline to grow and thrive, and to survive budgetary setbacks, has been assisted by its popularity with students and its continuing relevance to policy makers.

## *1. Introduction*

It is now 60 years since one of the dominant figures of international politics, Hans Morgenthau (1955, p. 439), observed that "today the curriculum of political science bears the unmistakeable marks of its haphazard origins and development". We might expect that, well into the twenty-first century, this generalisation would no longer hold true: that decades of teaching and research would have resulted in a streamlined discipline with an agreed methodology and clearly defined priorities for analysis.

The current study of the state of political science in Ireland, however, will show that in this country, at least, this is not the case—that, as in other European countries, political science continues to be methodologically divided and extraordinarily diverse in focus. We seek to develop this point by looking at five features of political science in Ireland in the sections that follow: its historical evolution, its contemporary organisational basis, its teaching curriculum

and practices, its research orientation, and its relationship to the world of public policy.[1] Before doing so, however, we briefly provide, in the next section, an outline of the development of the discipline within the broader framework of the emergence of the Irish university system.

### *2. Evolution of the university system*

The emergence of the Irish university system has been decisively shaped by Ireland's relationship with England, dating from the middle ages, and by its later relationship with Great Britain, with which it was more fully integrated from 1800 to 1922, the date of Irish independence. The first major development was the foundation of the University of Dublin, or Trinity College Dublin (TCD), in 1592. Reflecting its origin in the period of the Protestant reformation and its political position as the intellectual power-house of the ruling group, it retained until the late 1960s a Protestant character. This reflected the dominant economic, social and political position of Ireland's small Protestant minority, which, however, had fallen to 3% by the end of the twentieth century. The privileged position of this minority came under pressure in the course of the nineteenth century, with the emergence of a new Catholic middle class, whose religious leaders believed that the Protestant character of Trinity College rendered it unsuitable for the educational formation of young Catholics.[2]

This encouraged the (British) government to experiment with alternative arrangements, and it decided in 1845 to establish "Queen's Colleges" in three provincial sites, Cork, Galway and Belfast. The colleges opened in 1849, but the Catholic bishops, seeing these as insufficiently attentive to the Catholic position, resolved in 1850 to establish a Catholic University in Dublin (it opened in 1854). The Catholic University never flourished, reflecting the still restricted size of the Catholic middle class and the fact that wealthier Catholic families preferred the more established universities in Dublin, Oxford and Cambridge, Protestant though their ethos might be. The Catholic University was transformed in 1882, when the bishops decided to extend it over several colleges and to reconstitute its original campus in central Dublin as University College Dublin (UCD). The realities that led to this position are reflected in the composition of the student population on the island of Ireland: as recently as 1901, only 22 per cent of

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[1] This chapter draws in places on comparable earlier reports: Coakley, 1991, 1996; Coakley and Laver, 2007. We are grateful for their advice to Gary Murphy, Eoin O'Malley and Alex Baturo (DCU); Anne Byrne, Su-ming Khoo and Brendan Flynn (NUIG), Michael Gallagher and Gail McElroy (TCD), Andrew Cottey (UCC), Ben Tonra (UCD) and Bernadette Connaughton (UL).

[2] Catholics were admitted to Trinity College in 1793, and remaining restrictions on Catholics in the college were removed in 1873. However, the Catholic bishops prohibited Catholics from attending the college in 1875, and in 1956 this became an explicit ban, though exceptions could be permitted by the Archbishop of Dublin. The ban was lifted only in 1970.

university students were Catholic, though this figure increases to 54 per cent if the Catholic clerical seminary at Maynooth and seven smaller Catholic colleges are taken into account.

The cornerstone of the present university system was laid in 1908, when the Queen's Colleges in Cork and Galway were renamed University College Cork (UCC) and University College Galway (UCG) respectively, and merged with University College Dublin as a federal university, the National University of Ireland (NUI). This amounted to a de facto concession of the principle of denominational education (the colleges were likely to be overwhelmingly Catholic), and formed part of a broader programme of British efforts to reach an accommodation with Irish nationalists. At the same time, Queen's College Belfast was given autonomous university status as Queen's University Belfast. Of course, the partition of Ireland in 1921 detached Queen's University from the southern portion of the island that ultimately became the Republic of Ireland; since then, it has formed part of the British higher education system.

The structures devised by the British administration in 1908 survived with little change for 70 years. The first significant innovation was the foundation of two technologically-oriented "National Institutes for Higher Education" in Limerick (1972) and Dublin (1975); these were granted autonomous university status in 1989 as the University of Limerick (UL) and Dublin City University (DCU). Alongside these, a network of "regional technical colleges" was established; these were later renamed institutes of technology. In 1978, six third-level colleges in Dublin were merged to form the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), though this was not formally given university status. The picture is completed by a number of smaller specialist colleges such as clerical seminaries, teacher training colleges and other specialist institutions; and a few small private colleges were established in the late twentieth century.

A significant change in the National University of Ireland took place in 1997, when its constituent colleges were given independent university status, though, in a confusing provision, they are now defined as constituent "universities" of the NUI. At the same time, the Faculties of Arts, Science, Celtic Studies and Philosophy of the Catholic seminary at Maynooth became a further constituent university of the NUI. Two of the older NUI colleges, UCD and UCC, chose to retain their original names; UCG and Maynooth were renamed respectively NUI Galway (NUIG) and NUI Maynooth (NUIM), but the latter changed its name again in 2014, to Maynooth University (for background, see White, 2001; Loxley, Seery and Walsh, 2014).

### *3. Evolution of the discipline*

Notwithstanding the roots of the study of politics in ancient Greece, it took a long time for the discipline to find its place in the university curriculum. Political science lagged far behind such long-established subjects as philosophy and law, but took second place also to such modern disciplines as history and sociology. Indeed, it became a university subject only towards the end of the nineteenth century, and then only in a few institutions in the USA and in northern Europe. Its emergence in southern Europe was essentially a late twentieth-century phenomenon, as political science broke free of its parent there, law (Coakley, 2004, pp. 174-5).

