

STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2015

Forward Thinking

*Transformation
with
Continuity*

1. Foreword

The Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB) was established by an Act of the Oireachtas in 1999. At the time, one of its stated purposes for was to provide opportunities for a rapidly growing population in Dublin north-west which was under-represented in higher education.

Having worked to address this need since opening in 1999, the Institute has flourished and can now count itself as a significant provider of higher education in the region and beyond. It has positioned itself firmly within the commercial, social and educational fabric of Blanchardstown and Dublin north-west and has become a vital resource for its multiple stakeholders.

We take pride in our accomplishments, yet share a belief that we have even greater potential to realise. In thinking forward, our core challenge is to maintain continuity while simultaneously achieving transformation. This document sets out precisely how we plan to do this, where we want to focus and the progress we expect to achieve.

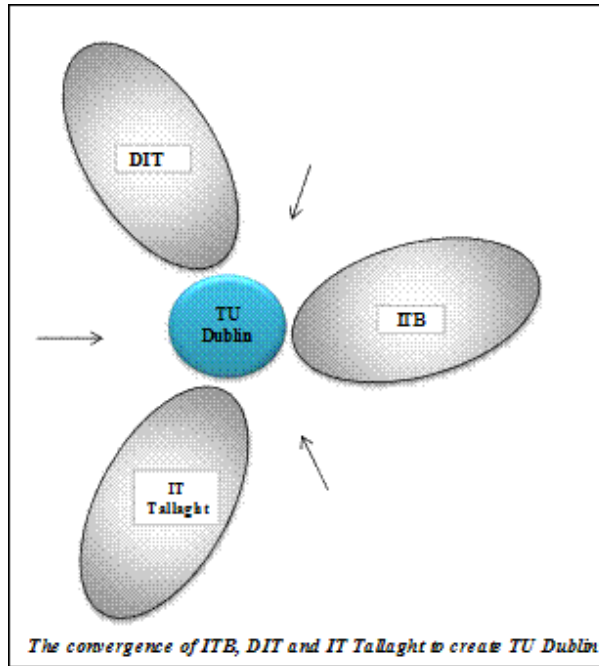
The plan outlines our main aims over the next three years as we seek to continue the rapid rate of growth and development against a background of social and economic imperatives. We fully expect that in following this plan, by 2014 we will have furthered our objective of making a real difference in peoples' lives.

A focus on continuity

More specifically, by 2015 we expect that we will enrol a greater number and a more diverse mix of students and retention levels will increase. Our constituents will report markedly improved levels of satisfaction with all manner of campus supports and services. We will realise concrete gains in relevant measures of academic quality for individual schools and departments.

The nature and quality of academic staff relationships with our students is an aspect of the ITB education experience that is highly valued. By executing this plan, we will create an environment where this is further enriched through dynamism and imagination in our teaching and increased attention to scholarship and research. Drawing on the strengths of our partners in the TU Dublin Alliance will aid this. Dissolution of 'false divides' among engagement, teaching and learning, research and innovation and achievement of a much deeper integration among them will support advancement of interdisciplinary programmes and activities.

A focus on transformation - TU Dublin



Three years hence, we also expect that the formation of the new technological university for Dublin, through the convergence of ITB with DIT and IT Tallaght, will be at an advanced stage. The formation of this new university offers an opportunity for us to make a significant impact, one that is much greater than we could achieve working alone. For us it will mark a 'coming of age'. On completion it will irretrievably transform ITB, bringing its status as a legally autonomous entity to a close and opening the chapter on a new era.

Emmet Brown, Chairperson of the Governing Body of the Institute

Dr. Mary Meaney, President

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3. Drivers and Catalysts

It is clear that ITB now operates within an environment characterised by a catalytic coincidence of unprecedented economic crisis and a fast-moving policy agenda. This demands a focused and prompt response.

3.1. *The Economy*

At present, the global economy as we have known it is in crisis and the national economy is experiencing unprecedented difficulty. Our labour force is no longer low cost and we have to compensate for this by being a front-runner in the innovation cycle. Our prosperity is now dependent on Ireland transitioning smoothly and quickly to an innovation – and knowledge-driven society.

Nationally, twin economies are emerging. Multi-national export-driven businesses are increasingly unable to find sufficient people with the requisite skills within Ireland, while simultaneously an over-supply exists of individuals with obsolete or redundant skill-sets.

