

Athlone Institute of Technology Agreed Minute

The HEA acknowledges and appreciates the work undertaken by Athlone Institute of Technology in preparing the Compact Documentation submission in the context of this the first cycle of Strategic Dialogue. Documented feedback on the draft compact has been conveyed to Athlone Institute of Technology. This feedback has been informed by an extensive HEA exercise of evaluation of the submission, including analysis by an external panel set up to provide an independent assessment of the overall performance of the institution, against the backdrop of its mission.

HEA recognises that this is the first year of strategic dialogue and this is a developmental process. In year 2, HEA will have regard to the agreed outcomes of the dialogue process this year, including not only specific objectives and indicators proposed, but also any feedback to institutions regarding the overall composition of the compact. Institutions are expected to have regard to this feedback and to demonstrate that they have incorporated it into their processes for next year's process.

Subject to the above, the HEA and Athlone Institute of Technology agree that the mission, planned profile and targets, as now set out in the accompanying Compact, are consistent with the national objectives set for the higher education system and are appropriate to the place of Athlone Institute of Technology within the system. This agreement takes full cognisance of the strategic dialogue meeting which took place on 17th December 2013. **The following issues are taken from the Strategic Dialogue Meeting held on the 17th December 2013. It is recognised that this does not represent a full minute of the meeting but focuses on issues of particular importance.**

Meeting Ireland's Human Capital Needs

The HEA noted the central importance of job creation for the Government and the important role Higher Education plays in that domain. AIT agreed and noted the range of efforts underway to support this objective.

Targets

The institute accepts that its student numbers are ambitious but is confident that it can deliver the projected numbers. In respect of post-graduate students, AIT updated HEA on the most recent numbers which are already quite close to the projected numbers and are aligned with its major centres. AIT is confident that it can deliver on these projected numbers, in its specified areas of focus. AIT noted its intention to manage its PhD education in collaboration with other major PhD education providers, particularly NUIM.

Excellent teaching and learning and quality of the student experience

The institute accepted that the compact as presented may be overly focussed on input metrics such as staff development, rather than the student experience. They consider, however, that they are demonstrating continued success in this area, noting that the recommendations arising from QQI reviews have been implemented but accepted the need for further improvement in the way in which the compact describes the outcomes to be achieved in teaching and learning. The HEA international panel noted some of the practical ways to benchmark quality in this regard e.g. selection of extern examiners, destination of graduates etc.

In respect of staff development, the HEA international panel noted the need for peer review to identify development needs. AIT accepted this but noted concerns in relation to industrial relations matters.

Internationalisation

The HEA queried the ambition in respect of growth in EU students and AIT undertook to examine this. In respect of non-EU international students, HEA noted the need for very careful risk assessment and management in respect of major internationalisation ventures and asked that risk management strategies be referred to in the compact.