

Galway-Mayo IT (GMIT)

Strategic Dialogue Cycle 2 Reflections on Performance

Overview

- On the basis of the self-evaluation report, while GMIT appear to have met the majority of their 2014 interim targets, there are serious concerns over institutional performance. The Institute provided little commentary or accompanying evidence in the submitted documentation as to why targets were either achieved or not achieved. There was thus little evidence of self-reflection on performance and learning for future performance. Such evidence was discussed at the dialogue meeting and GMIT undertook to include it in future compact reports.
- In some instances, GMIT has already exceeded a number of its 2016 targets and the Institute should revise such targets in light of this. In addition, many targets are concerned with process and reporting provides little evidence of impacts, now or in the future.
- The North-West Cluster members were consistent with their reporting of activities under the heading 'Regional Clusters', albeit there was some slight divergence in the reporting by institutions of progress with these activities.
- Domain 2 'Participation, equal access and Lifelong learning' – Objective 2: GMIT reported that adjusted 2014/15 EAS data was not available at the time of submission. Therefore, they reported progress made against their 2013/14 return. 2014/15 EAS data was subsequently submitted to the HEA.
- Domain 2 'Participation, equal access and lifelong learning' – Objective 4: GMIT states they had 674 flexible learners at the end of 2014. There is a discrepancy between this and the number reported by the HEA which shows that GMIT had 864 flexible learners in 2014/15 which can be explained by reference to changing data definitions.
- Domain 4 "High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation" –issues of performance in relation to research, student numbers, income etc. would suggest need for revisiting the research strategy. HEA has been advised of a review of research centres in May 2015, a consequence of which was the closure of CiSET. GMIT also clarified that it is in the process of appointing a VP for Research and Innovation while also embarking on a new strategic plan which will include a research pillar based on a new research strategy.
- Domain 5 'Enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge' – Objective 1. GMIT stated in their self-evaluation report that, as a baseline, 10% of its current programmes have a work

placement element. It was clarified that the interim target for the end of 2015 states “accredited professional practice module offered on 15% of programmes”. This target has been achieved, as has the 20% target for the end of 2016. Revised targets will be set in the updated compact.

- Domain 7 ‘Enhanced Internationalisation’ – the Institute underperformed in achieving their 2014 Erasmus targets and have taken a strategic decision to reduce their number of Erasmus bilateral agreements. It is not clear how this reflects national policy. GMIT is commended for growing the percentage of its registered international students. However, it provided little evidence in relation to growing its international programme portfolio. On the whole, GMIT should reflect on performance under the ‘Internationalisation’ heading.

Self-evaluation report - domain level review

1. Regional clusters:

The high-level cluster structures have been put in place and several management groups have functioned over the course of 2014. Two programme managers have been appointed to coordinate cluster work.

Significant work has been completed in the mapping of UG and LLL programmes and research activity in the cluster area, although some gaps remain which are being addressed. Collaboration between cluster Institutions (NUIG/ITS and NUIG/LYIT) to offer taught postgraduate programmes has begun, and NUIG is to facilitate IoT staff in pursuing structured PhDs.

However, several targets, mainly relating to engagement with the FE sector and the ETBs, were missed. No reason has been given for the failure to engage with the FE sector/ETBs (part of Regional Clusters objective 1). In terms of the Regional Clusters objective 3, pathways for student transfer and progression between the cluster Institutes have been devised, but there appears to be no work done on pathways from the FE sector or with regard to RPL policy. The other cluster institutions also report no real progress on engagement with the FE sector, except LYIT, which has made good progress in this regard.

All institutions in the North-West cluster submitted a self-evaluation report under the heading of "Regional clusters". The objectives, targets and progress reported by the institutions was generally consistent across the cluster. Some institutions also submitted other regional cluster objectives, targets and progress relating to activity outside the North-West cluster.