The demand for education nationally and locally in ITB's catchment area is at an all time high and projected to remain so. The challenge for ITB is to continue to make education accessible to greater numbers of students – school leavers, job-seekers, graduates, and those in industry seeking to up-skill or re-skill - at a time of severe constraints on public finances.

Simultaneously, it is imperative that we continue to plan, act and invest strategically to play our part at the frontier of nurturing creative and innovative minds and delivering education at a time and place that accommodates the changing life circumstances of our students.

3.2. *Higher Education Policy in Ireland*

Irish education itself is at a crossroad. The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* envisages higher education playing a central role in the transition to an innovation-driven society and for making Ireland a country recognised for competitive enterprise and continuing academic excellence. For this to be accomplished a strengthening of the higher education system as a whole is required, via the formation of regional clusters of collaborating institutions and institutional consolidation. The emergence of stronger amalgamated institutes of technology is specifically referenced. This focuses attention on ITB's continued viability as an autonomous entity and our response is the vital imperative framing the strategy 2012-14.

Reacting quickly to these environmental conditions yet staying true to our core purpose is at the heart of the challenge we face. A measure of audacity at this time could achieve much.

4. Our Purpose and Values

ITB is a human community clear about its purpose and sharing a deep commitment to widening participation in education and serving the needs of the people of Dublin north-west and beyond.

As a community, we want to make a difference in people's lives and we believe we can. We offer opportunity and trust in the capacity of people to develop their potential through education and training. Building on strengths, paying attention to relationships and helping people to find and do what energises them is an essential part of what we are about.

Underpinning ITB's purpose is our belief in the capacity of people to develop their potential through education and training. We aspire to realise the potential of:

- **Students** - through the excellence of our teaching and backup support services and, though our core value of placing the needs of our student first;
- **Staff** – by providing rewarding careers in a positive and diverse working environment.
- **Employers** – by producing high-quality graduates and by providing research and training relevant to employers' needs;
- **Local community** – by providing learning opportunities locally and by supporting important local initiatives;

In seeking to deliver upon this mission, a number of core values are central:

Community

We acknowledge the diversity of people involved in our work. We respect the different role played by each person. We listen with patience and understanding. We work to build genuine relationships founded on acceptance and trust.

Enjoyment

We aim to enjoy our work and derive fulfilment from it. We value positive attitudes throughout our workplace.

Excellence

We strive for excellence in the provision of internal and external services, courses and programmes.

Success

We will celebrate our achievements

These values shape our aspirations; they determine both what we seek to achieve and how we seek to achieve it.

As a community, we embrace our interdependence with one another and with our wider environment and so seek to remove 'false divides' that could hinder our effectiveness and transformation.

5. Our Vision

Our vision is that by 2014, the formation of TU Dublin will be at an advanced stage and ITB, while still autonomous, will be providing high quality education in deep collaboration with DIT and IT Tallaght. From this, ITB will develop a growing community of successful ITB graduates who make vital contributions to the economic, cultural and social wellbeing of the societies in which they live and work.

