

Institute of Technology Tallaght (ITTD)

Strategic Dialogue Cycle 2 Reflections on Performance

Overview

Institute of Technology Tallaght (ITTD) has, with DIT and ITB, taken a shared approach to the self-evaluation of Categories 1 (Regional Clusters), 4 (Research and Innovation) and 7 (Institutional consolidation)

The TU4Dublin institutes have all relied on very similar data for appendices which demonstrates further the level of collaboration between them.



In the light of delays in implementing TU designation legislation, the consortium should consider the implications of non-enactment of the legislation TU4D members have clarified that it is the goal of TU4Dublin Alliance to achieve technological university designation and that the merger is a step on this journey. It was further confirmed that neither TU designation, nor indeed the merger, is possible without the Technological Universities legislation which is currently being developed.

Research performance and activity – the number of Masters Research students is static, a big increase is anticipated between 2014/15 and 2016/17 (102 > 253). Similarly, in PhD students (303 > 640). Is this realisable?

In terms of internationalisation student numbers growing but it would be helpful to understand how the institution manages the risks involved.

Self-evaluation report - domain level review

1. Regional clusters:

ITTD has achieved, and in some cases, exceeded the targets set out in this category. It has provided specific examples of e.g. improved course provision. Clearly, ITTD benefits from and contributes to the already strong working relationship it has with DIT and ITB as all three institutions move towards TU status.

Appendix 1 provides further detail of achievements reached in this category with the establishment of the Graduate Research School and development of TU4D curriculum considered particularly positive. Notwithstanding the delays in the introduction of a necessary TU legislation, it is welcome that the three institutions are also proceeding towards common governance and organisational structures.

Information on spin-out companies is referenced under institution objective 4, regional clusters and the knowledge transfer framework. Data returns to the HEA state that no spin-out companies have been created for ITTD and only 4 in the TU4D group. Further detail on entrepreneurship conversion rates is provided in Appendix 5 but further elaboration on spin-out activity would be useful.

2. Participation, equal access and lifelong learning:

In its compact ITTD proposed four targets in this category, three of which have been achieved. In particular, it should be noted that part-time enrolments have exceeded the target set out in the compact (2,214 versus a target of 1,200). This does not agree with the stated objective of "prudently" growing lifelong learning enrolments and ITTD should be challenged whether such a rapid increase can be adequately managed in terms of staff and facilities.

ITTD has acknowledged that it has not met its targets for First Year retention rates with varying rates between levels and disciplines. It would have been helpful if ITTD had provided a more detailed description of this, e.g. in Appendix 2, given the importance of retention and having special regard to ITTD's catchment area.

ITTD has also included three new targets in this category that were not previously in the compact:

- Maintenance of high participation rate by targeted SED groups
- Increase the proportion of new entrants who are mature learners
- Increase the proportion of new entrants who gain entry by way of a FETAC award

ITTD has indicated that the targets were always intended to appear in the original submission.

In relation to participation by targeted SED groups, no figures for comparison with the target are provided. ITTD states that HEA figures are not yet available but that it continues to attract large numbers of students from these groups - it

would have been helpful if even internal ITTD figures could have been provided to verify the achievement of the target.

According to data supplied to the HEA, 24% of new entrants were in receipt of a full maintenance grant (and free fees) in 2013/14. This might be discussed at the HEA meeting and ITTD might give details on what specific actions and initiatives are being put in place to increase retention across departments.

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

In its compact ITTD proposed four targets in this category, only three of which were initially reported on. ITTD subsequently submitted a section on "increased employability of graduates". In respect of the latter, ITT acknowledges that while the performance indicator used – *Participation in Synergy Enterprise Awards* – was reported and the target was met, the indicator is limited in that it does not capture the range of measures employed to increase the employability of our graduates. These measures are numerous and diffused through a number of areas (some of which are captured in the compact under other headings).

Skills for employability are built in to the learning outcomes of all programmes and modules. Further, programme design in all disciplines is carried out in conjunction with industry and professional bodies as appropriate – e.g. Engineers Ireland, the Institute of Project Management (IPM), the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and other Accountancy Bodies, the Institute of Professional Auctioneers and Valuers (IPAV), and the HSE. Some programmes have modules in Professional Practice (related to their discipline) as well as a work place element/project/internship built in to their programme of study. Students are prepared prior to undertaking work placements and are supervised when on placement. All students, in addition, undertake in year 1 a *Learning to Learn at Third Level* module which is designed to prepare students for education and employment and focuses on the development of generic skills and competencies. Individual Departments, supported by the Careers Office, organise career fairs, company presentations, CV workshops, interview skills etc.

