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# Research Classification Ireland

## The Development of a National Research Classification System

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## Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to explain why and how Research Classification Ireland (RCI) was developed. RCI itself is documented separately<sup>1</sup>.

Action 7.6 of *Innovation 2020*<sup>2</sup> (predecessor to *Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy*<sup>3</sup>) identified the need for a national standard research classification to improve transparency and provide valuable evidence of what publicly funded research is taking place. This will strengthen the connections between Government Departments and the public research system and facilitate accessible research expertise.

Dr Claire McKenna, through the *SFI Public Service Fellowship Scheme (2019)*, developed RCI over the period October 2020 to September 2022. This involved extensive consultation with the main national research funders and research performing organisations in Ireland and with experts in specific fields across all academic domains. This included over 60 meetings with stakeholders and an open public consultation in February/March 2022. This consultative approach was designed to ensure consensus and to enable widespread future adoption of RCI.

RCI classifies research and experimental development performed in Ireland based on:

- Type of Activity;
- Field of Research; and
- Socio-economic Objective.

RCI is designed to be inclusive of all current sectors of research in Ireland and was developed to ensure consistent categorisation of Exchequer-funded research in Ireland. This will enable reliable comparison of research statistics and data nationally as well as the development of standardised reporting and benchmarking. In addition, RCI is closely aligned with the concepts underlying the Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification (ANZSRC 2020)<sup>4</sup> and the Canadian Research and Development Classification (CRDC 2020)<sup>5</sup>. RCI also takes account of international standards and best practice in research reporting, as described in the OECD Frascati Manual 2015<sup>6</sup>. This enables comparability of Irish statistics with those derived using ANZSRC, CRDC or OECD Frascati Manual classifications.

In summary, RCI will facilitate improved insights into the impact of public investment in research, aid the development of future research funding policy and support the administrative management of research. As such, RCI will contribute to improving accountability and transparency in reporting of publicly funded research in Ireland.

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<sup>1</sup> Research Classification Ireland - <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/263890/6a7615b8-b85d-4f4e-9e29-cefaac4b65f8.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/publications/publication-files/innovation-2020.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://assets.gov.ie/224616/5f34f71e-e13e-404b-8685-4113428b3390.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/australian-and-new-zealand-standard-research-classification-anzsrc/latest-release>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/subjects/standard/crdc/2020v1/index>

<sup>6</sup> OECD (2015), *Frascati Manual 2015: Guidelines for Collecting and Reporting Data on Research and Experimental Development, The Measurement of Scientific, Technological and Innovation Activities*, OECD Publishing, Paris. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/978926>

## Introduction

This section of the report explains why RCI was developed.

### Establishment of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS)

The establishment of DFHERIS in summer 2020 elevated Irish tertiary education and research to a central and more visible position, both nationally and internationally, and recognised the importance of further and higher education and research to the economy and to society. DFHERIS's *Statement of Strategy 2021-2023*<sup>7</sup> sets out the path for Ireland to become a leading knowledge economy, with recognition internationally in the areas of higher education, research, and innovation. It explicitly recognises that investment in research will be a critical driver of innovation, providing the foundation for Ireland's future economic growth and societal wellbeing.

### Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy

One of the first major milestones for DFHERIS was the publication of *Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy* in May 2022. Reflecting the policy intent behind the creation of DFHERIS, *Impact 2030* is a Whole-of-Government strategy and delivery of *Impact 2030* is a collective effort by a range of Government Departments and their Agencies.

As referenced in *Impact 2030*, Ireland is facing key economic and societal challenges, including climate change and the need to transition to a climate-neutral society; economic transformation fuelled by technological and other change; greater international competition and geopolitical instability; increased mobility of talent; and the need to build societal resilience against the threat of shocks. *Impact 2030* puts R&I at the heart of Ireland's response to these social, economic and environmental challenges and leverages our national performance to date to advance the strategic development of Ireland's R&I system between now and 2030.

