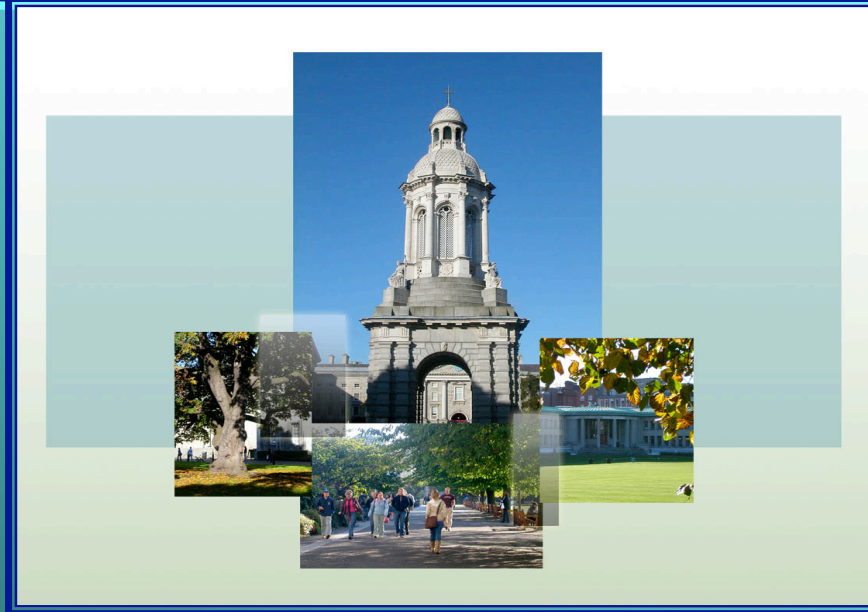


# Workshop 5: The Perspectives of Post-Docs on Postgraduate Education in Ireland



Avril Kennan and Alison Donnelly

***Trinity Research Staff Association (TRSA)***

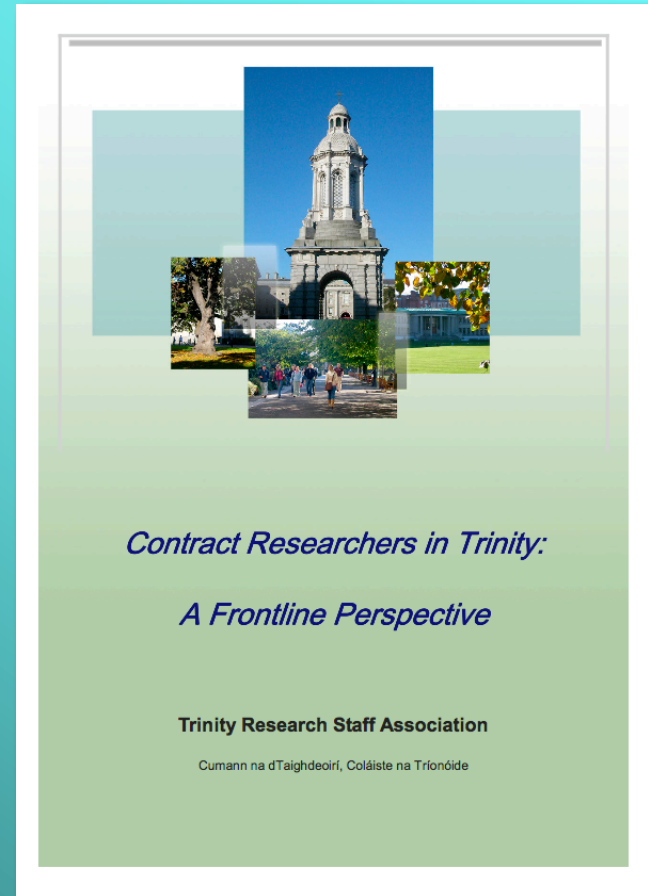
Ireland-UKCGE: Colloquium on Graduate Education, 25 October 2007

# Workshop Outline

- Introduction (5 mins)
- **Part 1: What are the demographics of researchers in Ireland?**
  - Group discussion (5 mins)
  - Presentation (5 mins)
- **Part 2: How do we improve graduate education with a view to current problems faced by Contract Researchers (CRs)?**
  - Group discussion (10 mins)
  - Presentation and feedback (15 mins)
- Conclusions

# About the TRSA

- Established June 2005
- Represents & promotes interests of Contract Researchers (CRs)
- First association of its kind in Ireland
- Surveyed CRs to determine their terms and conditions of employment
- Position paper on issues affecting CRs ([www.tcdlife.ie/trsa/?Position\\_paper](http://www.tcdlife.ie/trsa/?Position_paper))