Stakeholder feedback – from employers and graduates - is consistently positive with regard to the employment readiness of our graduates.

ITTD therefore propose that they revise the metric used in the compact under the target "increase employability of graduates", replacing '*Participation in Synergy Student Awards*' with '*Percentage of programmes with a work placement/ internship/industry project element and/or Professional Body recognition/collaboration in programme accreditation*'.

In respect of other performance indicators, ITTD states that the number of staff participating in Training, Learning and Assessment development events per annum was 15 and that they have met their target in this regard.

The Irish Survey of Student Engagement for 2014 gives ITTD an overall satisfaction rating of 66.1% (all institutions: 67.3%). ITTD scores higher than the national score in respect of career readiness. ITTD scores up to 5% lower than the national score in respect of higher order thinking and academic challenge.

4. High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation:

ITTD's compact sets out just one target in relation to research and innovation, i.e. to consolidate R&D as part of the TU4D Graduate Research School. It states that it has achieved this target. The Centre for Applied Science for Health that ITTD would consider its core research activity aligns with one of TU4D's four research pillars (Environment, Energy and Health).

In the self-evaluation report ITTD refers to consolidation of research themes, growing research numbers, targeted measures to increase competitiveness in research funding, etc. – these are presumably indicators of consolidation of R&D as a part of the TU4D Graduate Research School but it is not clear. Some specific examples of how ITTD's research capacity is being consolidated into the Joint Graduate Research School should have been provided.

In its compact, ITTD states that it will "consolidate other research priorities into a second major thematic research area during the period of this plan." This is now repeated in its self-evaluation report but no further detail is provided on what this second research area is.

ITTD does provide some useful data on research publications and citations with a 5-year weighted citation impact average of 0.98 (data supplied to the HEA records a score of 1.28).

Despite the criticism of some of the information presented in the self-evaluation report, it must be acknowledged that ITTD would not have the same research capacity of, e.g. DIT and any critical reading should take this into account. The establishment of a Joint Graduate Research School will also assist ITTD in building on its R&D capacity.

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

ITTD has exceeded its three targets in this category with sizeable increases and growth in the number of innovation vouchers, active engagement channels with schools and community groups. Appendix 5 should have been used to provide greater detail and examples of these targets and how they were achieved, e.g. activities that students volunteer for. To address this point, IT Tallaght subsequently provided the following:

In relation to progress on civic engagement activities, examples include:

- The introduction of a *Special Purpose Award in Volunteering* (15 credits). Staff and students participated in this pilot programme and 12 participants graduated in 2015.
- The introduction of a module on *Civic Engagement*. This is an elective module on year 2 of the Bachelor of Business in Management programme and accounts for 5 ETC credits. It was introduced following the Programmatic Review.
- Social Enterprise Awards. The Institute participated in the SPARKS Social Enterprise Awards sponsored by CPI Ireland and designed to stimulate social entrepreneurship among students.

- The development of a National Student Volunteer Management System (NSVMS) database. Staff in the Department of Computing at ITT helped to develop this bespoke web-based database which will maintain and promote student volunteering within higher education, and maintain and promote the development of volunteering and student-led engagement opportunities both within and outside higher education. The new management system will be centralised in one single national system provisionally entitled www.studentvolunteer.ie. The system can offer bespoke dimensions for individual HEI's.

Appendix 5 provides details of the external panel review findings of the Dublin Region Innovation Consortium (DRIC) of which ITTD is a member. It notes that its metric targets have been achieved or exceeded and conclude that the consortium is a "gold standard".

ITTD also provides welcome details on business incubation, e.g. support for start-up companies, and the popularity and success of the Student Enterprise Award Scheme.

At the next Strategic Dialogue meeting, the consortium might elaborate on whether it has met Dublin City, Fingal County and South Dublin County Councils (as was discussed at the interim meeting in February).

6. Enhanced internationalisation:

ITTD has exceeded its three targets in relation to increasing the number of non-EU students and international staff exchanges. Its third target refers to one module in Honours programmes reflective of international dimensions. It is not clear from the self-evaluation report whether the target had been achieved (figure of 23 is provided but it is unclear as to what this refers to) and examples of such modules were sought. In response, ITTD provided an explanation of how the number of modules on the level 8 programmes with an international dimension were calculated.