### Research Classification Ireland (RCI)

Action 7.6 of *Innovation 2020*<sup>8</sup> (predecessor to *Impact 2030*) identified the need for a national standard research classification, RCI, to improve transparency and provide valuable evidence of what publicly funded research is taking place. This will strengthen the connections between Government Departments and the public research system and facilitate accessible research expertise, which will ultimately benefit those seeking to engage in, or procure, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary research. In addition to facilitating improved insights into the impact of public investment in research, RCI will aid the development of future research funding policy and support the administrative management of research. As such, RCI will contribute to improving accountability and transparency in reporting of publicly funded research in Ireland.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/3f066-statement-of-strategy-2021-2023/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/publications/publication-files/innovation-2020.pdf>

## Development of RCI

This section of the report explains how RCI was developed.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

According to the *Best Practice Guidelines for Developing International Statistical Classifications*<sup>9</sup> published by the United Nations Statistics Division, the essential components of a statistical classification are:

- A consistent conceptual basis;
- A flat or hierarchic structure;
- Categories that are mutually exclusive and exhaustive;
- Definitions that are clear and unambiguous, and which define the content of each category;
- That it is up-to-date and relevant;
- That it is robust enough to last for a period of time;
- That it meets user needs;
- That it provides comparability over time and between collections; and
- That it provides guidelines for coding and output of data collected using it.

Stakeholder feedback identified that RCI must:

- Have a low administrative burden to enable widespread future adoption of RCI and minimise the cost of implementation;
- Be internationally comparable to allow benchmarking;
- Be sufficiently granular for Government-level reporting;
- Be easy to use; and
- Avoid double counting when assessing use of public funds.

### OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT OF RCI

Dr Claire McKenna, through the *SFI Public Service Fellowship Scheme (2019)*, developed RCI over the period October 2020 to September 2022. In summary, the project involved the following phases:

1. Identification of existing international research classifications that could be adapted for use in Ireland.
2. A pilot study involving ten national research-funding agencies to determine which option to pursue.
3. Extensive consultation with the main national research funders and research performing organisations in Ireland and with experts in specific fields across all academic domains.

Each of these three stages is described in more detail below.

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<sup>9</sup> [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/classifications/bestpractices/Best\\_practice\\_Nov\\_2013.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/classifications/bestpractices/Best_practice_Nov_2013.pdf)

# 1. International Classifications

## OECD FRASCATI MANUAL<sup>10</sup>

The OECD Frascati Manual is the global standard for collecting and reporting statistics related to research and experimental development (R&D). It is widely used by various organisations associated with the United Nations and the European Union and it:

1. Defines R&D as “*creative and systematic work undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge – including knowledge of humankind, culture and society – and to devise new applications of available knowledge*”.
2. States that R&D covers three **Types of Activity (TOA)**: basic research, applied research and experimental development.
  - **Basic research** is experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge of the underlying foundations of phenomena and observable facts, without any particular application or use in view.
  - **Applied research** is original investigation undertaken in order to acquire new knowledge. It is, however, directed primarily towards a specific, practical aim or objective.
  - **Experimental development** is systematic work, drawing on knowledge gained from research and practical experience and producing additional knowledge, which is directed to producing new products or processes or to improving existing products or processes.
3. Recommends classification by **Field of R&D (FORD)**, identifying six ‘Broad classifications’ (natural sciences; engineering and technology; medical and health sciences; agricultural and veterinary sciences; social sciences; and humanities and the arts) and multiple ‘Second-level classifications’ within each ‘Broad classification’. Two R&D projects can be said to belong to the same field if their content is the same or sufficiently similar.

For the purposes of national and international reporting (such as Government Budget Allocations for R&D<sup>11</sup>), research is also classified according to the **Socio-economic Objective (SEO)** using Nomenclature for the Analysis and Comparison of Scientific Programmes and Budgets<sup>12</sup> (NABS) codes. The OECD Frascati Manual adopts the NABS classification, which

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<sup>10</sup> OECD (2015), *Frascati Manual 2015: Guidelines for Collecting and Reporting Data on Research and Experimental Development, The Measurement of Scientific, Technological and Innovation Activities*, OECD Publishing, Paris. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/978926>

<sup>11</sup> Government Budget Allocations for Research and Development (**GBARD**) is the internationally recognised indicator for benchmarking State-funded performance of R&D. In Ireland, GBARD includes Government: (i) funding for R&D programmes in the higher education sector administered by DFHERIS, its Agencies (the Higher Education Authority, Science Foundation Ireland and the Irish Research Council) and others; (ii) funding for business sector R&D, administered through State Agencies including IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and others; (iii) funding for R&D performed in the public sector by Teagasc, the Marine Institute and others; and contributions to international R&D programmes or organisations solely or mainly concerned with R&D. DFHERIS carries out the annual **R&D Budget Survey** (which presents the data on the Government R&D Budget and on Ireland's R&D expenditure across all sectors) and the biennial **Higher Education R&D Survey** (which presents expenditure and human resources devoted to research activity in the Irish higher education sector). Both of these surveys result in statistics that are communicated to the Central Statistics Office, Eurostat and OECD for international publication, which underlines the importance of accurate reporting.

