

Maynooth University (MU)

Strategic Dialogue Cycle 2 Reflections on Performance

Overview

- The Leinster Pillar II Cluster consisting of Dundalk Institute of Technology, Dublin City University, Athlone Institute of Technology and Maynooth University have made significant progress in meeting their objectives.
- MU have sought to revise their target figures in access and participation (+/-) to account for the HEA interpretation and fluctuations in numbers over recent years.
- Adequate progress has been made against their mission objectives in teaching and learning. However objective two, relating to postgraduate studies, has been delayed. This issue has been identified and clarity is required on how this can be addressed in 2015.
- All targets for research have been met or exceeded with evidence provided to support this.
- Taking progress to date into consideration, it appears that MU is still on course to achieve the objectives set out for engagement. There is evidence of benchmarking in this domain. There are some discrepancies - for example the baseline number of students undertaking work placements in 2012 has to be clarified. One objective not yet complete relates to the internal review of engagement activities. Overall the objectives and outcomes appear coherently linked and appropriate to the engagement domain. MU should confirm whether the 2016 targets are still valid, in the sense that some are extremely close to being achieved at year end 2014.
- In terms of internationalisation, MU appear to have doubled their outgoing students over the last 3 years. Reference is made to the 3U Pathways Programme without significant substantiation as to what this has contributed.
- The integration of Froebel College of Education is well established and was further embedded in 2014.

Self-evaluation report - domain level review

1. Regional clusters:

Institutional objective 1: Agree and implement process to establish and support a sustainable and shared academic planning process to ensure coherent, coordinated and rational higher educational provision across the region.

The institution met its objections. A Working Group of Registrars prepared a protocol for new programme provision within the Midlands East, North Dublin

(MEND) cluster. The Working Group will keep working together in examining the requirements for effective, reliable and efficient systems for Student Data Exchange for Joint Academic Programmes.

Institutional objective 2: Develop a regional approach to access, transfer and progression. (ATP). Objectives have been met in relation to student pathways. SIDF have facilitated the Group in completing inventory of options and mechanisms for Access Transfer and progression. An agreed protocol for new programme provision will be rolled out across the entire HE and FE sectors.

Maynooth University's collaboration with Dublin City University and Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) in 3U Partnership is ongoing.

The cluster objectives were met. The institutions are working collectively and collaboratively and a Regional Cluster Board which includes Presidents and Registrars has been established.

The Leinster Pillar II Cluster consisting of Dundalk Institute of Technology, Dublin City University, Athlone Institute of Technology and Maynooth University have made good progress towards meeting its objectives.

2. Participation, equal access and lifelong learning:

MU have stated four objectives in their self-evaluation; to increase undergraduate intake in a planned manner; to stabilise decline in PG enrolments in the short term and plan for subsequent growth; retain current proportions of students from target groups; and to continue to increase provision of specialist supports for non-traditional students.

It should be noted that MU have agreed a common regional approach to Access and progression as part of the cluster. However, the first objective is not strictly an access target but nonetheless they have exceeded these targets (partly due to the absorption of Froebel College) and have revised them upwards.

MU has also arrested, and indeed is beginning to reverse, a decline in postgraduate numbers. The original target has been revised downwards (as a %) but as an overall figure it is actually higher. It seems that this later target as a figure has been achieved but the overall % of the university sector remains slightly below target. However, MU are confident that the final targets will be achieved.

The proportion of new entrants from the designated target groups (SEG/Disability/Matures) has also been revised. The baseline for SEG new entrants should have stood at 20% (not 22%); the 2014 reported figure stands at 21.5% in 2014/15. Students with a disability have risen to 13.1% from a base of 10% and the target has been revised upwards. Matures have fluctuated over the last number of years. The interim target has been achieved but the target has been revised downwards.

Supports for students from HEAR & DARE routes and those needing specific supports have been maintained with foundation programmes and pathways for certain groups and orientation to aid transition to 3rd level.

MU have sought to revise their access target figures to account for the HEA interpretation and fluctuations over the last number of years.

Of slight concern is that MU's part-time/flexible provision has decreased. This topic should be discussed at the meeting with the HEA.

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

Institution Objective 1: Develop a distinctive Maynooth undergraduate curriculum

This target has been met.

Institution Objective 2: Continue to strengthen our portfolio of taught postgraduate programmes.