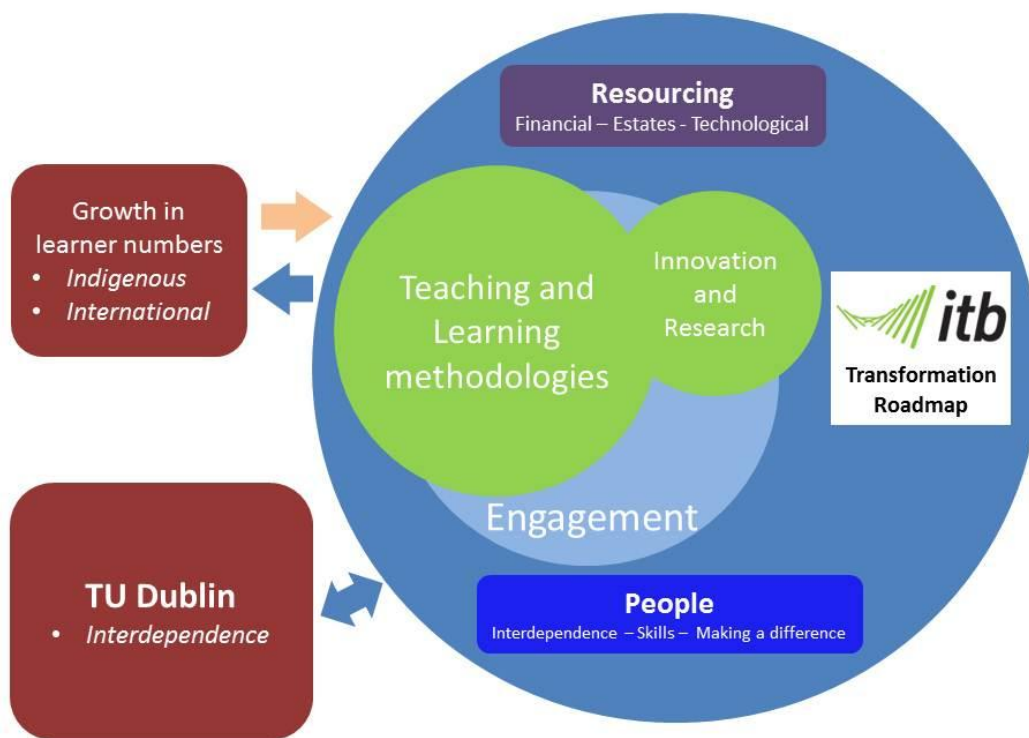


Figure 1 (ITB Transformation with Continuity)

6. Our Ambition and Roadmap

6.1. Our Ambition

Following a period of inquiry and reflection, a consensus has emerged in ITB about where to anchor our strategic efforts for the next three years. Our perspective is one of bringing something new into being, building upon our collective vitality and passion for ITB's mission.

People

The delivery of practice-based education will continue to be at the heart of what we do. For us, education is about people and making a difference in peoples' lives. We will therefore continue to place the student to the foreground in all our endeavours. We are unambiguous about this.

Growth

Our commitment to making education accessible and to serving the needs of our community remains firm. Given the economic imperative, we will increase our efforts to open the doors of ITB to greater numbers of students, including job-seekers and those in employment. In doing so, we remain true to our core purpose. Resourcing constraints are recognised and to address these, we will seek to use our resources differently and more innovatively.

Transformation

The gathering pace of the re-structuring of higher education in Ireland presents the likelihood of ITB's convergence with DIT and IT Tallaght to create a new technological university for Dublin. Whilst remaining legally autonomous, we anticipate that by 2014 a high level of collaborative activity will irretrievably change how each institute is providing education. We face this positively and will proactively embrace, shape, and act in response to the emergent changes.

Interdependence

Over the next 2 – 3 years, we want to further deepen our interdependence as a provider of higher education with stakeholders in north-west Dublin and its environs. We will do so either through the TU Dublin Alliance or via the formative process that will create the new technological university for Dublin.

Integration

Over the next 2 to 3 years, we want to further deepen our interdependence as a provider of higher education with stakeholders in the north-west Dublin and its environs. We will do so either through the TU Dublin Alliance or via the formative process that will create the new Technological University for Dublin.

6.2. Our Roadmap

Over the next three years, we aim to:

1. Continue to grow our student community while retaining its diversity;

2. Further develop our model of teaching and learning - same high standards, new styles and methods;
3. Strengthen ITB as a vital resource for north-west Dublin and its environs within the broader alliance of TU Dublin;
4. Extracting maximum benefit from our resources to meet the vision of TU Dublin;
5. Creating opportunities to relate, connect and develop our capabilities
6. Be part of the formation of a new technological university for Dublin.

Each of the six elements of the ITB Roadmap is presented in more detail in Sections 7 to 12.

7. Strengthen our reach in education through further diversity and growth

This first element of our roadmap stems from our core purpose. We need to extend educational opportunity to greater numbers of students, especially within the community we serve. Intertwined with this, we need to address the matter of ITB's continued viability as an autonomous entity.

In Dublin 15 and its environs demographic changes indicate a significant future increase in demand for third level education. In the population as a whole, there is a greater desire to engage in lifelong learning. This is driven by economic and social factors. Our focus must be on meeting these aspirations by providing innovative and flexible possibilities in education.