<sup>12</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/metadata/classifications>

has been in place since 2007 and includes the following 14 main SEOs (with numbers 12 and 13 each having subcategories):

1. Exploration and exploitation of the earth
2. Environment
3. Exploration and exploitation of space
4. Transport, telecommunication and other infrastructures
5. Energy
6. Industrial production and technology
7. Health
8. Agriculture
9. Education
10. Culture, recreation, religion and mass media
11. Political and social systems, structures and processes 1
12. General advancement of knowledge: R&D financed from general university funds (GUF)
13. General advancement of knowledge: R&D financed from other sources than GUF
14. Defence

### **AUSTRALIAN/NEW ZEALAND STANDARD RESEARCH CLASSIFICATION (ANZSRC)<sup>13</sup>**

ANZSRC is the most well established research classification system internationally. It was first developed in 2008 and has undergone several revisions since. This was one of two research classification systems that were used as a basis for developing RCI.

### **CANADIAN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CLASSIFICATION (CRDC)<sup>14</sup>**

CRDC was developed from ANZSRC and was published in 2020. This was the second research classification system that was used as a basis for developing RCI.

### **EUROPEAN RESEARCH CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS**

There is no mandatory research classification system for research projects funded by European programmes, with classifications tending to follow the needs and mandate of the particular programme and its underlying policies. In addition, some European countries have national research classification systems, for example:

- Germany: Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft;
- The Netherlands: National Academic Research and Collaborations Information System (NARCIS); and
- Sweden: 'Swecris', as used on Sweden's national research database.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/australian-and-new-zealand-standard-research-classification-anzsrc/latest-release>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/subjects/standard/crdc/2020v1/index>

## 2. Pilot Study

### BACKGROUND

To ensure consistent categorisation of Exchequer-funded research in Ireland, RCI needed to be inclusive of all current sectors of research in Ireland. Preliminary analysis and consultation with Irish funding agencies and other stakeholders established that the OECD Frascati Manual's FORD and SEO (namely, NABS 2007) classifications are not detailed enough for use in an Irish research classification system.

After a desk study and discussions with multiple stakeholders across the Irish funding agencies, it was decided to conduct a pilot study to assess the suitability, for Irish purposes, of ANZSRC and CRDC.

### METHODOLOGY

For the pilot study, 238 projects were classified from data provided by ten research funders:

1. Department of Agriculture; Food and the Marine (DAFM);
2. Enterprise Ireland;
3. Environmental Protection Agency;
4. Geological Survey Ireland;
5. Health Research Board (HRB);
6. Irish Research Council (IRC);
7. Marine Institute;
8. Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI);
9. Science Foundation Ireland (SFI); and
10. Teagasc.

The funders were asked to choose recently funded projects that they perceived as being 'difficult' to classify under their internal classification systems. 'Difficult' projects were deliberately chosen in order to test the robustness of ANZSRC and CRDC.

To enable consistent comparison, funders were asked to provide the following information in spreadsheet format:

- Primary funder/co-funder (if relevant)
- Programme
- Contract number
- Principal Investigator – Surname
- Principal Investigator – Forename
- Host institution
- Project title
- Abstract
- Total value of the project
- Total cost to funder
- Start date
- End date
- Career stage of Principal Investigator

The list was then analysed and manually categorised according to the ANZSRC and CRDC systems under the three categories covered by both classifications (TOA, FOR and SEO). The resulting classifications were subsequently verified by the funder in question and feedback was requested regarding the extent to which:

- The subject areas were well captured;
- There were any omissions; and
- One system was superior to the other in terms of TOA, FOR and/or SEO.



