

Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT)

Strategic Dialogue Cycle 2 Reflections on Performance

Overview

A comprehensive cycle two self-evaluation report has been received from LIT. All seven major domains have been completed, reporting progress against 2014 Interim Targets.

A useful cover note has been provided by the Institution and it provides 'Reflections' on each of the domains.

It is noted that that the Institution clearly acknowledges where it faces challenges and how these may be overcome. It has clearly listed those responsible for each of the Key Performance Indicators and a system of accountability and responsibility seems strongly embedded within the institution.

LIT's report is concise and there is a welcome use of benchmarks (including international) against which the organisation measures itself. LIT suggests that its report is best read in line with the 'LIT Vision and Strategy to 2020' as this clearly shows how the compact with the HEA has been integrated into the institution's long term development planning.

Self-evaluation report - domain level review

1. Regional clusters:

The regional cluster is operational (MoU, Steering Group and Implementation Group), performing strongly and has formal structures in place including an Independent Chair. The report is consistent with the information provided by the other two institutions in the cluster (UL and MIC).

There is a clear recognition of the contribution that the cluster is making to Limerick City and the Region.

While links between UL and LIT appear very strong, links between LIT and MIC lie largely in the joint work on the federated Limerick Graduate School.

2. Participation, equal access and lifelong learning:

LIT look set to exceed numbers agreed in the Compact. The institution's vision is very much one of contribution to the development of the region through greater participation of underrepresented groups.

LIT raises a concern about an increase in the number of students who withdrew on financial grounds, these primarily being students ineligible for SUSI grants. More data in this area may be useful for policy analysis.

There are useful international benchmarks employed by the institution concerning service delivery and LIT is committed to seeking out best practice.

Significant developments in the area of links with the Limerick and Clare ETBs could provide a useful model for greater HE-FE links.

The institution marks targets as "orange" under flexible learning but explains that this is due to the economic downturn. It outlines how steps to address this have been taken.

3. Excellent Teaching and Learning and Quality of Student Experience

LIT has performed extremely well in the ISSE and ahead of national averages in almost all cases. A detailed LIT Learner Retention Strategy is in place.

4. High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation:

Reflections under this heading by LIT are also combined with reflections on enterprise and this underpins the clear role the institution sees for itself in supporting the economic development of the region.

LIT raises two obstacles that may hamper the achievement of its targets;

- Inequity of funding, where there is no provision in the RGAM for IoTs to fund postgrad research students (in contrast to UL and MIC).
- Infrastructure deficits at LIT

Acknowledging these challenges (and rating the objective as 'orange'), LIT clearly outlines, however, that it has a structured plan to achieve (and is achieving) the objectives set for itself.

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

Extremely strong performance is outlined by LIT under these headings. Enterprise and civic engagement underpin the strategy and work of LIT and the institution outlines how these partnerships are developing.

One possible concern is the statement, "We will endeavour to meet our knowledge transfer research metrics agreed in our HEA Compact". It would be helpful for the institute to provide more detail on this issue.

6. Enhanced internationalisation:

LIT acknowledges that while meeting incoming international student target numbers, it has not met its target for study abroad by its own students. It outlines why this continues to be a challenge but sets out a programme to address this underperformance.

It will be important to examine the extent to which these have been implemented during the next review.

7. Institutional consolidation:

LIT is achieving its targets under this heading and we must acknowledge the institution's points concerning historical funding imbalances which have made reaching these goals difficult.

The institution has also flagged concerns about physical space constraints.

8. Additional Notes:

No changes to compact targets are suggested.