We plan to increase our student numbers by targeting:

- Schools in the catchment area of the Institute;
- People in the workforce/industry who wish to up-skill;
- Job-seekers who need to re-skill;
- People previously unable to participate in third-level education;
- International students;
- Graduates.

Given the competitive environment, the presentation, design and marketing of the Institute and its programmes will be critical.

Achieving growth without compromising on quality will present a challenge. Constraints on finance, staffing and physical infrastructure will all have to be considered. We will need to be innovative in how we provide education and in how we use our resources to do this.

7.1. Guiding approach

In pursuit of an economically viable and diverse student population we will:

- 7.1.1. Given the Institute's delegated authority status, we will continue to be proactive in the development of new programmes for all stakeholders at all NFQ levels;
- 7.1.2. All programmes will be characterised by their emphasis on;
 - Sustainability;
 - Communities of Practice.
- 7.1.3. Achieve a steady rate of growth in student numbers on the ITB campus of TU Dublin up to 3,500 full-time equivalents by 2014 and 5,000 by 2016;
- 7.1.4. In partnership with others, achieve a mix of new admissions among school leavers, job seekers, industry, international and graduates in the TU Dublin catchment area;
- 7.1.5. Achieve a year-on-year increase in overall student retention rates;
- 7.1.6. Leverage the financial benefit accruing from increasing numbers of student registrations;
- 7.1.7. Find innovative solutions to resource constraints;

- 7.1.8. Embrace the principles of universal design in support services and the learning environment.

7.2. *Indicative Actions*

We will achieve this by:

- 7.2.1. Increasing our use of flexible modes of delivery, including on-line and blended approaches at all levels;
- 7.2.2. Increasing numbers of international students in partnership with third level providers in India, China, Canada, Brazil and Malaysia and other regions;
- 7.2.3. Implementing recommendations arising from the work of the Transition to Higher Education group in ITB (First year experience);
- 7.2.4. Achieving sustainable levels of revenue;
- 7.2.5. Leveraging the capability TU Dublin for the benefit of ITB students;
- 7.2.6. Incorporating the principles of Universal Design into programme and services design and delivery;
- 7.2.7. Provide staff development activities and resources to:
 - 7.2.7.1. Build the necessary skills to: manage the diversity of our student population more effectively;
 - 7.2.7.2. Develop our knowledge and skill relating to Universal Design;
 - 7.2.7.3. Develop an awareness and understanding of the nature and scope of research as it applies to the Institute.

8. Increase dynamism and imagination in our teaching and learning

This second element of our roadmap arises from the emergence of the learner and the learning process as key priorities in education. It is framed in the context of *The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*. The strategy places a renewed emphasis on teaching, and specifically teaching kept up to date and relevant through scholarship, research and professional development.

As an academic institution we are committed to excellence in education. The Institute recognises that we must offer greater flexibility in the content and delivery of programmes.

Developing a reputation for learner-centred excellence in teaching and in parallel, maximising the flexibility of modular course design and the system of accumulation of credits will be important. Organisational agility, responsiveness to the needs of students from a range of educational and employment backgrounds, and quality of teaching and support will be key requirements.

A culture of continuous review, improvement and service in all areas will be necessary. The retention of Delegation of Authority will provide a framework for meeting these challenges. Supporting and encouraging excellence in teaching practices and methodologies is vital, as is flexible programme design and delivery across all programmes.

It is further essential that ITB build on its emerging strengths in applied research, development and innovation. Strength in these areas will be essential to developing the teaching capability of academic staff, to enhancing their capacity to nurture creative and innovative minds and to the maintenance of relevant and stimulating curricula.

Our competitive advantage will come from *how* we provide education. It will be embedded in the relationship between student and staff member. Maintaining a culture that enables and supports this relationship will require on-going attention.

8.1. Guiding approach

In further developing our model of teaching and learning, we will:

- 8.1.1. Be agile and responsive to the diverse needs of our targeted learners while paying special attention those making the transition into third level education;
- 8.1.2. Actively identify, develop, promote and apply pedagogical best practice;
- 8.1.3. Embrace the principles of universal design in the learning environment;
- 8.1.4. Attain a culture of quality and continuous improvement that is characterised by responsiveness to feedback from students and other stakeholders;
- 8.1.5. Ensure that staff are actively involved in research, development, scholarship and innovation;
- 8.1.6. Enhance our technical capability to support the virtual campus and align the physical campus with this;
- 8.1.7. Provide enhanced learning opportunities for all our people working in ITB.