## RESULTS OF PILOT STUDY

### TOA

CRDC includes the same three TOA as the OECD Frascati Manual (basic research, applied research and experimental development) while ANZSRC includes a fourth TOA (strategic basic research). During the pilot study, it emerged that those undertaking the categorisation exercise had varying understandings of the distinction between ‘pure basic research’ and ‘strategic basic research’.

Therefore, to eliminate subjectivity and retain alignment with the OECD Frascati Manual, RCI uses the same three TOA as the OECD Frascati Manual: basic research, applied research and experimental development.

Should research funders wish to distinguish further between the maturity of technologies or innovation under development, they may avail of other widely adopted standards such as Technology Readiness Levels<sup>15</sup> (TRL) or the more recently established Societal Readiness Levels (SRL), depending on their needs. Since 2014, the TRL scale is part of the European Union’s Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and it has been widely adopted in the context of ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) supported research, development and innovation. As a result, many Irish researchers are familiar with TRL.

### Field of Research (FOR)

While the OECD Frascati Manual’s FORD classification contains two hierarchical levels, ANZSRC’s FOR has three and CRDC’s FOR has four. An example (behavioural ecology studies) will illustrate how this difference affects the classification of research in practice.

*(Behavioural ecology studies how adaptations arise from selective pressures under different ecological environments, including new selective environments that are generated by animal behaviour. At the intersection of ecology, evolution, neuroscience and genomics, behavioural ecology explores the evolutionary causes and ecological consequences of behaviour. Research into behavioural ecology would be classified as follows:*

#### OECD Frascati Manual FORD

Hierarchical level	FORD
Broad classification	1. Natural sciences
Second-level classification	1.6 Biological sciences

#### ANZSRC

Hierarchical level	FOR
Division	31 Biological sciences
Group	3103 Ecology
Field	310301 Behavioural ecology

<sup>15</sup> ISO 16290:2013

**CRDC**

<b>Hierarchical level</b>	<b>FOR</b>
Division	RDF10 Natural sciences
Group	RDF106 Biological sciences
Class	RDF10603 Ecology (except applications)
Subclass	RDF1060301 Behavioural ecology

As the example illustrates:

- The OECD Frascati Manual's 'Broad classification' almost exactly corresponds to the CRDC's 'Division', which better aligns the CRDC with the OECD Frascati Manual;
- The ANZSRC omits the top-level classification entirely, which requires a mapping exercise to align it to the OECD Frascati Manual; and
- The OECD Frascati Manual's 'Second-level classification' is similar to the ANZSRC's 'Division' and the CRDC's 'Group'.

In general, both ANZSRC and CRDC achieve the same overall objective when analysing FOR and, in the majority of cases result in the same FOR 'Group' (i.e. subject) categorisations. However, some differences were noted in terms of territory specific categories and underrepresentation of some subjects that are important in Ireland.

**Therefore, to maintain alignment with OECD Frascati Manual, and based on feedback received during the public consultation, RCI's FOR categorisation is based on the CRDC's four level system (Division, Group, Class, Subclass).**

(RCI<sup>16</sup> also compares its FOR categorisation with the OECD Frascati Manual's FORD categorisation.)

**SEO**

The ANZSRC SEO is a hierarchical classification with four levels (Sector, Division, Group, Objective) while the CRDC SEO is a two level hierarchical classification (Division, Group).

**Stakeholders expressed a preference for the ANZSRC SEO coding because it is more granular (840 codes at the lowest level, compared to 85 in CRDC). Therefore, the ANZSRC SEO codes are the basis for RCI.**

(RCI<sup>17</sup> also compares its SEO codes with the OECD Frascati Manual's SEO codes, namely NABS 2007.)

**Career Stage of Researcher(s)**

Since 2021, application forms for funding under the European Union's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation have required details of applicants' career stages. The application forms use the following career stages from the OECD Frascati Manual:

- **Category A – Top grade researcher:** the single highest grade/post at which research is normally conducted. Example: 'Full professor' or 'Director of research'.

