Press Release

Assessment of plans for technological universities - announcement of panel of international experts

The Higher Education Authority today announced the composition of the expert panel that will advise the Authority on the viability and adequacy of plans for the creation of a technological university (TU). The HEA have received plans from two consortia - Cork IT and IT Tralee; Dublin Institute of Technology, IT Blanchardstown and IT Tallaght. Waterford IT and Carlow IT are also currently preparing a plan.

This evaluation of plans is part of the process put in place by the Minster for Education and Skills, on the advice of the HEA, to ensure that any new technological university would meet rigorous, internationally benchmarked, standards for performance and quality. It is an important interim step, whereby the institutions concerned set out how they propose to meet the criteria for a TU. If the plans are approved, the institutions will proceed to implement them over a period, including mergers of the members of the consortia, before they apply for designation as a TU. This application will in turn be subject to another full review by international experts, before the HEA advises the Minister on TU designation. Details of the process and criteria are attached as Appendix B.

The members of the panel are -

Chairperson - Lauritz B. Holm-Nielsen (former Rector of Aarhus University)

Kay Harman (Adjunct Professor University of New England Australia)

Philip Gummett (former CEO Welsh Higher Education Funding Council)

(Biographical details are attached at Appendix A.)

Speaking today Mr Tom Boland CEO of the HEA said -

"Technological universities are, potentially, an exciting and valuable addition to the Irish higher education sector enhancing student choice and broadening the range of outcomes. But it is vital that, in their creation, there is no compromise on quality or in the capacity of any new institution to be recognised in Ireland and internationally as operating at university level. The advice of this distinguished panel will make a significant contribution towards meeting this objective".

It is expected that decisions in respect of the evaluation of the plans will be made by November 2014.

Appendix A

Lauritz B. Holm-Nielsen was appointed Rector of Aarhus University in 2005 and led the successful mergers out of which the current globally ranked university was born. As part of the reform of Danish higher education, initiated as a key part of the Danish globalisation strategy, the University merged with two research institutes, the Institute of Business and Technology in Herning (HIH), and the Danish Institute of Agricultural Sciences, the National Environmental Research Institute. The Aarhus School of Business, the Danish University of Education and the Engineering College of Aarhus are now all formally a part of the University of Aarhus. As a result of these mergers, the University now counts a total of about 34,000 students and 9,000 staff.

Besides being Vice-President of the EUA and President of Euroscience, Lauritz Holm-Nielsen is also Chairman of the Nordic Universities Association (NUS) and Vice-Chairman of the Universities Denmark (DU). In 2008 he was appointed to serve as a Commissioner in the Danish Prime Minister's Africa Commission. During his career he has served as a Chairman of the Danish Science Research Council and as a member of other competitive funding councils.

He started his career as an academic in botany, and was Dean of the Faculty of Science at Aarhus University from 1976 to 1979 – a position he left to take up a professorship in Ecuador. He has published a long series of research papers on tropical plants and ecology.

He spent 18 years working abroad, 12 of these at the World Bank, Washington DC, where he formulated strategies for further education, training and research, and managed the planning and implementation of higher education sector investments in a wide range of emerging economies – most recently Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Mexico. During his career he has published many papers on higher education, science and technology, innovation, and globalisation. His latest publication is concerned with the mobility of talent.

Kay Harman

Professor Kay Harman is one of the foremost international experts and authors on the subject of higher education institutional mergers. She has also published significant work on higher education and research policy, academic culture and work, researcher-industry links, technology and knowledge transfer, research training, and doctoral education, the professional development of university managers and new researchers, public sector management and leadership, and research methods in education and management. She has acted as consultant to the World Bank, the Asian Bank, the South African government amongst others, on research policy and on higher education landscape reconfiguration including mergers. Following her period as inaugural Dean of Graduate Studies (2005-2009) and her retirement in February 2010, Kay Harman was appointed as an Adjunct Professor in the University of New England Business School, in Australia. She continues to supervise higher degree research students and engage in research and consultancy work, is a member of one of the School's research centres, the Centre for Higher Education Management and Policy - CHEMP, and is the Co-ordinator of the Australian Network for Higher Education Policy Research (ANHEPR). She is also an Honorary Fellow of the Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL).

