



UCD Geary Institute
for Public Policy
Institiúid Uí Ghadhra
um Beartas Poiblí UCD

EPEx
EMPOWERING POLICY EXCELLENCE

UCD Geary Policy Summer School

Planning for Ireland's Future Challenges:
Key Skills, Knowledge and Strategies
for Policymakers

EVENT SCHEDULE

Tuesday 14th July - Thursday 16th July 2026



Day 1 – Tuesday 14 July

09:30 AM **Registration**
Registration and coffee

10:00 AM **Session 1: POLICY DEBATES**

John McCarthy

Chief Economist, Department of Finance

Policymaking for Future Ireland

The keynote examines the Department of Finance Future Forty report which provides a long-term economic, demographic fiscal outlook for Ireland over the next four decades.

PANEL DISCUSSION

The subsequent panel discussion engages senior civil and public servants working in a wide variety of policy fields to debate the policy reforms that should be introduced in response to the challenges identified in the Future Forty report.

Chair: Mary Doyle - Secretary for Policy and International Relations, Royal Irish Academy

Panelists: Sarah Glavey - Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation

Paul Woods - Central Bank

Ruth Kennedy - Revenue

12:00 PM **Lunch**
Lunch and Networking

1:15 PM **Session 2: POLICY SKILLS WORKSHOP**

Barry Vaughan

Principal Officer - Department of the Taoiseach

Anna Visser

Head of the Child Poverty and Well Being Programme Office - Department of the Taoiseach

Policymaking in Transition: Adapting Systems, Skills and Relationships

This interactive workshop examines how the Policy Handbook, 'real world' guide to policy formulation, drawn up by the Department of the Taoiseach can be rolled out in practice and enables participants to apply it to examples from their own experience.

The session also examines the emerging concept of relational public services as a tool for implementing the wider policy development framework and participants take part in an exercise to consider what adopting a relational approach would mean in the context of the wider framework.

3:15 PM **Break**
Coffee and Networking

10:00 AM **Session 3: POLICY CASE INVESTIGATION**

Lisa McNally

Director of Public Health - Worcester Council

Integrating Place-Based and Community-Led Approaches into Ireland's Public Health System

This session explores how Ireland can transform its public health system by shifting power closer to communities, using place-based and community-led (PBCL) approaches and provides guidance on how this can be achieved, using real-world examples from Ireland and elsewhere.

The session enables participants to reflect on how a place-based and community-led approach could apply to their areas of work.

Day 2 – Wednesday 15 July

9:45 AM

Session 4: **POLICY CASE INVESTIGATION**

Rory Mulholland

Assistant Principal - Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment

Keith Fitzgerald

Lead Economist - Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment

Developing Ireland's next enterprise strategy: Enterprise 2035

10:40AM

Break

Coffee and Networking

11:00 AM

Session 5: **POLICY SKILLS WORKSHOP**

Stefan Müller

Associate Professor - School of Politics and International Relations at University College Dublin

From Data to Decisions: A Practical Introduction to AI and Data Science for Policymakers

This interactive workshop provides a practical introduction to artificial intelligence and data science which assumes no prior technical knowledge of relevant software or statistical analysis techniques.

The session focuses on the AI and data science tools that are most relevant to policymakers' needs. These include: accessing and 'wrangling' data, how to get started with data visualisations, and how to use local large language models for text classification

1:00 PM

Lunch

Lunch and Networking

2:15 PM

Session 6: **POLICY SKILLS WORKSHOP**

Lucie Martin

Research Officer - ESRI

Tackling 'Sludge' in Public Services: identifying and reducing behavioural barriers to policy implementation

This interactive workshop focuses on 'sludge', which refers to the unnecessary frictions in the policy system that can impact access to programmes and services, and may undermine the effectiveness of public policies.

The workshop examines why policymakers should care about sludge and offers practical examples of sludge and ideas about what policymakers can do about it. Participants also get to conduct a practical Sludge Audit exercise.

1:00 PM

Break

Coffee and Networking

2:15 PM

Session 6: **POLICY CASE INVESTIGATIONS**

Paul Ellingstad

PTI Advisors

Turning Red to Green: How Shared Data Empowers Families, Services and Government to End Poverty

This session introduces the Poverty Stoplight — a global tool that uses mobile technology and data to transform how we understand and address poverty.

The session examines the need for shared data to empower people, services, and policymakers. Participants get to experience the self-assessment tool and discuss how such tools could be used to design policy responses.

5:35 PM

BBQ

Summer BBQ



Day 3 – Thursday 16 July

9:45 AM **Session 4: POLICY SKILLS WORKSHOP**

Thomas Rochow

Research Associate - Centre for Public Policy, University of Glasgow

Using Stories to Understand the Effects of Policy Systems on Low-Income Groups

This is an interactive workshop where participants create composite stories to explore multi-policy governance issues related to child poverty, examining how a whole system approach is required.

Participants get to actively engage with evidence and practice collaborative storytelling, highlighting real-world policy challenges.

11:40AM **Break** *Take a break, grab a coffee*

12:00 PM **Session 5: POLICY SKILLS WORKSHOP**

Donncha Kavanagh

Full Professor of Information & Organisation - College of Business, UCD

Building Ireland's Policy Foresight System

This interactive workshop examines the need to build Ireland's Policy Foresight System, discussing why Irish policy needs to pivot towards the long-term, using international examples to show how a foresight ecosystem could be developed.

Participants get to learn about commonly-used foresight techniques, when and how they might be implemented, and their strengths and limitations. They get to conduct experiential exercises to surface their own understandings of the future and imagine alternative futures.

1:30 PM **Lunch** *Lunch and Close*