8.2. Indicative Actions

We will achieve this by:

- 8.2.1. Undertaking the measures needed to achieve flexibility in student learning, including advancement of innovative teaching models;
- 8.2.2. Promote understanding and implementation of universal design;
- 8.2.3. Incorporating multiple modes of delivery into all programme design;
- 8.2.4. In collaboration with the TU Dublin Alliance, fostering and developing teaching excellence, supported by research in pedagogy and education;
- 8.2.5. Contributing to the development of the teaching profession by putting methods in place to disseminate whatever good practice exists across ITB and giving those who have been really innovative visibility and a platform for their work;
- 8.2.6. In conjunction with our TU Dublin partners, introducing new and innovative models of post-graduate education to include professional masters and doctoral programmes;
- 8.2.7. Establish an Academic Council working group on Teaching and Learning to consider:
 - 8.2.7.1. Learning Delivery;
 - 8.2.7.2. Modes of Assessment;
 - 8.2.7.3. Interdepartmental Teaching Initiatives.
- 8.2.8. Set up review mechanism to review module allocation and time-tabling;
- 8.2.9. Investigate new mechanism around work placement and delivery as an integrated element of courses;
- 8.2.10. Develop an effective student feedback on line mechanism;
- 8.2.11. Increase student voice within the Institute.

9. Deepen our impact in the wider community within the broader alliance of TU Dublin

This third element of our roadmap arises from awareness that the presence of an Institute of Technology in an area results in expectations that it will contribute significantly to the economic development and prosperity of that area. Our continued success and growth will depend on making a proactive contribution to north-west Dublin and its environs.

Forming strong links with education providers, businesses, community organisations and the public sector has always been a priority for ITB. Our strategy for the next three years is to deepen these relationships within the context of the TU Dublin Alliance. This will be achieved through a range of initiatives to address the needs of each of these stakeholders, with particular efforts being devoted to indigenous SMEs.

ITB will contribute by providing knowledge and technology transfer alongside enhanced educational opportunities and achievement. We will build on our emerging strengths in research, innovation and the development of professional practice in the workplace. This will provide the flow of new knowledge and skills essential to developing ITB's links with business and the community.

9.1. Guiding approach

In strengthening ITB as a vital resource for north-west Dublin, we will:

- 9.1.1. Continue to build and support our relationships with the business community in tangible and practical ways to promote job creation and economic development, with particular emphasis on indigenous Multi-national corporations and SME in our region;
- 9.1.2. Encourage and support start-up businesses;
- 9.1.3. Expand and deepen our links with public sector bodies, community representative organisations, voluntary organisations and other education providers;
- 9.1.4. Improve the level of interaction between staff and students and business and community organisations;
- 9.1.5. Stimulate research, development and innovation activity with strong links to industry and the public sector;
- 9.1.6. Increase the use of the campus as a social and cultural amenity, and encourage environmental and social responsibility;
- 9.1.7. Deepen our engagement with a supportive network of alumni;
- 9.1.8. Be proactive in seeking civic engagement opportunities in relation to:
 - 9.1.8.1. Service Learning;
 - 9.1.8.2. Volunteering.
- 9.1.9. Making the Institute's expertise, academic resources, buildings and recreational facilities available for community use when possible.

9.2. Indicative Actions

We will achieve this by:

- 9.2.1. Strengthening and exploiting the resources of our learning and innovation centre (LINC) to:
- provide links to local business and industry;
 - provide mentoring/incubation facilities for start-up businesses;
 - optimise the training and education opportunities in the region by developing learning networks with industry and other education providers;
- 9.2.2. Collaborating with local government, business associations and community bodies;
- 9.2.3. Undertaking collaborative initiatives in applied research, training, and consultancy with industry stakeholders; for example, undertaking research under the auspices of TU Dublin to identify how we can best meet the needs of SMEs;
- 9.2.4. Increasing the level of post-graduate activity;
- 9.2.5. Incorporating staff/student interaction with community organisations and business into programme design and delivery;
- 9.2.6. Developing and implementing a coordinated ITB-wide framework for community engagement;
- 9.2.7. Respond to labour market initiatives involving up-skilling and reskilling of staff;
- 9.2.8. Continue to embed community involvement in many programmes as part of assessment.