From this perspective, the emergence of political science in the Irish university curriculum began at a surprisingly early date. The title "political science" appeared in the designation of a chair as early as 1855, when the new Catholic University appointed a professor of "Political and Social Science". This post disappeared in the reconstitution of the university in 1882, after which political science fell under the umbrella of a professorship of "Mental and Moral Philosophy". The content of the syllabus and the range covered by examination papers in the 1880s illustrate the extent to which this represented a genuinely modern approach to the study of politics, one with few rivals elsewhere at this time (University College Dublin, 2005). Following the establishment of the National University in 1908, the first full politics professorship in Ireland appeared: a chair of Ethics and Politics in University College Dublin. In Trinity College, a lectureship in political science was created in 1934; in a striking departure from the more general pattern at the time, the first two incumbents were women.[3]

As elsewhere in Europe, political science remained on the margins as a university subject in the inter-war years. Curriculum development was limited, and only a small volume of published work appeared. Much of the analysis of politics at this time was in fact carried out within related disciplines such as history, constitutional law and philosophy. There were occasional contributions from the UCD Professor of Ethics and Politics, and American political scientists made an early appearance in writing about Irish politics. The ethos of the discipline in UCD continued to be dominated by Catholic social and political thought. Areas considered "sensitive" by the Catholic church (including education, philosophy and sociology, as well as politics) were especially prone to clerical influence, not least in the area of appointments, which were dominated by Catholic clergy. Modernisation and secularisation took place slowly

[3] For a history of the discipline in TCD, see www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/about/history/ (consulted 14 Dec. 2014).

but steadily, and the discipline began gradually to emerge in its modern form, with a significant, explicit presence in six cases (for more information, see the web addresses below).

- In UCD the first lay appointment in the Department of Ethics and Politics took place only in 1961, but this was followed by a significant expansion in political science and the birth of the discipline in the modern sense, with significant growth in the 1970s and the 1980s, and a retitling of the department in 1989 as the Department of Politics (the areas of ethics and moral philosophy were transferred to another department). In 2005 the department was incorporated (together with two smaller institutional segments, the Dublin European Institute and the Centre for Development Studies) as the School of Politics and International Relations (ucd.ie/spire).

- In Trinity College Dublin, a chair in Political Science was established in 1959, with the department itself appearing formally a decade later, and growing modestly subsequently. Like the other Irish universities, it was swept up in a drive for the creation of schools, and in 2005 it was merged with the departments of Economics, Philosophy and Sociology to form a new School of Social Sciences and Philosophy. Uniquely, though, the departmental structure survived within this broader umbrella (tcd.ie/Political_Science).

- In UCG, a chair of Political Science and Sociology was created in 1969, initially under clerical influence; the first lay professor was appointed in 1983. The department grew rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s, retaining its formally bi-disciplinary status, but with a notable expansion in the areas of social work and child and family studies. In the grouping of departments into schools in Galway, it became the School of Political Science and Sociology in 2007, incorporating also the Women's Studies Centre; its involvement in applied social sciences was subsequently reinforced (nuigalway.ie/soc).

- In UL, political science established itself in the 1970s in a succession of interdisciplinary departments, first in European Studies, then under the umbrella of Government and Society, and finally, in 2003, as the Department of Politics and Public Administration (ul.ie/ppa).

- In DCU, the study of politics appeared at an early stage in the business school. A chair of Government and International Relations was established in 1998; in 2001 a school of law and government was established, and a strong political science area emerged within this (dcu.ie/law_and_government).

- In UCC, the area of public administration within the Department of Economics, in the Commerce Faculty, was reorganised in 1998, when a Department of Government was

created. This subsequently expanded rapidly, extending to cover the main areas of political science (ucc.ie/en/government).

Of course, this is only a partial account of the emergence of the discipline at university level in the Republic of Ireland. As elsewhere, the study and analysis of politics has also proceeded under the umbrella of other disciplines, such as philosophy, sociology, history, law, anthropology and geography, not to mention interdisciplinary areas such as European studies, peace studies and public administration. In particular, Maynooth University has recently promoted this area vigorously, within the Department of Sociology. Some institutes of technology have had a political science component (for example, the Dublin Institute of Technology, in the media studies area).

A final terminological point needs to be made. In this essay we use the term “political science” freely, but we need to stress that this is not unproblematic. This term is more the exception than the rule in the UK, where most departments are labelled “politics” or “political studies”, or sometimes “government”. In Ireland, there is an even division between three labels: two use “politics” (UCD and UL); two use “government” (UCC and DCU); and two use “political science” (TCD and NUIG). This arises in part from historical accident, but also reflects a more profound disagreement over the nature of the discipline, with a deeply embedded strand of opinion in the UK seeing “political science” as inappropriately narrow, and as describing a mock-scientific approach that excludes broader normative and analytical questions. This perspective was disseminated widely in British Commonwealth countries, such as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, and its influence in Ireland remains strong.

### *4. Political science in the higher education system*

The Irish higher education system currently consists of 27 state-funded institutions: seven universities, six colleges and 14 institutes (of which 13 are institutes of technology). A few small private colleges also exist. Table 1 describes the most visible features of the universities: their numbers of students and of academic staff. The table also describes where political science fits formally into this structure. It is entirely absent in the private colleges, and only marginally present in certain of the institutes of technology. In the universities, political science has a mainstream, dedicated presence in four (if we interpret international relations and public administration as subfields of the discipline). In two others, it forms part of a bi-disciplinary department: with law in DCU, with sociology in NUIG. Finally, in Maynooth a small politics area has recently been created within the sociology department.