<sup>16</sup> <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/263890/6a7615b8-b85d-4f4e-9e29-cefaac4b65f8.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/263890/6a7615b8-b85d-4f4e-9e29-cefaac4b65f8.pdf>

- **Category B – Senior researcher:** Researchers working in positions not as senior as top position but more senior than newly qualified doctoral graduates (ISCED<sup>18</sup> level 8). Examples: ‘associate professor’ or ‘senior researcher’ or ‘principal investigator’.
- **Category C – Recognised researcher:** the first grade/post into which a newly qualified doctoral graduate would normally be recruited. Examples: ‘assistant professor’, ‘investigator’ or ‘post-doctoral fellow’.
- **Category D – First stage researcher:** Either doctoral students at the ISCED level 8 who are engaged as researchers, or researchers working in posts that do not normally require a doctorate degree. Examples: ‘PhD students’ or ‘junior researchers’ (without a PhD).

Monitoring the career stage of applicants and awardees allows for follow-up tracking of those researchers’ influence in their field through publication and patent databases, awards and prizes, as well as evolution of working conditions through salary levels and benefits. Changes in influence are considered a proxy indicator of the extent to which the Framework Programme generated scientific impact by strengthening human capital in research and innovation<sup>19</sup>.

The pilot study sought to analyse the career stages of researchers using the OECD Frascati Manual’s career stages. However, other than funding calls that target certain career stages (for example, IRC Laureate Awards and the SFI-IRC Pathway Programme), Irish funding agencies do not generally record the career stage of applicants. As a result, it was only possible to classify career stage for the IRC’s project list (48 of the 238 projects tested), which consisted of data from the IRC Laureate Awards. However, Dr McKenna made the following observations:

- A significant number of grants involve collaborative teams where co-Principal Investigators may be at different career stages and/or participants may include researchers from industry or other non-academic organisations. Therefore, collecting information on the career stage of one Principal Investigator will not accurately reflect the profile of all researchers funded through the project.
- The OECD Frascati Manual’s career stages correspond to traditional academic career paths, but not all publicly funded research projects in Ireland are awarded to higher education institutions (HEIs). Within the pilot study alone, beneficiaries of funding included researchers working in industry or industry associations, hospitals, charities and State agencies such as the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), Teagasc and the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA). In addition, data on the host organisation was provided for 207 of the projects, of which 32 (15.5%) were awarded to non-HEI organisations.

**RCI does not mandate the use of career stages as outlined in the OECD Frascati Manual because they are not appropriate for all publicly funded research projects in Ireland. However, where appropriate, their use is encouraged.**

### 3. Stakeholder Consultation

When finalising RCI, Dr McKenna took account of feedback received during extensive consultations with the main research funders and research performing organisations in Ireland as well as with experts in specific fields across all academic domains. This included over 60 meetings with

<sup>18</sup> International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED): the international classification for education programmes/qualifications.

<sup>19</sup> See page 146 of “A New Horizon For Europe: Impact Assessment of the 9th EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation” (doi:10.2777/194210).

stakeholders (organisations and representative bodies) over the period October 2020 to September 2022 and a public consultation from 7 February to 21 March 2022 (see **Appendix 1**). This consultative approach was designed to collect evidence-based recommendations, ensure consensus and enable widespread future adoption of RCI. It included meetings with:

- The Australian Bureau of Statistics, Statistics New Zealand and the Australian Research Council, which developed ANZSRC and has been using it for over ten years;
- Statistics Canada and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), which undertook a similar project from 2017 to 2020 and published Canada's first national research classification, CRDC, in 2020;
- UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), which undertook a similar project from 2018 to 2020 and ultimately adopted the ANZSRC FOR system;
- University of Hasselt, which is a partner in the Expert Centre for Research & Development Monitoring (ECOOM-Hasselt), which developed the Flemish Research Discipline Standard (which is based on the OECD Frascati Manual's FORD, but contains four hierarchical levels);
- Ireland's main national research funders to ensure that RCI supports the full range of uses of a research classification for programme delivery, monitoring and reporting;
- Subject-matter experts and national representative groups in the research community to inform and validate the terminology used in and the scope of specific field of research; and
- Other organisations, such as the Central Statistics Office and Quality and Qualification Ireland.