10. Strengthen utilisation of institute resources to support our mission.

The past eleven years has seen the Irish State make a considerable investment in ITB. This investment has yielded state-of-the-art facilities and infrastructure on the ITB campus, something for which we are immensely grateful. On an on-going basis, the State continues to invest a large tranche of public funds in ITB, notwithstanding the climate of financial austerity that now prevails. This affords us a real opportunity to make a difference while also placing an onus upon us – individually and collectively - to use resources wisely and for the maximum benefit of those we serve.

Accordingly, primary emphasis will be placed on extracting maximum value from our resources –physical infrastructure and finances– while advancing our use of virtual facilities. We will need to be proactive, flexible and innovative.

During the life of this plan, funding is expected to be increasingly dependent on multiple sources of funding as public funding continues to decline. Under the current model for allocating higher education funding, ITB will need to achieve strong growth relative to our competitors if it is to maximise its access to public funding. Therefore, increasing student numbers is an imperative, not only terms of remaining true to our core purpose but also in terms of securing ITB’s financial viability. Pursuing new approaches to generating revenue from alternative sources, including international students, will be critical as will cost reduction.

Over the period of this plan, physical space utilisation must be optimised. The concomitant further development of our virtual space will also be critical to our evolution and will be a theme of this strategic plan. The development and management of our space in innovative and creative ways will be fostered.

10.1. Guiding approach

To extract maximum benefit from our resources, we will:

- 10.1.1. Achieve a balanced budget;
- 10.1.2. Be more innovative in how we use our limited physical sources to provide education to a larger student population;
- 10.1.3. Provide additional virtual and physical infrastructure that addresses identified needs over the life-span of this strategic plan and within the context of TU Dublin;
- 10.1.4. Embrace the principles of universal design in support services and the learning environment;
- 10.1.5. Engage with civic responsibility and sustainability agendas.

10.2. Indicative Actions

We aim to achieve this by

- 10.2.1. Identify opportunities to optimise use of resources
- 10.2.2. Maximising funding from the HEA and other state bodies;
- 10.2.3. Develop a more diversified funding base, to include income from sources that contribute a surplus after allowing for their true costs;
- 10.2.4. Utilising appropriate resource allocation, monitoring and control strategies;
Developing an integrated approach to physical space usage, achieving

convergence between estates management, management of the virtual environment and academic planning; developing an Estates strategy to address the Institute's needs over the next three years (reference Indicative Actions in Section 8.2.7);

- 10.2.5.* Developing an IT strategy to address the Institute's needs over the next three years.

11. Create opportunities to relate, connect and develop our capabilities

Delivering upon the objectives of this plan depends on the extent to which everyone working in ITB is ready to respond positively to the changes we face and willing to be part of the solution to the presenting challenge. It will also be dependent upon ITB's organisational capacity to create opportunities to expedite the development of individual and institutional capabilities, while ensuring that these are aligned.

It is important to recognise that change, including that associated with the creation of the new technological university, will primarily be effected at the level of the individual. It will present varying levels of disruption for each individual and is likely to disrupt relationships built up over many years within the Institute. Success will be contingent upon our capacity individually and collectively to manage this disruption. Preparation, support and on-going opportunities to connect with colleagues will all be essential.

Success will also be contingent upon each individual's willingness to be personally responsible for the development of their own capabilities. For each individual, developing their professional practice will become important and applicable across the full spectrum of roles in ITB. Accordingly, each individual is invited to inquire into those experiences and from that inquiry to identify actions that could enhance their development.

Focusing and co-ordinating our efforts will be critical to success, as will our willingness to embrace modern work practices. Our ability to communicate and to facilitate the engagement of everyone affected will be important. In this time of transition, our capacity for relational leadership will be pivotal.

The next three years will present challenges. Meeting these will require openness and flexibility. Most importantly it will require us to work actively as a human community with energy, creativity and commitment, overcoming difficulties in pursuit of our common goals.

11.1. Guiding approach

To relate, connect and develop our capabilities, we each will:

- 11.1.1.* Enhance our relational leadership capacities, focusing on relationships in times of transition;
- 11.1.2.* Substantially strengthen our engagement and connection with each other;
- 11.1.3.* Embrace and support opportunities to inquire into and develop our professional practice;
- 11.1.4.* Encourage and support modern and flexible work practices.