**Table 1. Total staff and student numbers and location of political science, third-level educational institutions, Republic of Ireland, 2011-14**

| Institution | Students | Staff | Location of political science (total staff – politics staff) |
|---|---|---|---|

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dublin City University | 8,940 | 735 | School of Law & Government (22 – 15) |
| Maynooth University | 7,582 | 409 | Department of Sociology (18 – 2) |
| NUI Galway | 13,139 | 1,145 | School of Political Science & Sociology (33 – 14) |
| Trinity College Dublin | 14,123 | 1,360 | Department of Political Science (11) |
| University College Cork | 15,906 | 1,220 | Department of Government (10) |
| University College Dublin | 20,054 | 1,507 | School of Politics & International Relations (16) |
| University of Limerick | 10,597 | 791 | Department of Politics & Public Administration (13) |
| All universities (7) | 90,341 | 7,167 | (see above) |
| Colleges (6) | 9,118 | 608 | (not taught as a subject) |
| Institutes (14) | 65,641 | 4,752 | (individual courses in certain institutes of technology) |
| Total | 165,100 | 12,527 | (total de facto political science staff, 81) |

Note. Data on student numbers refer to full-time enrolments for the academic year 2012-13; data on staff numbers refer to the total number of permanent and full-time contract academic staff on 31 December 2011 and data on individual departments refer to full-time lecturing staff on 1 September 2014, excluding any on sabbatical. The first or only figure in brackets in the last column refers to total staff in the department in question; the second figure refers to those in the political science area.

Source. Higher Education Authority Statistics Section, hea.ie/en/statistics/overview, and Higher Education Authority, 2014; web sites of the respective departments.

When it comes to identifying the numbers of staff and students in the political science area, we immediately run up against certain formidable difficulties. Identifying staff numbers is relatively straightforward, especially when there are single-discipline departments. Table 1 indicates the position, describing the distribution of 81 academics over seven departments. One obvious way of extending this to the student body is to rely on a standard UNESCO classification system that is used by the Irish universities funding body, the Higher Education Authority (HEA). This, however, conveys a quite misleading picture. In UCD, for example, most of those studying political science do so as part of a broader programme in combination with one or more other subjects; they are therefore not reported separately, but are classified in one of several “combined” categories. This is true of some of the other universities, too. For this reason, we rely instead on information obtained directly from the departments being described.

**Table 2. Staff and student numbers, political science, Republic of Ireland, c. 2014**

| University | Staff | | Students numbers (FTSE) | | | Doctoral theses | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1999 | 2014 | UG | PG | Total | 1985-99 | 2000-14 |
| Dublin City University | 4 | 15 | 199 | 62 | 261 | 3 | 31 |
| NUI Galway | 11 | 14 | *520 | *96 | *616 | 0 | 10 |
| Trinity College Dublin | 8 | 11 | 317 | 59 | 376 | 10 | 61 |
| University College Cork | 4 | 10 | 217 | 61 | 278 | 0 | 22 |
| University College Dublin | 14 | 16 | 357 | 147 | 504 | 7 | 50 |
| University of Limerick | 10 | 13 | 182 | 87 | 269 | 14 | 46 |
| Totals | 51 | 79 | *1,792 | *512 | *2,304 | 34 | 212 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | (1,490) | (456) | (1,946) |

Note. Data refer to full-time student equivalents during the academic year 2012-13 (TCD, UCC, UL) or 2013-14 (DCU, NUIG, UCD). Those for DCU are estimates based on weighted programme registrations. “UG” refers to undergraduate and “PG” to postgraduate students.
*NUIG data refer to the whole school, not just to the political science area; figures in brackets in the last row are crude approximations based on the reallocation of FTSEs in NUIG to political science in proportion to its share of academic staff in the school (42%).

Source. Coakley, 1999; *Index to Theses* (electronic resource); information supplied by the relevant schools and departments.

Table 2 seeks to provide an overview of the position. It begins by reporting the number of staff in the various departments, both in 2014 and, for benchmarking purposes, in 1999. In the 15 years since 1999, staff numbers in politics increased by 59%, with big variation across departments. In particular, the new Department of Government in Cork expanded rapidly, as did the relatively new subject area in DCU. It is much more difficult to trace the evolution of student numbers, since in most universities a major change took place over this period: the traditional teaching system under which students registered for one or two subjects and took year-long courses in these was replaced by a more flexible modular system—which, however, made it more difficult to attribute students to departments. For this reason, the table relies on full-time student equivalents (FTSEs) for the most recent period as providing an approximation of the teaching load of each department.

It is possible to compare recent student data with those from 1999 (computed from Coakley, 1999) in two cases. In TCD, the number of undergraduate FTSEs increased from 216 to 317 (47%); in UCD the increase over the same period was from 303 to 357 (18%). There was an explosion in teaching at postgraduate level over this period. Again, direct comparison is difficult, but in UCD, where there were 20 students taking taught Master’s courses in 1999, there were 147 FTSEs in 2014, a pattern of growth not untypical of that in other universities. But the hardest data we have on the progress of the discipline comes if we look at the completion of doctoral theses. The last two columns of table 2 compare the position in the first 15 years of the twenty-first century with the last 15 years of the twentieth century. The change has been dramatic. Where previously fewer than one thesis was being completed per year even in the most productive departments, from 2000 onwards the number has exploded, with most departments producing several doctoral graduates per year.

This narrative of growth portrays a positive image, but the Irish experience has not been unproblematic. In general, expansion in staff numbers has not kept pace with expansion in student numbers. Thus, in TCD the student-staff undergraduate ratio deteriorated from 27 to 29, though it remained stable in UCD (dropping from 22 to 21). But when account is taken of

the huge increase in the numbers of taught Master's and PhD programmes, the ratio deteriorates much further, with a similar trend in the other universities.