Joint objectives included the establishment of a regional cluster (targets: cluster defined, governance agreed, agreement of cluster objectives, engagement with FE sector); co-ordinated academic planning (targets: mapping of programmes, research activity and civic engagement activities); and development of regional learning pathways (targets: development of a matrix of course provision, review of policies, scheme for progression, regional targets agreed).

Note: There was some minor divergence in the progress identified across the cluster. NUI Galway noted that all targets were achieved (marked green). LYIT noted that some targets had not been entirely achieved (marked yellow - mapping of research and civic engagement activity; agreement on regional targets). IT Sligo noted that some targets had not been entirely achieved (marked yellow – engagement with FE sector; mapping of lifelong learning, research and civic engagement activity; scheme for progression; agreement on regional targets). GMIT noted that some targets had not been entirely achieved (marked yellow – mapping of lifelong learning, research and civic engagement activity; scheme for progression; agreement on regional targets). All other targets for the three Institutes were marked as achieved (green).

Overall, the North-West cluster has reported good progress against targets for 2014. It would be useful to see further commentary and supporting documentation on progress made. Further, where progress has been slower than anticipated, greater self-

evaluation of the reasons for this, and any implications for 2015 or 2016 targets, would be welcome.

GMIT completed its MOU with LIT in 2014.

2. Participation, equal access and lifelong learning:

Objective 1: 'Provide a range of alternative entry routes from Further Education providers': The Institute set an interim target of establishing one further education alliance by the end of 2014. However, there is some confusion around whether the Institute achieved any new alliances as it is stated in their self-evaluation report that '*strong collaborative alliances exist*' with three education providers.

Additionally, under the same objective, the Institute had set a target of establishing advanced entry routes for further education by the end of 2014. GMIT reported that it has established advanced entry routes with more pending. However, it does not provide any indication of the further education providers or of the number of routes established.

Objective 2: 'Increase the number of students from the socio-economic group, in particular those from socio-economic disadvantaged background': GMIT's performance indicator for this objective was based on the number of students as a percentage of the student population and had set an interim target of 33%.

GMIT reported their 2014/15 EAS data was not available and based progress made on their 2013/14 return. The Institute achieved a 38% outturn. GMIT's 2014/15 EAS data was provided to the HEA in March 2015 and it demonstrates the proportion has decreased to 28% and therefore this target was not achieved by the Institute.

A mitigating factor for GMIT not achieving this target may be due to the large increase in new entrants for under-represented groups (+159) the Institute experienced between 2013/14 and 2014/15. This needs to be clarified with GMIT, but this is not expanded upon. Additionally, GMIT's self-evaluation report provides no details relating to the programme level or discipline which the majority of this cohort of students are enrolling in. According to HEA statistics, the Institute's Level 7 & 8 non progression rates (18% & 31%) are above the national averages of 16% and 28% (2010/11) respectively.

The Institute has a large non-progression rate in respect of its Level 6 Computer Science programmes with a non-progression rate of 42% in 2013/14 compared to the national average of 31% (2010/11). It may be challenging for the Institute to reduce its non-progression rates while increasing its cohort of students from under-represented groups, given resource constraints. The question arises if the Institute is pursuing an appropriate strategy – increasing intake while not making progress on retention.

As GMIT achieved an interim outcome of 38% for this target (based on their 2013/14 EAS data), the Institute should revise their final 2016 target in light of this.

Objective 3: 'Increase post-entry support for Mature students while attending GMIT': The Institute had set an interim target of the Learning to Learn and Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) being available to all mature students. GMIT did achieve this target as it reports the 'Learning to Learn' module is available to all students. However, the Institute reports PASS is offered on 41 programmes across 4 campuses but as no baseline figure was reported, there is no evidence that PASS was rolled out across additional courses since cycle 1 of strategic dialogue and review of institutional performance was introduced.

