

IT Tralee Agreed Minute

The HEA acknowledges and appreciates the work undertaken by IT Tralee in preparing the Compact Documentation submission in the context of this the first cycle of Strategic Dialogue. The HEA commends the quality of the submission. Documented feedback on the draft compact has been conveyed to IT Tralee. 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 IT Tralee 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 IT Tralee within the system. This agreement takes full cognisance of the written responses to HEA feedback and of the strategic dialogue meeting which took place on the 15th January 2014.. **The following issues are taken from the Strategic Dialogue Meeting held on the 15th January 2014. It is recognised that this does not represent a full minute of the meeting but focuses on issues of particular importance.**

General

IT Tralee noted that they are currently in the process of developing a new strategic plan. This will be aligned with the compact framework, and would also be prepared in consultation with CIT given their plans for future merger.

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. IT Tralee emphasised their strong commitment to this objective. All programmes are delivered in the context of employer demand and the institute scans the environment to identify future needs. All graduates of degree programmes have work experience which is also used as a means to get employer input into future programme design, delivery, and development.

Financial issues

The institute outlined plans to return to breakeven by 2016 through significant increase in enrolments and income generated from international students, and also referred to the proposed purchase of Kerry Technology Park (KTP). HEA stated that more analysis was required on the assumptions underlying the revised financial projections submitted by the Institute and the proposed purchase of KTP. It was agreed that a further meeting would be held with the Institute specifically on this matter, with a view to bringing a proposal regarding the KTP to the HEA Board in March.

Regional Cluster

The institute noted that they were very committed to this concept and would fully co-operate in its development.

Participation, Equal Access and Lifelong Learning

IT Tralee noted their strong role in this space and that in general the institute meets or exceeds national targets. In respect of life-long learning there are challenges relating to decline in demand from fee-paying part-time students. IT Tralee noted also the value of their ongoing links with Kerry Education and Training Board which has facilitated work across the education system and successful transition of further education students to the institute. In the case of the latter, extensive work has been done with Kerry Education and Training Board to ensure all relevant FE programmes are mapped to IT Tralee programme to facilitate student progression.

In relation to transitions, IT Tralee noted that they have consolidated programmes in order to provide for a common first year structure across a number of courses. HEA requested that IT Tralee consider whether further consolidation is possible in future years.

Excellent Teaching and Learning and Quality of the Student Experience

HEA noted the issues presented in the compact and suggested that it would be helpful to see this area reflect any actions proposed to be taken by the institute as a result of its quality reviews.

High Quality, Internationally Competitive Research and Innovation

IT Tralee presented their research strategy. Prioritisation of research in five thematic areas provides the basis for the IT, Tralee research strategy. It is this focused approach which will support the quality of research undertaken in each of these areas. In response to a query raised by the HEA regarding future research funding levels for the designated research areas, the institute outlined its commitment to achieving these targets (despite the challenging funding environment). This trajectory of proposed growth is based on the institute's track record to date in securing funding (e.g. 3 FP7's, 2 Enterprise Ireland funded National Gateways, etc.). In response to a query regarding quality at PhD levels within the growth projected the ITT outlined the five areas where it has research approval by QQI to level 10. The institute will seek to increase capacity at level 10 in a minimum of two additional discipline areas to include Engineering and Health Studies and Sports Sciences. It is this targeted and focused approach which will deliver quality PhD programmes.

IT Tralee indicated they considered the compact targets with respect to research to be appropriate.

The HEA asked the institute note the implications for funding if targets were not being met.

Enhanced Internationalisation

The institute noted that they have a strong record and set out some of the factors that they take into account in managing the risks arising this area.

Institutional Consolidation

The institute noted their strong commitment to the consolidation process and their confidence that it is proceeding well to date.