Much of the reason for this change may be attributed to Ireland's rapidly worsening economic position after 2008. The economic crisis associated with the near-bankruptcy of the Irish banking system as a consequence of the implosion of a massive property and construction bubble, together with a huge and growing government spending deficit, led to the introduction of harsh budgets and, in 2010, intervention by the EU, the European Central Bank and the IMF. Since the Irish universities derive most of their income from state sources and are counted as part of the public sector, they suffered severely as a consequence. There were staff reductions and pay cuts; the state grant dropped by a figure of almost 20% per student over the period 2007-2011; and student numbers continued to rise. The outcome was a slide down international league tables on the part of Irish universities (Hazelkorn, 2014, p. 1347). Recruitment of replacement staff was blocked, and promotions were frozen, demoralising staff and incentivising their departure for other countries.

Political science, as a discipline with a high level of labour force mobility, suffered particularly badly, as the most marketable staff members increasingly voted with their feet by moving to universities abroad where working conditions were relatively better. There was little that the universities could do to prevent this. They were prohibited by the government from charging fees for undergraduate students (though allowed to levy substantial "registration" charges). There was no such restriction in respect of postgraduate programmes; this in part explains the proliferation of new Master's programmes. These allowed universities to generate substantial fee income, especially in respect of students recruited from outside the EU, who are required to pay much higher fees.

**Table 3. Staff by sex and status, political science, Republic of Ireland, 2014**

| **University** | **Academic status equivalent** | | | | **Total** | **Sex** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Professor | Associate Professor | Senior Lecturer | Lecturer | | Male | Female |
| **2014** | | | | | | | |
| Dublin City University | 2 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 15 | 10 | 5 |
| NUI Galway | 1 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 14 | 8 | 6 |
| Trinity College Dublin | 1 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 11 | 8 | 3 |
| University College Cork | . | . | 3 | 7 | 10 | 5 | 5 |
| University College Dublin | 3 | 2 | 1 | 10 | 16 | 12 | 4 |
| University of Limerick | 2 | . | 1 | 10 | 13 | 8 | 5 |
| Total | 9 | 6 | 12 | 52 | 79 | 51 | 28 |
| (women) | (1) | (3) | (7) | (17) | (28) | - | - |
| **1999** | | | | | | | |
| Total | 10 | 4 | 7 | 30 | 51 | 34 | 17 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (women) | (0) | (2) | (1) | (14) | (17) | - | - |

Note. Data refer to full-time (but not necessarily permanent) teaching staff. Data for 1999 have been adjusted to ensure comparability with 2014 (staff in the History and Sociology departments in UCC, included in 1999, have been dropped, and one person in NUIG has been reclassified). In 1999, the "lecturer" category includes three assistant lecturers and two junior lecturers. Formal designations referring to academic status have been converted to generic ones.

Source. Coakley, 1999; web pages of schools and departments.

Finally, it is important to comment on the changing structure of the small Irish political science labour force. Table 3 looks at two key features: status within the university, and gender. Irish universities were for long characterised by a traditional system of academic organisation by which there was one established chair in each department, and the incumbent served as head of department. Other staff were described as "lecturers", but typically enjoyed academic tenure. Gradually, two intermediate categories appeared: senior lectureships and associate professorships. Indeed, some universities eventually moved to a system by which full professors could be appointed on a personal basis, and the position of head of department or head of school was opened up to a wider segment of academic staff.[4] As will be seen from table 3, though, the Irish political science community is rather "bottom-heavy": 52 out of 79 (66%) are at lecturer level, an increase on 1999, when the corresponding share was 30 out of 51 (59%). Rather than simply aging and moving up the academic ladder, the Irish political science work force appears to have fallen victim to the economic recession. Several of the most promising younger scholars reacted to funding cutbacks by moving to more senior positions in the UK and in continental Europe, as discussed above.

The pattern in respect of gender balance is also unsurprising. Women have increased marginally as a proportion of the total: from 33% in 1999 to 35% in 2014. But the kind of status imbalance that is so obvious across the profession globally (and, indeed, across academic life more generally) is to be found here too. Of the most senior posts (professorships and associate professorships), 27% (four out of 15) were occupied by women—though this was

[4] In the NUI system, a distinction arose between "university lecturers" (also known as "statutory lecturers"), notionally appointees of the NUI, and "college lecturers", appointees of the several colleges. These two positions eventually evolved into the positions of "senior lecturer" and "lecturer" respectively, though peculiar features continue to differentiate them (for example, college lecturers were traditionally paid for examination assessment, on the grounds that they were not appointees of the body that theoretically set the examinations, the NUI, and that such assessment therefore did not form part of their areas of normal responsibility). In Trinity College Dublin all posts were retitled in 2011, though staff remained on their existing salary scales: lecturers were redesignated assistant professors, senior lecturers became associate professors, associate professors became professors, and existing full professors became "professors holding established or personal chairs". The data here are based on the original equivalents of these posts, as determined by pay scale.

something of an increase on the position in 1999, when the corresponding figure was 14% (two out of 14).

### *5. The political science curriculum*

The political science curriculum in Ireland evolved along relatively traditional lines, covering Irish politics, comparative politics, European politics, international relations, and topics relating to the various subfields of the discipline, such as public administration. In addition to core modules or courses, most universities have for long offered an extensive suite of optional modules to more advanced students. These are capped by a set of postgraduate programmes that were once few and general (such as UCD's MA in Politics, launched in 1971) but that are now many, and generally focus on much more specialised areas (for example, UCC's MBS in International Public Policy and Diplomacy).

While traditional approaches to doctoral studies are still to be found (with little formal training, and an emphasis on the thesis as the exclusive basis of assessment), structured doctoral programmes have been growing in importance. These were pioneered by Trinity College Dublin, which introduced a US-style PhD programme in 1995. This is based on an initial two years of course work and examinations, followed by two years writing a dissertation. Similar models were subsequently adopted in other universities. In 2009 an ambitious programme of collaboration between TCD and UCD saw the two universities introduce a jointly taught and jointly assessed programme, though students continue to be registered separately in the two universities.