Objective 4: 'Increase Life-Long Learning participation with flexible learning provision': GMIT had a baseline figure of 1,006 LLL students and their interim target was 1,000 LLL students. The Institute did not achieve this target as their self-evaluation report states they had 674 flexible learners at the end of 2014. There is a discrepancy between this and the number reported by the HEA which shows that GMIT had 864 flexible learners in 2014/15, which can be explained by reference to changing data definitions. Furthermore, the Institute reported positive developments in new programmes which have been designed for flexible delivery.

A contributing factor to this decline may be due to the drop in the Institute's mature student numbers, but no commentary is provided on this or on wider sectoral trends seen in mature enrolments. GMIT highlighted in their interim strategic dialogue meeting that the drop in their mature students was predominately due to people having less disposable income to participate in higher education and that 50% of its Castlebar student cohort are mature students.

Additionally, based on a baseline figure of 6, GMIT set an interim target of 8 accredited awards for flexible delivery but greatly exceeded this figure with a reported outcome of 17. As GMIT has already exceeded its 2016 target of 16 accredited awards for flexible learning, the Institute should revise their final 2016 target in light of this.

3. Excellent teaching and learning and quality of student experience:

Objective 1: 'Provide leadership and support for innovative approaches to learning and teaching': In the context of GMIT's baseline for this objective, 'Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy approved', the Institute had set an interim target of 'Establishment of Centre for Educational Development'. GMIT met this target and states the centre is fully operational. However, there is no evidence or additional data on the benefits this centre brings to the Institute or how it ties in with their Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy.

Objective 2: 'Facilitate student engagement in their learning': For this objective, GMIT's performance indicator was student retention rates and the Institute had a baseline figure of 66% first year retention rates as per the 2010/11 Progression Report. However, there is some disparity in GMIT's interim target as it centred on the Institute's 'Retention Policy approved' with no indication of specific retention target rates or updates in line with GMIT's final 2016 target of 70%. Following GMIT's bilateral meeting, there appears to be some ambiguity in relation to the metrics applied for measuring student retention rates as the Institute's applied metrics appear to be

different than the HEA's metrics. It should be clarified that both GMIT and the HEA are applying the same metrics.

Objective 3: 'Guide and support assessment for learning as well as assessment of learning': GMIT's performance indicator for this objective was 'Performance award levels (Award Classifications Profile) and the Institute's interim target was set at 25% of their staff attending assessment workshops. The Institute stated it had completed this target but did not provide any tangible evidence of what was to be achieved from these workshops etc. Additionally, there is no way of gauging the progress made by the Institute in training its staff members as there was no baseline figure provided for the number of staff who would have attended assessment workshops prior to the commencement of performance compacts.

Objective 4: 'Create a learning environment to underpin student centred learning': The performance indicator for this objective was based on student satisfaction as per ISSE and the interim target was 'technology infrastructure to support further development, implementation of VLE'. As part of its self-evaluation report, the Institute does set out some of the technology infrastructure that has been introduced. However, it does not provide any description or accompanying commentary to describe how these developments will assist the development and implementation of the Institute's VLE. According to statistical analysis completed by the HEA on the ISSE survey, GMIT was ranked number 1 nationally in 'Active Learning' in 2014.

Objective 5: 'Ensure that staff are effectively supported in their professional development'. The performance indicator for this objective centred on the percentage of staff with L9 and L10 qualifications and their interim target was 'Structured programme for pedagogical development in place'. The Institute confirmed it completed this target and it is available to all staff but there is no update on the percentage, or number of staff, with L9 & L10 qualifications. Also, there is no information on the new structured programme for pedagogical development.

4. High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation:

Objective 1: 'Re-affirm, state research strengths, differentiation, specialisation: identify emerging areas'. GMIT's interim target was to establish two centres with possible cluster partner synergies. The Institute reported that it has established two centres (Marine & Fresh Water and GMedtech) which appear to be developing and expanding. However, GMIT did not provide any details on the number of staff employed or PG students enrolled in these centres; and provided very little description on the types of research currently being undertaken.