11.2. Indicative Actions

We aim to achieve these objectives by:

- 11.2.1.* Participating in activities and opportunities to connect with others formally and informally;
- 11.2.2.* Participating in one-to-one conversations between managers and staff about development needs, organisational needs, career aspirations and goals for the future;
- 11.2.3.* Developing our own relational leadership capacities through development, training and attention to professional practice;

- 11.2.4.* Enabling staff to enhance their capabilities by facilitating and supporting the development of their professional practice through a range of measures;
- 11.2.5.* Instituting new roles and work practices to facilitate more innovative and flexible delivery of programmes and services;
- 11.2.6.* Devising mechanisms for enhanced co-ordination and effective communication, including management communication, throughout the Institute.

12. Accelerate our transformation through the formation of TU Dublin

Higher education, recognised as being pivotal in reacquiring economic success and addressing societal issues, is a critical element in Dublin's and Ireland's development. To be globally competitive, a new type of university graduate, with societal and professional parity of esteem with traditional university graduates, is required. This graduate has core skills in their chosen area of study, and is also innovative, creative and entrepreneurial. She or he demonstrates the technical and relational capabilities sought by employers and is an independent thinker, constructive yet disruptive.

ITB will be part of the formation of a new technological university for Dublin, whose objective will be to provide practice-led, research-informed higher education of the highest quality for this new style of university graduate. The new university will be brought into being through ITB's convergence with the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), Institute of Technology Tallaght (ITT).

The new TU Dublin will be a unitary institution formed by the three partners seizing this unique opportunity to make real change. It will be a three campus autonomous degree awarding university. The targeted future positioning of TU Dublin alongside the current positioning of the three institutions is as depicted in Figure 2. This shows an increased orientation in TU Dublin towards society and enterprise and a greater emphasis of use-inspired research. It places it as an outwardly focused, regionally engaged university. Internally there will be three inter-dependent activities: teaching and learning, research and innovation and engagement.

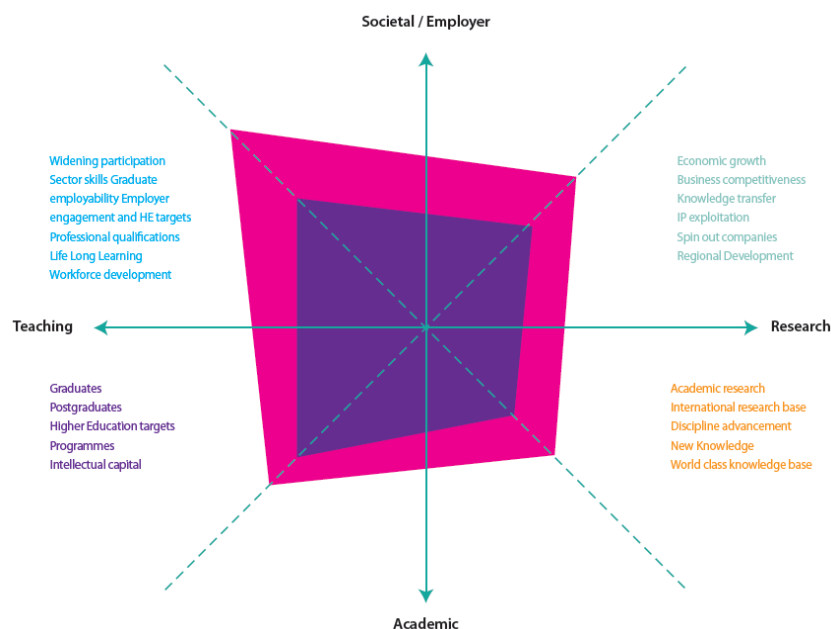


Figure 2: Indicative Positioning – Range of Activities in TU Dublin

Diagram is adapted from a framework developed by Dr. M. Wedgewood, Manchester Metropolitan University

12.1. Guiding approach

- 12.1.1.* Through ITB's convergence with DIT and IT Tallaght, create a new technological university for Dublin, with increased orientation towards society and enterprise and a greater emphasis of use-inspired research;
- 12.1.2.* Seamlessly integrate the three core domains of ITB's activity – teaching and learning, research and innovation and engagement.