Efforts to standardise approaches to third-level education at European level in order to facilitate cross-national mobility and degree validation have led to a more streamlined approach to course design. The initial stimulus came from the "Bologna declaration" of 1999, under which European education ministers committed themselves to facilitating mutual recognition of courses across international borders. This made specific suggestions about the curriculum, specifying core subject areas to be followed by political science students for which they would be awarded ECTS credits:

- Political theory/history of political ideas
- Methodology (including statistics)
- Political system of one's own country and of the European Union
- Comparative politics
- International relations
- Public administration and policy analysis

- Political economy/political sociology.[5]

These guidelines, which reflect broad international consensus on the main subfields in the discipline, helped to shape the character of the Irish political science curriculum. Nevertheless, the curriculum varies across schools and departments, in response to the different specialist areas that have evolved within each. Thus, for example, NUIG has particular strengths in the area of political sociology, UL in public administration, UCC in Irish politics and democratic theory and practice, DCU in international relations and conflict, TCD in electoral studies and UCD in political theory and international politics.

As regards approaches to the teaching of political science in Ireland, a number of key developments need to be noted. These have been in part a response to broader national and international strategies that emphasise excellence in teaching and that encourage the integration of research, teaching and learning. But they have also been stimulated by developments in the discipline itself.

Specific national agencies and international initiatives have sought to enhance the quality of the teaching and learning process by setting standards and disseminating information about best practice. These include, at national level, the Strategy Group for Higher Education to 2030, which reported in 2011 (Strategy Group, 2011); the National Academy for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning, whose object is to promote mutually beneficial interaction between the teaching and research processes (nairtl.ie); and the Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, which offers guidance on mechanisms for improving teaching and learning quality (teachingandlearning.ie). These operate within the general framework of the European Commission's *Europe 2020* agenda, and the Bologna process. Together, these agencies and norms have exercised decisive influence over the formulation of strategy documents adopted by individual Irish universities in the area of teaching quality (see Harris and Quinn, 2015), and they inform the environment in which political science is taught in Irish universities.

Particular disciplinary developments have also exerted an influence. In recent years, a scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) has emerged in political science in Ireland, linking the teaching and research processes. Many Irish political scientists are actively involved in SoTL through formal or informal networking within their specialist areas, or through national

[5] Cited in a memorandum from Paul Furlong, Acting Secretary, European Conference of National Political Science Associations, 1 September 2003; available www.politicologie.nl/archief/35-archief/jaarverslagen/49-europese-brief-over-de-bama-structuur (consulted 19 Nov. 2014).

and international workshops on teaching and learning. In response to this obvious interest, the Political Studies Association of Ireland (PSAI) set up a specialist group on teaching and learning in politics in 2009 to "act as a forum for networking, debate, publication and grant application and as a locus of communication between scholars of teaching and learning in politics in Ireland and similar groupings in this field internationally" (www.psai.ie; accessed 6 Oct. 2014). This followed the model of similar groups in the Political Studies Association of the UK, the European Consortium for Political Research, and the American Political Science Association. The community's commitment to promoting teaching quality was further strengthened by the launch of the PSAI prize for excellence in teaching and learning in 2010. Table 4 provides an insight into the teaching and assessment strategies used by teachers of political science in Ireland.

**Table 4. Teaching tools in undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, Ireland, 2014**

| Teaching tool | Undergraduate teaching | | | | Postgraduate teaching | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Fre-quently | Occas-ionally | Rarely | Never | Fre-quently | Occas-ionally | Rarely | Never |
| Lectures | 98 | 0 | 2 | 0 | *59 | 17 | 15 | 10 |
| Virtual learning environment | 79 | 10 | 7 | 5 | *73 | 10 | 7 | 10 |
| Tutorials | 55 | 14 | 14 | 17 | *22 | 15 | 12 | 52 |
| Seminars | *46 | 29 | 10 | 15 | *61 | 24 | 2 | 12 |
| Group Presentations | 33 | 33 | 10 | 24 | 33 | 21 | 17 | 29 |
| Problem-based learning activities | 19 | 24 | 26 | 31 | *15 | 20 | 24 | 41 |
| Role playing/simulations | 10 | 24 | 26 | 40 | 12 | 10 | 26 | 52 |
| Workshops | 10 | 21 | 31 | 38 | **10 | 30 | 13 | 48 |
| Case Studies | *17 | 32 | 32 | 20 | *37 | 24 | 17 | 22 |
| Podcasts | 10 | 7 | 19 | 64 | 7 | 9 | 16 | 67 |
| One to one meetings | 7 | 34 | 31 | 29 | 24 | 40 | 7 | 29 |
| On-line discussions/blogs | 7 | 29 | 29 | 36 | 7 | 26 | 21 | 45 |
| Guest Speakers | 5 | 50 | 21 | 24 | 12 | 43 | 14 | 31 |
| Service learning/practicum | 5 | 12 | 10 | 74 | ***3 | 5 | 13 | 79 |

Note. All figures are percentages; based on 42 respondents.
*one non-respondent **two non-respondents *** three non-respondents.

Source. Harris and Quinn, 2015.

Like their colleagues elsewhere in Europe, Irish political scientists traditionally used lectures attended by large numbers of students (sometimes extending to several hundred) and small group sessions (tutorials or seminars) as their primary mechanisms for contact with students (see Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2010). A recent study of teaching tools and assessment techniques used by Irish political scientists confirmed that these continue to be the primary teaching instruments, notwithstanding the introduction also of more modern techniques; case

studies and group presentations are also popular teaching tools (Harris and Quinn, 2015).[6] The study showed that active learning approaches, such as problem based learning, role playing or simulations, workshops and service learning or practicum (community based learning and work placements, for example) are used sometimes, but not often. Information and communications technology is widely used, with Blackboard and Moodle as the most popular, but with some lecturers also relying on podcasts and online discussions.