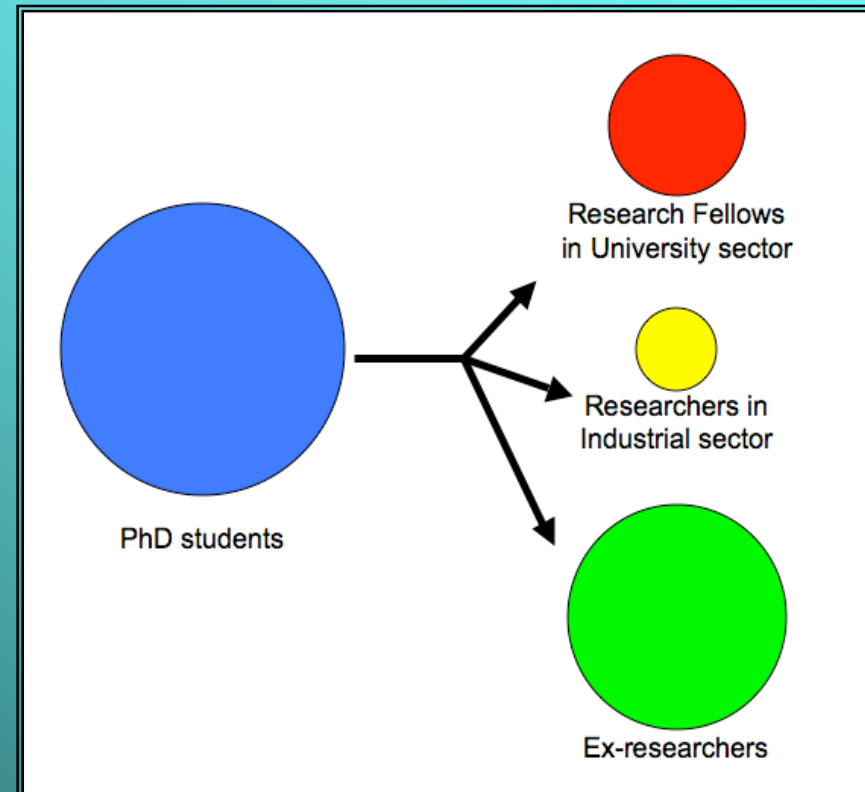


## Government's Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (SSTI)

- 'Science, Technology and Innovation is vital to our economic and social progress'
- 'Over the life of this strategy we aim to see a doubling of postgraduate researchers' (total output of 6,546 PhD graduates)
- 'We need to build the critical mass in our research teams...by growing the number of principal investigators by over 350 over the period to 2013 and postdoctoral researchers by 1,050'
- '[We envisage] significant numbers [of postgraduates] going on to take up employment in the enterprise sector'
- 'Emphasis will be placed on sustainable career development rather than only focusing at early stage careers'

# Research Careers in Ireland

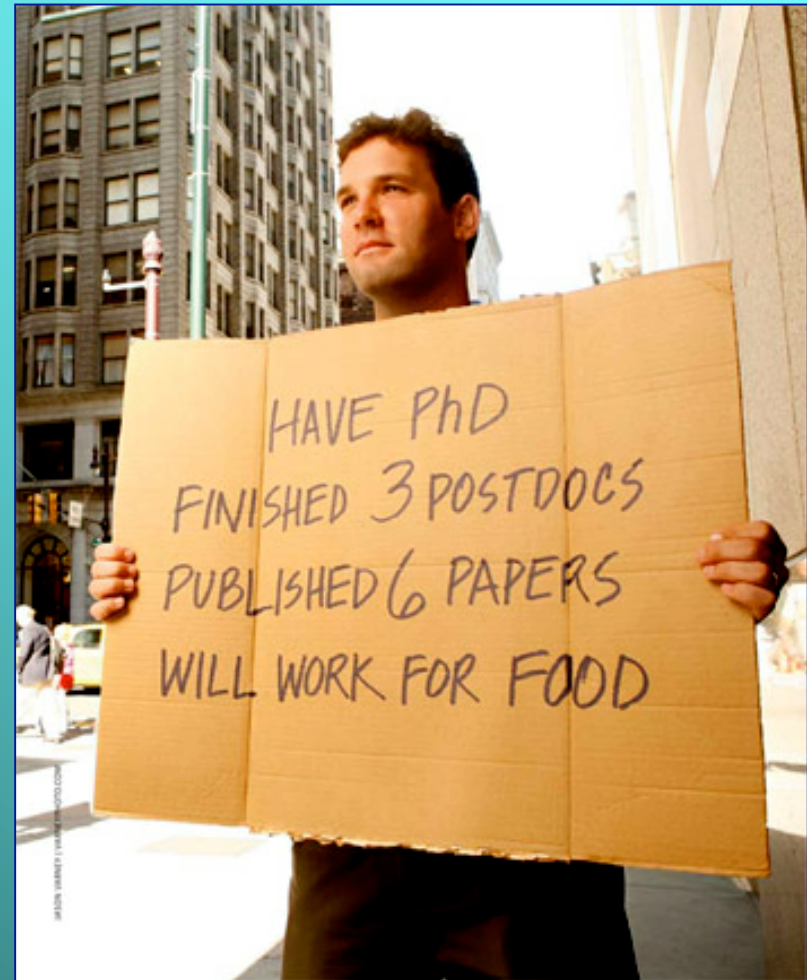
- How many researchers are there...
  - In Ireland?
  - In the University sector?
  - In the Industrial sector?
  - In other sectors?
- How many CRs get permanent academic jobs?
  - Lectureships
  - Research positions



Part 1: What are the demographics of researchers in Ireland?

# Issues Highlighted by Survey

- Lack of career prospects/stability
- Lack of career structure
- Salary not in line with experience
- No career development advice
- No opportunities for gaining transferable skills
- Lack of recognition - not seen as professional



# Why do people do a PhD?

- They enjoy research and want a career in it
- They assume that a permanent career as a university academic is an option for them
- They do well at undergraduate level and see it as a natural progression
- They are ill-informed about other opportunities available to them

Part 2: How do we improve graduate education with a view to current problems faced by CRs?

# Conclusions

- Despite improvements in science funding, research remains a difficult career choice
- We need to enable researchers, from the postgraduate stage, to maximise the career opportunities available to them
- Postgraduate studies could be improved by:
  - Ensuring that students are aware of what a PhD entails and job prospects thereafter
  - Providing career guidance and mentoring over the course of the PhD
  - Making courses in appropriate transferable skills available to postgrads
  - Supporting the CRs who supervise postgrads