Philip Gummett

Philip Gummett was the Chief Executive Officer of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales years until 2011. A former pro vice-chancellor of Manchester University, Prof. Gummett was charged with drawing a new structure for the configuration of Welsh higher education institutions. The resulting plan led to a series of high-profile mergers completing a decade-long process of consolidation during which the number of higher education institutions reduced from 13 to eight under his tenure.

Appendix B Process and criteria for designation as a technological university

Introduction

The National Strategy for Higher Education provides for the establishment of a new type of university – a technological university. A technological university will have a systematic focus on the preparation of graduates for complex professional roles in a changing technological world. It will advance knowledge through research and scholarship and disseminate this knowledge to meet the needs of society and enterprise. It shall have particular regard to the needs of the region in which the university is located.

For the purposes of determining whether an application for designation as a technological university should be approved, the HEA shall appoint international panels of experts (referred to as "Expert Panels") to advise the Authority in respect of Stages 3 and 4 of the designation process outlined in this memorandum. In conducting their evaluation, the Expert Panels will carry out such site visits and reviews and be given access to information from the applicant institution as they consider appropriate.

The designation process will consist of four stages as follows –

- an expression of interest,
- the preparation of a plan to meet the criteria,
- an evaluation of the plan, and
- an application for designation.

Stage 1 - Expression of Interest

Higher education institutions in Ireland wishing to apply for designation as a technological university must submit an expression of interest to the Higher Education Authority. The expression of interest must state, *inter alia*, how the transition from the institutions' current status to final designation will be financed. The expression of interest will be considered by the HEA in the context of a system wide analysis of Ireland's higher education needs and the strategic implications arising from the establishment of a new university. The HEA will, having considered the system level implications of the proposal, advise, within a reasonable period (no longer than six months), as to whether or not the proposal may proceed to the next stage.

Stage 2 - Preparation of Plan to Meet Criteria

At this stage a plan will be prepared by the applicant, addressing how it is proposed to meet the criteria for a technological university and the process requirements and related timelines.

The establishment of a technological university requires the consolidation of two or more institutions. Accordingly, the plan must be based on a legally binding memorandum of understanding between a consortium of existing institutions describing their consolidation into a new single institution, which has been approved by the Governing Body of each institution.

The plan must demonstrate that legally binding academic and administrative arrangements are in place to ensure that national and regional needs for graduates at higher education Levels 6 and 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications are met.

Stage 3 - Evaluation of Plan

The plan will be assessed by an Expert Panel which will have regard to -

- the capacity of the proposed consortium to achieve the objectives of consolidation in terms of academic rationale, scale, the degree of integration through alliances and membership of clusters and the extent to which workplace practices have been developed to bring them into line with those of a modern university, and
- the existing position of the proposed consortium in relation to each of the technological university designation criteria (Appendix 1) and its capacity, based on its developmental trajectory, to meet these criteria within a reasonable timeframe.

A decision will be provided by the HEA to the applicant within six months of receipt of the plan. If, in the opinion of this Expert Panel, the proposal is not likely to meet the criteria for designation as a technological university within the proposed timeframe the application will not proceed further. In that case, a further application will not be accepted for a period of five years. If the Panel is of the view that the plan presented represents a credible and realisable proposal, the Panel may provide advice to the applicant or the HEA on any matter relating to its implementation.

Stage 4 - Application for Designation as a Technological University

Where a legal consolidation has been achieved and the applicant considers that all other requirements for designation have been met, the applicant may apply for designation as a technological university. The application for designation will be evaluated by an Expert Panel. In carrying out that evaluation, this Panel will have regard to the criteria set out in Appendix A, the legal and administrative requirements applying to universities in Ireland, the configuration of institutions within the Irish higher education system, the characteristics of technological universities internationally, detailed statistical profile data on Irish higher education institutions and the overall merits of the application.