The choice of continuous assessment tools in political science in Ireland mirrors the teaching approaches, with frequent reliance on traditional instruments such as essays, particularly in large undergraduate classes. There is, however, evidence of a varied repertoire of assessment devices that include in-class presentations, posters, group projects, problem and enquiry-based learning, participation in online discussions and learning journals or logs (Harris and Quinn, 2015).

Interestingly, as regards pedagogical autonomy, all of the survey respondents indicated that they make their own decisions about the choice of teaching and assessment tools and techniques. This pedagogical freedom permits staff to tailor their teaching to the specific cohorts they teach, and is particularly relevant given the wide range of ability among students. Unsurprisingly, some respondents took the view that the budgetary reductions flowing from the economic recession influenced their approaches to teaching and assessment, but the impact of these cuts seems to have been relatively minor (Harris and Quinn, 2015).

To meet international, national and university specific strategies that call for excellent teaching and learning experiences, a range of professional development options are increasingly offered by Irish universities for their academic staff. These include postgraduate awards for teaching and learning in higher education, seminars on topics such as innovation in teaching and learning and pedagogical good practice, and funding for research on teaching and learning. Professional development is taken very seriously by Irish political scientists, with 88 per cent stating they had engaged in some form of it (Harris and Quinn, 2015).

While our concern here is with political science as a university-level subject, it is important to note its role at earlier stages in the educational system, since this has implications for the manner in which secondary school students are prepared for the study of politics at university, for the potential readership of academic textbooks (or at least those pitched at an introductory

[6] The data are based on responses from full-time lecturers in political science units across the island of Ireland, who were identified through university websites and surveyed using the online “survey monkey” tool. The total survey population was 123, and there were 43 respondents, of whom 42 addressed the questions reported here.

level), and for potential employment opportunities for political science graduates (as secondary school teachers of the subject). The Political Studies Association of Ireland has sought, with limited success, to persuade the Department of Education and Skills to incorporate political science firmly in the curriculum. There are plans to introduce Politics and Society as an optional subject at upper secondary level, but there is no firm commitment to a date for implementing this. At lower secondary level, Civic, Social and Political Education has been a compulsory subject since 1997; it is taught for approximately 40 minutes per week, covering rather general areas with limited political science content: rights and responsibilities, human dignity, stewardship, development, democracy, law, and interdependence.

### *6. Research in political science*

A recurring theme in early trend reports on the status of political science in Ireland was the striking absence of any systematic funding opportunities. There was no research council to support research, and such funding as was available was channelled into the natural and applied sciences. The Royal Irish Academy (founded in 1785), a private body with little funding of its own, tried to promote research in the social sciences within the limits of its resources, and set up a small-scale Irish Social Science Research Council in 1995. Given scarcity of resources, though, this functioned more as a discussion forum than as a grand-awarding agency. Some funding for research had traditionally come from private grant-awarding foundations, such as the Ford Foundation, the Nuffield Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. To these was added from the 1990s onwards very substantial funding from an organisation now known as Atlantic Philanthropies, a foundation whose source of income derived from the wealth of a self-made Irish American billionaire, Chuck Feeney.[7] This had an enormous impact on research in Irish higher education.

As well as generous grants for specific projects and programmes, Atlantic Philanthropies and its predecessor body sought to steer state policy in a more progressive direction by co-funding large-scale initiatives. One of the most important of these was the Irish government's Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions, launched in 1998. This promoted planned infrastructural development (including a substantial building construction programme), but it also offered generous funding for collaborative research. The outcome was the sudden availability of new sources of funding in political science, allowing for innovative survey research (including Ireland's first ever election study in 2002) and the creation of the Irish

[7] The extent of Chuck Feeney's contribution is not widely known, since as a true philanthropist he insisted in the early years on anonymity as a rigid condition of awards, though this was abandoned when a stage was reached at which anonymity was no longer realistic; see O'Clery, 2007; atlanticphilanthropies.org.

Social Science Data Archive, which, like its counterparts elsewhere, both stores Irish data and acts as a clearing house for data from elsewhere (see www.ucd.ie/issda/).

At the beginning of the new millennium there was a further important development: the creation in 2000 of the Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS). This overshadowed the more modest initiative of the Royal Irish Academy (which was consequently wound up) in having a sizeable budget from the state (about eight million euros annually initially). This transformed the position in the social sciences by offering awards for large-scale research projects, supporting individual researchers and, in particular, introducing, for the first time, systematic support for doctoral students and for postdoctoral researchers (ad-hoc funding for doctoral bursaries had been available since 1998). Although the council was merged in 2012 with its science counterpart to form the new Irish Research Council, these activities have continued. The new council also continues to promote Irish participation in major cross-national research initiatives, such as those of the European Science Foundation (including the European Social Survey) and, in particular, of the European Commission (see research.ie).

One consequence of increased answerability in respect of research and other funding has been a growing tendency on the part of departments and schools to promote more structured approaches to research by creating research clusters. Thus, for example, TCD identifies eight research areas, of which the first, and historically the most widely known, is political institutions, with an emphasis on elections, parliaments and parties. The seven other focal points of research identified by the department are the European Union; international relations and security; democratisation, development, and African and Chinese politics; Irish politics; public policy; political theory; and judicial politics. UCC recognises three broad research clusters: democracy and governance, international politics and the EU, and Irish politics. Other universities try to group their staff into more tightly defined clusters, though the level of coherence inevitably varies from cluster to cluster. Thus, the interdisciplinary department in Galway is organised around four clusters (children, youth and families; global women`s studies; governance and development; power and conflict). UCD, similarly, defines its interests as extending over five clusters (justice, human rights and citizenship; nationalism, ethnicity and conflict; representation and public policy; European and international integration; political economy and international development). In the University of Limerick, clusters focus on four themes (transitions to democracy, regime change and state building; Europeanisation and European politics; global transformation and exclusion; governmental capacity and political reform).