Data provided to the HEA shows a disappointing decrease in outgoing Erasmus students from 40 in 2013/14 to 18 in 2014/15.

Appendix 6 briefly refers to international collaborations with other institutions abroad. To address this point, IT Tallaght subsequently provided the following:

In relation to the metric for *Enhanced Internationalisation*, the Institute has made progress on internationalising the curriculum through the introduction of modules with an international/global dimension and focus. For example, in 2014/15:

- The Department of Engineering introduced a module on *Global Business* on the Masters in Engineering programme.
- The Department of Management introduced a new one year programme – a *Bachelor of Business in International Digital Management & Sales*. This programme was designed to provide education and training in the use and

management of digital technologies required by firms to trade internationally. It includes modules on International Business, Digital Marketing, Social Media Management, Customer Relationship Management (in an international and multicultural context), and Strategic Marketing.

- The Department of Marketing & Business Computing in collaboration with the Department of Computing developed a joint programme in *Data Analytics and Digital Marketing*. This programme also supports the use of technology in global trade.

With regard to *International Collaborations*, the Institute has developed its collaboration with Nanjing Tech University in China which are approved by the Chinese Ministry of Education (three joint 3+1 programmes) and with Shanghai Institute of Technology. The relationship with Shanghai is a 2+2 Exchange Agreement in the Department of Electronic Engineering, relating to a Bachelor of Engineering in Electronic Engineering (NFQ Level 7) and the Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Electronic Engineering (NFQ Level 8).

The Institute also signed an Exchange Programme Agreement with St. Lawrence College, Ontario; a small number of students commenced in 2015.

7. Institutional consolidation:

Clearly ITTD's reporting in this category is in the context of ongoing TU designation and application. Detailed information on the TU project plan is provided in Appendix 7 e.g. 1st Year Experience, Joint Graduate Research School, Structured PhD, joint marketing for international students. The ongoing work of the Curriculum Commission is also welcome, e.g. audit of programme portfolio as well as the portfolio of graduate attributes. The partner institutions should be asked to provide an update on this work at the Strategic Dialogue meeting.

Notwithstanding the delays in the preparation of the TU legislation, it is very welcome that the three partner institutions are working on important administrative changes, e.g. TU4D financial model including internal resource allocation framework, engagement with trade unions ('safe space' forum under the auspices of the LRC), engagement with student body. These could serve as a model or guide for other future HEI consolidations.

8. Additional Notes:

ITTD inserted three new targets in Category 3 "Teaching and Learning".

- Maintenance of high participation rate by targeted SED groups
- Increase the proportion of new entrants who are mature learners
- Increase the proportion of new entrants who gain entry by way of a FETAC award

ITTD confirmed that the targets above were intended to be in the compact from the start.

In response to *participation by targeted SED groups* (the first point above), the HEA suggested that ITTD use an internal metric rather than results from the HEA. A useful internal indicator would be the percentage of full-time students in receipt of a full or partial grant. Data for 2013/14 confirm that 1,578 students, amounting to 61.2% of full-time students, were in receipt of a full/partial grant. This figure excludes any students who deferred the year or were officially withdrawn.

At times there was a disjoint between what was reported under each category and what was described in the respective appendix. Following initial feedback, ITTD have acknowledged this point and have provided additional information, particularly with regard to international collaborations and civic engagement activities.

In general, in respect of targets identified, the type and level of information provided, and indeed the original targets themselves, do not seem to easily allow for comparison with international benchmarks. The HEA requested that ITTD update on their plans for 'peer scanning' and a broader benchmarking of their performance at the HEA meeting.

To address this point, ITTD would like to note that the Institute has participated in U-Multirank at an Institutional level and at the level of individual disciplines. The Department of Computing completed the survey in 2015 and Department of Applied Science will complete the U-Multirank benchmarking exercise in the current academic year.

The institute also reviews the results and feedback from the Irish Survey of Student Engagement and engages in benchmarking informally through comparisons with our international partners. The ISSE provides a metric of 'work-integrated learning' which reflects the integration of employment-focused work experiences into programmes of study. This will be used as a benchmark in future years. They also survey graduates.

Benchmarking is also built into quality assurance processes within the Institute e.g. the external examiner and programmatic review processes, as well as programme board reports and new programme development procedures and policies.

ITTD state that they acknowledge that some targets and metrics do not adequately capture the extent of the institute's activities in the relevant area. They are currently reviewing all metrics used as a strategic planning exercise and in the context of meeting the criteria for technological university.