## Appendix 1: Public Consultation Feedback

A public consultation ran from 7 February to 21 March 2022 to give all interested parties the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Research Classification Ireland (RCI), which:

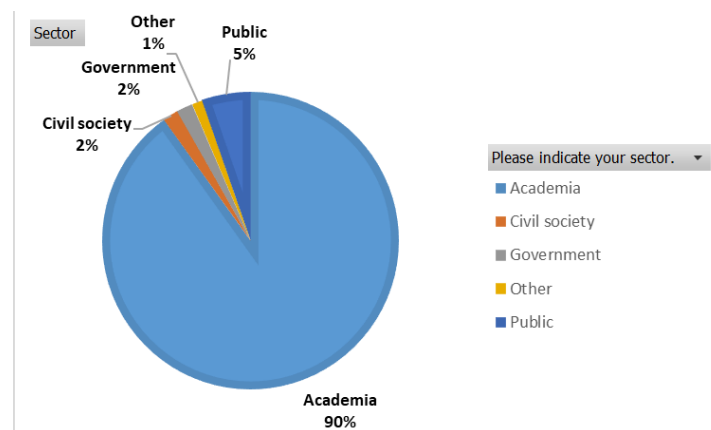
- Proposed using the Australian/New Zealand Standard Research Classification 2020 (ANZSRC) Field of Research (FOR) codes; and
- Included draft Socio-economic Objective (SEO) codes (based on ANZSRC, but with some changes to reflect the results of the pilot study and feedback received from other organisations that had developed national research classification systems).

The public consultation posed five questions and received 180 responses, of which 133 were from individual researchers and 47 were from a range of groups and organisations. Of these, 172 responses were submitted online and could readily be analysed, with the results shown below. Dr McKenna considered all 180 responses when developing the final RCI, with changes in response to the feedback including:

- The addition of new subjects;
- Renaming of existing subjects to reflect current usage; and
- Restructuring the RCI FOR to better align with the OECD Frascati Manual’s Field of R&D (FORD) and the Canadian Research and Development Classification (CRDC), which was intended to alleviate any concerns about the perceived favouring of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects over AHSS (Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences) subjects.

### SECTOR

The vast majority of respondents worked in academia (90%), with the remainder split between the general public, civil society, government officials and ‘other’.



### Q1: CAN YOU IDENTIFY YOUR AREA(S) OF EXPERTISE IN THE FIELD(S) OF RESEARCH CLASSIFICATION? (Y/N)

A clear majority of respondents (111 respondents, 65%) agreed that they could find a FOR code to represent their research area in the ANZSRC list, with 61 (35%) respondents stating that they could not identify their area(s) of expertise.

**Q2 IF YOU CANNOT FIND A SUITABLE FIELD OF RESEARCH CODE WHERE SHOULD YOUR RESEARCH BE ADDED? [TEXTBOX]**

Of the 172 respondents, 89 provided a response to suggest how their research could be included. All responses were analysed and considered in the development of the final FOR list.

**Q3 IS THE INTENDED PURPOSE(S) OF YOUR RESEARCH REPRESENTED IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC OBJECTIVE CLASSIFICATION? (Y/N)**

A majority of respondents (101 respondents, 59%) agreed that the draft SEO list included the socio-economic objective of their research area, with 41% disagreeing.

**Q4 IF YOU CANNOT FIND A SUITABLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC OBJECTIVE CODE WHERE SHOULD THE OBJECTIVE OF YOUR RESEARCH BE ADDED?**

Only 170 of the 172 respondents answered this question and, of those, 69 suggested where the SEO of their research could be included. All responses were analysed and addressed in the development of the final SEO list.

**Q5 DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS?**

Of the 172 respondents, 95 provided further comments, of which 61 included further clarification on earlier responses (mainly suggestions for specific research topics to be added or for existing topics to be reworded to better align with current needs). Of the remaining 34 comments, the majority (21) were focused on four common themes:

- Questioning why a national research classification is needed;
- Unease at the use of the ANZSRC structure;
- Querying why Ireland was not adopting a European model (notwithstanding that there is no mandatory research classification system for research projects funded by European programmes, with classifications tending to follow the needs and mandate of the particular programme and its underlying policies); and
- Suggesting that the proposed classification could be perceived as favouring STEM subjects over AHSS subjects.

Of the 13 remaining comments, eight focused on the difficulties in classifying multi/interdisciplinary research (which had been explicitly acknowledged in the consultation preamble) and five expressed support for the development of RCI.