Aside from the efforts of departments to ensure that their teaching and research interests are mutually supportive, and that they develop in a systematic way, formal research institutes have in varying degrees cooperated with departmental staff in advancing research. Examples include the Geary Institute for Public Policy, the Institute for British-Irish Studies, the Dublin European Institute and the Centre for Development Studies at UCD; the Policy Institute at TCD; the Centre for International Studies and the Institute for International Conflict Resolution and Reconstruction at DCU; the Centre for Peace and Development Studies and the Centre for European Studies at UL; and the Centre for Global Women's Studies at NUIG.

**Table 5. Staff and research interests by subfield, political science, Ireland, 2014**

| Class | | Mentions | Persons |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Methods (research, teaching) | 10 | 0 |
| 2 | Political theory (including justice, rights, inequality) | 34 | 7 |
| 3.1 | Comparative politics (including institutions) | 19 | 17 |
| 3.2 | Political economy, public policy | 21 | 6 |
| 3.3 | Political change (authoritarianism, democratisation) | 13 | 6 |
| 3.4 | Local government | 2 | 2 |
| 4.1 | Elections and parties | 12 | 2 |
| 4.2 | Interest groups, lobbying | 8 | 3 |
| 4.3 | Nationalism and ethnic conflict | 9 | 5 |
| 4.4 | Gender politics | 7 | 3 |
| 4.5 | Other political behaviour | 21 | 6 |
| 5.1 | International relations, foreign policy | 14 | 9 |
| 5.2 | International political economy | 9 | 2 |
| 5.3 | International conflict and security; terrorism | 11 | 5 |
| 5.4 | Development and aid | 10 | 6 |
| 6 | Area studies | 16 | 0 |
| Total | | 216 | 79 |

Note. "mentions" refers to the number of times the various areas were pointed to within an individual's list of research interests (based on crude categorisation). "Persons" refers to the overall crude classification of each individual by research interests. Main categories are those used in the *International Political Science Abstracts;* subcategories were defined by grouping more specific interests.

Source: web pages of the relevant schools, departments and individuals.

Inevitably, though, the research orientation of particular departments is more likely to be the sum total of the research of its members than an aspirational collective research cluster. We attempt in table 5 to summarise the research interests of Irish university staff, based on what they report on their web pages, grouped using the main six-part schema adopted in the *International Political Science Abstracts*. It is worth noting that while the overall number of political scientists in the Republic of Ireland has increased from 51 in 1999 to 79 in 2014, there has been variation across subfields. Political theory has held its own, remaining stable at seven people at the beginning and end of this period. Interest in the study of political

processes and behaviour has shown a slight increase, from 17 to 19; there has been a big increase in interest in comparative politics, and especially in public policy (from 20 to 31); and a veritable explosion took place in the area of international relations, broadly defined (from six to 22).[8]

These data represent a crude classification of individuals based on their stated research interests and, in some cases, on their publications; it is obvious that particular individuals have been shoe-horned into categories in which they do not necessarily comfortably fit. Table 5 also provides a more detailed indication of where within these broad areas (such as political institutions and political behaviour) more specific interests of an individual lie, and an indication is also given of the extent to which specific areas appeared as part of multiple mentions. Thus, for example, two people have been classified as being primarily in the area of elections and parties, but 12 academics in all mentioned this as a research interest; for international political economy the respective figures were two and nine; and for the broad area of political economy and public policy they were six and 21. While eight people mentioned research methods and two mentioned teaching methods as an area of interest, none were classified as primarily in this area; and although many had a substantive interest in a specific geographical region or country, no-one was classified as being primarily in area studies. When particular geographical areas were mentioned, however, the EU featured most frequently (15 times), followed by Ireland (12), with a further three mentions for Northern Ireland. Other regions included Asia or its countries, such as China (mentioned by five), Africa (four), Central and Eastern Europe (including Russia) and Latin America (three each), and the Middle East (two).

Like their counterparts in other countries, Irish political scientists are active in their own national association (the Political Studies Association of Ireland, PSAI, founded in 1982) and in a range of political science organisations elsewhere. The activities of such associations provide a useful insight into the scholarly activity of the political science community. The PSAI has organised a conference each October since 1984; at its 31st conference, in Galway on 17-19 October 2014, almost 120 papers were presented on a wide range of topics. Participation in international conferences in a fairly typical year, 2014, serves as a useful indicator of international involvement. For that year, the conference programmes of the European Consortium for Political Research (Glasgow, 3-6 September), the American Political Science Association (Washington, 28-31 August) and the International Political Science

[8] One person in 1999 was classified as being in area studies (in fact, Soviet studies), a category not explicitly represented in 2014.

Association (Montreal, 19-24 July) contain, respectively, the names of 31, 18 and 11 paper givers with affiliations in the Republic of Ireland.

Publication outlets of Irish political scientists follow the conventional routes for the discipline: books, book chapters and journal articles. The journal launched by the PSAI in 1986, *Irish Political Studies*, plays a particular role here. It contains articles, book reviews and a very extensive data section, systematically documenting political developments in the Republic and in Northern Ireland. Originally a yearbook published by the association itself, it moved to Taylor and Francis in 2002, and currently appears four times a year. Analysis of the Social Science Citation Index, focusing only on articles formally classified as "political science" over the years 2000-14, gives us a total of 513 items authored or co-authored by Irish academics. The top 10 journals (accounting for 43% of all articles) were *Irish Political Studies* (79, a significant underestimate), the *European Journal of Political Research* (26), *Political Studies* (20), *West European Politics* (19), *Electoral Studies* (17), the *Journal of Common Market Studies* (14), the *British Journal of Political Science* (14), *Public Administration* (11), *European Union Politics* (11), and *Democratization* (10).[9]

### *7. Political science and public policy*

Debates on the relevance of political science and its public role have gained traction across the discipline in the past decade or so. In his presidential address at the 2002 APSA annual meeting, Robert Putnam (2003, p. 250) called for a stronger public role for the discipline, noting that "attending to the concerns of our fellow citizens is not just an optional add-on for the profession of political science, but an obligation as fundamental as our pursuit of scientific truth". Similarly, Nye (2009, p. 252) contends that political scientists should "devote more attention to unanswered questions about how our work relates to the policy world we live in". Suggestions on narrowing the gap between research and practice range from departments or universities giving greater recognition to faculty participation in "real world" politics and policy (Walt, 2004) to researchers enhancing the accessibility of their findings (Wood, 2014).

