

Letterkenny IT Agreed Minute

The HEA acknowledges and appreciates the work undertaken by Letterkenny IT in preparing the Compact Documentation submission in the context of this the first cycle of Strategic Dialogue. Documented feedback on the draft compact has been conveyed to Letterkenny IT. 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 cycle.

Subject to the above, the HEA and Letterkenny IT 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 Letterkenny IT 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 20 January 2014. **The following issues are taken from the Strategic Dialogue Meeting held on 20th January 2014. It is recognised that this does not represent a full minute of the meeting but focuses on issues of particular importance.**

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. In terms of human capital the institute outlined a number of specific contributions. These included their role in springboard programme, preparatory certificates and access to access programmes.

Profile

Letterkenny IT explained that they were confident of the growth trajectory set out for the institution. They noted that the HEA baseline year happened to be one of relatively low level of demand, but that demand has since recovered and is projected to increase steadily in coming years. They also noted that they had taken actions in the institute to release capacity through the semester/modularisation process.

Financial Issues

Letterkenny IT noted that the strategic dialogue compact process had assisted the institute and enhanced their own planning process. However, the institute noted the urgent need to address issues of financial sustainability relating to the institution. HEA acknowledged the issue and will be in further contact shortly.

Participation, Equal Access and Lifelong Learning

The important role of Letterkenny IT in equipping people in Donegal and the wider region for the future was noted, and the strong focus in the institution on equity of access to higher education and lifelong learning. There was some discussion of definitions of under-represented groups in higher education and the institution agreed to revisit its 2016 projection for target socio-economic groups so that it is aligned with the approach used for national targets. The disability target for 2016 would also be reviewed. The HEA is available to provide any further clarifications required. The institution also agreed to revisit the objectives and performance indicators with a view to making them more explicit and outcomes-oriented.

In respect of transitions, the institute noted that some of its programme numbers are accounted for by denominated programmes in nursing. They also noted the institute has withdrawn a number of courses from the CAO due to low demand. More generally the institute noted the favourable feedback from guidance counsellors on the transitions process and committed to further progress in implementing it, in order to improve the transition for learners between second-level and higher education.

In respect of retention it was noted that the institute had certain issues in respect of performance at levels 7 and 8 but will be developing its strategy in this regard over the course of 2014.

Excellent Teaching and Learning and Quality of the Student Experience

In terms of the objectives and indicators for teaching and learning, HEA noted the range of indicators provided. LYIT outlined some plans in relation to enhanced measures to collect and use student feedback and future iterations of the compact should have a greater focus on measures in relation to quality of student outcomes.

High Quality, Internationally Competitive Research and Innovation

In terms of research aspirations, the institute noted that their plans are still in development, but are anxious to link this to opportunities for regional development, e.g. wind energy. The numbers of research students are expected to rise modestly and to focus mainly on Masters (research).

Enhanced Engagement with Enterprise and the Community and Embedded Knowledge Exchange.

In relation to engagement with enterprise, the institute outlined the wide range of activities undertaken, but their concern is that there needs to be a more integrated state approach to supporting regional development, noting the lack of presence of the industrial development agencies. Cross-border links are important in this space, particularly in the context of making applications for INTERREG funding and the proposed North West Regional Science Park.

Enhanced Internationalisation

In terms of internationalisation it was clarified that the growth in international students was less than appeared in the compact. LYIT already had a number of incoming Erasmus students, but the institute now plans to increase the numbers of fee paying students.

Institutional Consolidation

The institute noted that:

- They are committed to work with their partners in the CUA and in the wider Western cluster.
- From their experience in the Lónra collaboration in BMW they consider that effective collaboration is a slow process and due attention needs to be given to building trust with partners
- While the institute does have an ambition to consider the possibility of TU designation there is a strong sense from the institute community of the importance of maintaining their own identity.
- In terms of academic planning, the institute notes its role in providing access to HE to a particular community which could be imperilled if programme rationalisation takes place. HEA noted that programme rationalisation had to take account of access to HE issues.