Objective 2: 'Align research activities with learning strategy to (a) develop pedagogical research, (b) encourage staff to pursue disciplinary aspects of RDI'. The Institute had set an interim target of 60 research active staff (from a baseline of 40) which includes publishing, PG supervision etc. GMIT's self-evaluation report stated this target was achieved.

Objective 3: 'Develop structures policies, encourage staff, students to be research active, compatible with research financing': GMIT's interim target for this objective was based on expanding its research PG numbers from 38 to 40 students. GMIT self-evaluated this objective as red due to the Institute only achieving an outcome of 27

students. However, on the backdrop of reduced funding for research, the Institute has outlined the steps it has taken to grow its PG numbers in the future and the Institute did acknowledge at their interim strategic dialogue meeting that it is behind with its Level 9 provision. Some reflection on sectoral trends seen over the last few years in relation to research enrolments would be welcome.

Objective 4: 'Consolidate, promote research driven by needs of enterprise'. From a baseline of 20 enterprise links (Galway and Mayo hubs), the Institute set an interim target of 30. As part of the Institute's self-evaluation report, this target appears to be met. It would be beneficial if the Institute could provide more in-depth information on these links.

Objective 5: 'Focus on external sources of funding for research and innovation activities': GMIT set itself an interim target of €1m funding from a baseline of €1m (2010/11). GMIT self-evaluated this objective as red due to the Institute only achieving a €698K (2013/14 accounts) outturn. The Institute provides a brief outline as to the reasons why it did not achieve this target (due to the development of two research centres). However, it does not expand on this or provide any additional commentary as to why these centres did not generate additional external research funding etc.

For this objective, GMIT had set a final 2016 target of €2.5m but the Institute has revised this target down to €2m in their self-evaluation report, with no explanation given.

5. Enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange:

Objective 1: 'Learning through wider engagement': GMIT's performance indicator for this objective was the percentage of their programmes which include an accredited work placement. The baseline was stated as 10% of all current programmes, with an interim target of 'An approved Institute policy on work placements/professional practice'. The Institute completed this task and although it is not indicated in their self-evaluation report, GMIT did state at their bilateral meeting that currently 15% of their programmes offer a work placement element (GMIT should clarify). Additionally, there is no commentary in their self-evaluation report on how this new policy will impact on programme delivery but GMIT did indicate at their bilateral meeting that financial/support incentives will be available to programmes which deliver at least 15 modular credits for professional placements.

In the context of benchmarking, the Institute should consider whether work placements on 10% (15%) of its programmes is low compared to other IoTs.

Objective 2: 'Engaging GMIT in regional networks'. GMIT had an interim target of completing an 'Audit of current engagement' and confirmed the audit is currently in progress. GMIT does make reference to an international Institute review which commended the Institute's Executive Board – this was subsequently provided.

Objective 3: 'Working with Communities': This objective had a performance indicator based on the percentage of students working on community engagement projects with an interim target of 'Sporting organisations – facilitate GMIT students, sustain facilities' – GMIT must be commended for their cost efficient approach to providing

their students with sports facilities. However, is this in line with the performance indicator of 'students working on community engagement projects'? GMIT outlined at their bilateral meeting that it has developed a credit recognition civic engagement module across three of its academic units and a non-credit bearing module for students volunteering in the community. The Institute could have highlighted these developments in their report.

Objective 4: 'Working with regional business and enterprise': GMIT set an interim target of '60% of graduates working in the region' and reported that 65% of its graduates were working in Connacht as per the 2012/13 graduate survey. Although GMIT is to be commended for exceeding their target, the Institute should provide (at a high level) some details of the industries the graduates were employed in. GMIT has undertaken to provide this as an appendix to future iterations of the compact.