Efforts to bridge this gap can be found in the weight that funding bodies and universities accord to relevance and impact. Funding schemes such as the EU Commission's *Horizon 2020* programme and the Irish Research Council's *New Foundations* programme seek evidence of these in evaluating proposals. In addition, Irish universities' recruitment and

[9] Like many other journals, *Irish Political Studies* was not included in the database for all of this period; its entries date only from 2008. Many important journals are, of course, altogether excluded from the SSCI database. These data were computed from the Social Science Citation Index database on 19 November 2014, using the author addresses Dublin, Cork, Galway or Limerick.

promotion policies increasingly value academics' public roles as well as recognising policy relevant research and diverse methods of disseminating research findings (including, for example, blogs and podcasts). Nonetheless, impact of this kind normally takes second place to articles in leading peer-reviewed journals when it comes to recruitment and promotion.

Within the discipline, courses, professional development seminars and publications organised by the Institute of Public Administration have traditionally linked political scientists and practitioners on issues of public management and public service delivery. However, since the onset of the economic and financial crisis, the PSAI has played a key role in leading and contributing to the wider public debate on whether the Irish political system is "fit for purpose". It has done this by publishing accessible academic research findings, propagating evidence-based ideas for reform, and imagining alternative futures on its popular blog, the Irish Politics Forum.

Indeed, developments in ICT and in social media, in particular, have made it easier, quicker and cheaper to circulate ideas and findings as well as to link up directly with policy makers and journalists. The information revolution has witnessed a growth in departmental and individual blogs as well as an explosion of academic Twitter accounts and Facebook pages which allow political scientists to feed their research output directly into the wider public debate.

An overview of the contribution of Irish political science to public policy may usefully be undertaken on the basis of Smith's (1986) framework for analysing this relationship, which extends over three domains: the communications media, the public service and party political activity. A report in the early 1990s concluded that in each of these areas the impact of political science in Ireland had been limited. While political scientists' services were occasionally solicited by the media, especially at election time, and a few individual academics had established reputations as broadcasters, they were commonly overshadowed as commentators on current affairs by contemporary historians and others, and were unable to match the perceived intellectual authority of, say, economists. Political scientists were rarely consulted by official bodies in areas where they might be expected to have particular expertise, and there was less movement between the universities and the civil service than elsewhere in Europe. While a few political scientists had adopted political careers, most remained aloof from political activity and comment (Coakley, 1991, pp. 369-70).

To what extent has the position changed since the late twentieth century? While the generalisation about the relatively modest role of political science in shaping public policy is still largely true, there have been important exceptions that suggest a more prominent role for the discipline. We may cite three examples, one in each of the areas discussed above. First, the onset of political turmoil in the aftermath of the economic crisis that began in 2008 has

resulted in more involvement of political scientists in public commentary—in newspapers, on radio and on television, but also through social media, a change facilitated by technological advances, as discussed above. One UCD political scientist, for example, has a weekly slot on a national current affairs programme. Second, political scientists have contributed in different ways to public policy and political reform by providing evidence to parliamentary committees, acting as advisors to specific government departments (for example, one DCU professor acts as an advisor to the Government Reform Unit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform), and by getting involved in other ways—locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. One of the most important of these was a pilot citizen assembly, "We the Citizens", led by a group of political scientists (see Farrell et al., 2013). In an important sequel to this, the Government established a Convention on the Constitution in 2012.[10] The work of the Convention was supported by a team comprising four political scientists and a lawyer; and a considerable number of political scientists were among those who provided expertise on issues ranging from electoral reform to women's representation in political life. Third, the most dramatic achievement by an academic political scientist was the election in 2011 of Michael D Higgins, formerly a lecturer in NUI Galway, as President of Ireland (though he had served as a parliamentary representative and government minister in between these two roles).

### *8. Conclusion*

The story of political science in Ireland resembles that in other small European countries. It shares two challenging features with political science elsewhere in Europe. The first is its autonomy in relation to other disciplines. It has not faced the same kinds of difficulties as in southern Europe, where the discipline was until recently seen as a branch of law; but it has had the same kind of difficulty in establishing its independence of other disciplines, such as philosophy (in UCD), sociology (in Galway and Maynooth) and history (in Cork). Second, and related to this, the very diversity of the discipline has promoted a tendency towards fragmentation, with political theory, political sociology and international relations pulling scholars in different directions, and into association with other disciplines.

Nevertheless, in part because of developments at international level, but in particular at European level (where the role of the ECPR in building up a well-integrated political science community has been outstanding), the discipline has managed to assert a distinct identity for itself. By the mid-1980s there was sufficient critical mass to sustain a professional association, an annual conference and a journal; and in the decades that followed the discipline expanded

[10] This was a "hybrid" citizens' assembly made up of 66 randomly selected individuals, 33 party politicians and an independent chair; it considered a range of aspects of constitutional reform.

steadily, notwithstanding sometimes difficult economic circumstances. Today, the Irish political science community plays a crucial role in education *in*, *for* and *about* politics. While traces of the "haphazard origins and development" identified by Morgenthau, as recalled in the introduction to this chapter, may still be in evidence, the discipline now has an identity, societal recognition and an infrastructural base sufficient to ensure its long-term survival.

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