The review of the portfolio of taught postgraduate programmes has been delayed slightly due to the pressures of work associated with the reform of the undergraduate programme (currently 44 programmes, however at interim review it was highlighted that a more suitable number would be in the region of 15 to 20). This will be discussed at the upcoming meeting.

Institution Objective 3: Enhanced support for student learning, doubling of the numbers availing of writing centre, maths support and study skills support.

The target was met, and indeed exceeded, in terms of aggregate level of activity.

4. High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation:

Institution Objective: Establish distinctive research priorities and increase research capacity and impact

It appears likely that all targets will be met or exceeded. MU has agreed a set of research priorities that reflects the strengths of the University and are aligned with the national research priorities. The target for research income was €21m. The Institute had secured €20.9m by September 2014. New postgraduate enrolments have recovered to 2011/12 levels although meeting the target on Masters Research student numbers for 2016/17 may be challenging. MU have already met PhD targets. While no baseline targets were set for publications or citations, the annual average number of peer reviewed academic publications per staff member has remained constant at 1.4 between 2012 and 2014 and the field weighted citation index increased from 1.3 in 2011 to 1.66 in 2014. MU also secured 3 ERC awards.

Institution Objective: Increase participation in EU Horizon 2020 programmes

All targets have been met or exceeded. The Institute propose changing the 2016 target from '% of national share' to a specific numerical target. This is because sourcing national data is slow and will not be available until well into 2017 reducing its utility as an indicator.

Institution Objective: Enhance doctoral education with emphasis on structured PhDs.

The University reported that a review of structured PhD programmes was undertaken in 2014. Outcomes include formal identification of role and functions of Departmental Research Student Progress Committees. The Graduate Studies Office has developed a new suite of graduate skills modules that are aligned with the IUA PhD Graduate Skills Statement. The modules are offered to partners in 3U and the in the Technology Transfer Alliance.

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

Institution objective: Prepare an engagement plan that will bring strategic coherence and direction to a range of enterprise engagement activities currently undertaken by individual staff

The intention was that the internal review would be completed in full at the end of 2014 but this has only been partially completed. The university, however, lists several relevant activities that are underway in this space e.g. student opportunities for experiential learning, the establishment of Centre for Entrepreneurship, Design and Innovation (EDEN) and they have established a baseline of students enrolled in customised credit bearing modules. They also reference the U-Multirank survey to benchmark MU engagement with the region. So, while the internal review is not yet completed, there is evidence of work in this space.

Institution Objective: Extension of research-led innovation activities to create value, and to support enterprise with a specific focus on the Midlands East/Dublin West region, and our sectoral enterprise partners.

Progress has been reported on a number of quantitative targets e.g. invention disclosures, spin out companies etc.

Institution Objective: Increase number of students taking work placements as part of formal studies, thus improving students' preparation for the workplace and building university-enterprise relationships

The target was to increase the number of work placements by 20%. Conflicting numbers are given for the baseline, the compact states this as 180 students in 2012 and the progress report states this as 121 in 2012. Assuming that the progress report is correct, then this target has been met. Assuming the former, then it is short by 16 students. MU also note plans to expand the planned centre for experiential learning to grow the number of resources dedicated to brokering work placements.

6. Enhanced internationalisation:

As reported by MU they appear to have doubled their outgoing students over the last 3 years. 1003 international students are mentioned as being enrolled but a breakdown is not provided and HEA data suggests that the numbers of Erasmus

students have not doubled over the period. A reference is also made to the 3U Pathways Programme without substantiation as to what this has contributed. It is also noteworthy that MU did not apply for the International Credit Mobility support under the Erasmus+ programme.

7. Institutional consolidation:

The integration of Froebel College of Education is well established and was further embedded in 2014. Work on a new building has commenced and a separate Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education has been established. Ongoing talks with St Patrick's College are taking place principally under the aegis of an Inter-Institutional Working Group.

8. Additional Notes:

Revisions to compact:

Participation, equal access and lifelong learning

The self –evaluation template requests several revisions to 2015 and 2016 targets in the participation, equal access and lifelong learning domain, in addition to clarifying previously submitted baselines. This will be discussed at the upcoming meeting.

High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation

Increase participation in EU Horizon 2020 programmes

The 2016 target has been revised upward to 55 H2020 applications per annum with >12% success rate which is welcome.