6. Enhanced internationalisation:

Objective 1: 'Consolidation of EU Partnerships': GMIT's performance indicator for this objective was based on the number of incoming and outgoing Erasmus students with a baseline of 112 outgoing and 110 incoming. The Institute self-evaluated this objective as red due the Institute not hitting their interim target of outgoing (120) and incoming (110) students. GMIT stated it has reduced and consolidated a number of its Erasmus bilateral agreements but there is no reflection on how this development fits in with national policy in this area. The HEA's International Programmes section which oversees the operations of the Erasmus programme in Ireland confirmed it received no formal communication from GMIT in relation to these developments. GMIT should provide more clarity.

Objective 2: 'Increase and diversify activities in Non-EU countries': The performance indicator for this objective was based on the number of FT registered international students as a % of FT registered students. GMIT had a baseline of 2% and their interim target was 3%. The Institute exceeded their target (4.4%) at the end of 2014. This figure corresponds with the HEA statistical analysis but it must be noted that 28 of the Institute's international student cohort are Brazilian 'Science without Borders' students and therefore could represent one-off increases in student numbers which might decline in the future.

Objective 3: 'Develop international programme portfolio, provide quality services to international students': The performance indicator for this objective was based on 'Accreditation as an International Quality Mark provider' with an interim target of 'identify international programmes to be developed' from a baseline of 'no international Education Quality Mark (2010/11)'. GMIT's outcome for this objective was a vague response stating 'An Erasmus PhD programme has been put in place' – the Institute provides no details of the number of students enrolled on this programme or which education discipline it relates to. Additionally, GMIT did not clarify if this PhD, programme or any other programme they deliver, has received the International Education Quality Mark. According to the HEA's statistical analysis, GMIT's PhD numbers continue to be low (19: 2013/14).

7. Institutional consolidation:

Objective 1: 'To pursue a trajectory that achieves re-designation as a Technological University': The performance indicator for this objective was 'A plan to meet TU Criteria' and included a number of interim targets to be met. GMIT outlined that apart from one, it had achieved all of its targets by the end of 2014.

Objective 2: 'Working to achieve the objective of TU status': The performance indicator for this objective was based on the alignment of structures, policies etc. for the institutions involved in the CUA to achieve TU status. In this context, the institution had set a number of staff training/development programmes to be completed by the end of 2014. The Institute self-evaluated this objective as 'red' due to the rescheduling of the CUA applying for stage 2 of the TU process. It's questionable if this should be evaluated as 'red' as this objective is to achieve TU status and the CUA has made adequate progress on achieving same. The strategic dialogue meeting should hear from GMIT its views on the risks, as well as the opportunities provided by TU designation and how they are being addressed.

Objective 3: 'Consolidate programmes across Academic Units and campuses': The interim target for this objectives was based on 'Mapping programmes, modules across Institute – programmatic review outcomes'. The Institute stated it is in the process of completing this objective and self-evaluated this objective accordingly.

8. Additional Notes:

The self-evaluation report forwarded to HEA in July 2015 reported end-2016 target as "establishment of Maths Learning Centre" instead of "Mature students to represent 25% of all first year entrants". The earlier reference to the Maths Learning Centre relates to an action in domain 3.

Proposed changes to compact:

Section 2 Participation, equal access and lifelong Learning

Increase the number of students from the 'socio-economic' group, in particular those from socio-economic disadvantage background

As GMIT achieved an interim outcome of 38% for this target (based on their 2013/14 EAS data), the Institute should revise their final 2016 target in light of this.

Increase Life-Long Learning participation with flexible learning provision

Based on a baseline figure of 6, GMIT set an interim target of 8 accredited awards for flexible delivery but greatly exceeded this figure with a reported outcome of 17. As GMIT has already exceeded its 2016 target of 16 accredited awards for flexible learning, the Institute should revise their final 2016 target in light of this.

Section 4 High Quality, Internationally Competitive Research and Innovation

Focus on external funding research and innovation activities

An original target of €2.5m has been revised down to €2m. This will be subject to discussion with GMIT at the upcoming meeting.