This Expert Panel will report its recommendation to the HEA which will consider the report and advise the Minister for Education and Skills.

Criteria for a Technological University

1 Mission

1.1 A technological university will have a systematic focus on the preparation of graduates for complex professional roles in a changing technological world. It will advance knowledge through research and scholarship and disseminate this knowledge to meet the needs of society and enterprise. It will have particular regard to the needs of the region in which the university is located.

1.2 Having regard to the mission of a technological university, these criteria set out the requirements that are to be met by an applicant before designation can be made.

2 Institutional Profile

2.1 The university will –

- be characterised by the breadth of its programme provision across higher education Levels 6 to 10 of the National Framework of Qualifications.
- have programmes of study that are vocationally/professionally oriented, with a strong focus on science and technology.
- have programmes of study that incorporate structured work placement.
- have programmes that address the social and economic needs of the region in which the university is located.
- have sufficient resources and critical mass to ensure appropriate pedagogical and research quality and depth of faculty expertise to meet the mission of the institution.
- have sufficient critical mass to support effective and efficient governance and administration and to provide an appropriate level of student services.
- maintain an active research policy primarily focused on applied, problem oriented research and discovery, with effective knowledge transfer alongside the provision of consulting/problem solving services that are particularly relevant to the region.
- support intensive and broad-based links with regional business, enterprise, professions and related stakeholders that inform curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment and research.

3 Student Profile

3.1 The student profile of the university will match its stated mission. Specifically, the university will provide programmes at higher education Levels 6 to 10 to meet local, regional and national demand and to meet the university's responsibilities in respect of educational opportunities at these levels.

3.2 At the time of application for designation as a technological university –

- enrolment in the applicant institution in research programmes at Levels 9-10 will not be less than 4% of FTE enrolments at levels 8 to 10. In addition, the application must evidence a developmental trajectory, showing that the institution will raise these enrolments to 7% within a period of ten years from the date of designation. Level 10 provision will be concentrated in a small number of fields/departments which have the capacity and credibility to offer this level of study and training to the level set by the national PhD standard;

- a combined minimum of 30% of all students in the applicant institution will be lifelong learning students enrolled on professional focused programmes and industry up-skilling, including part-time, work-related programmes and work-study programmes and/or mature learners.

3.3 Where the institutions that consolidate to comprise a technological university have been providing, prior to consolidation, non-higher education programmes (as defined by the National Framework of Qualifications) the university will, if necessary to meet local, regional and national demand, ensure this activity continues, either directly or indirectly, through appropriate administrative and academic arrangements that allow for the sharing of academic facilities and the progression of students.

4 Staff Profile

4.1 A technological university will in the appointment, management and progression/promotion of academic staff to and within the university have in place contractual and appointment procedures that, *inter alia,* -

- give weight to professional practice and institutional engagement activities

and

- provide existing staff members with a balance between teaching, research, engagement activities and academic administration that is appropriate to their subject area and their academic experience.

4.2 At the time of application for designation –

- 90% of full time, academic staff engaged in delivering higher education programmes in the applicant institution will hold a Level 9 qualification or higher.

- at least 45% per cent of full time, higher education, academic staff, will hold a Level 10 qualification or the equivalence in professional experience, combined with a terminal degree appropriate to their profession. The proportion of such staff that hold an equivalence in professional experience shall not exceed 10% of full time, higher education, academic staff. There will be demonstrable evidence of a developmental trajectory that shows the capacity, including staff with equivalence in professional experience as referred to, to increase and reach levels consistent with other Irish universities but not less than 65% within ten years of designation. These staff will not only hold Level 10 qualifications or equivalent in professional experience, but also be able to demonstrate sustained activity in relevant areas of research and development.

- in the fields of knowledge/study in which doctoral level training and research is on-going, the proportion of staff holding Level 10 qualifications will be in excess of 80%. As a general principle, only those with Level 10 qualifications will be engaged in the delivery and supervision of Level 9 programmes. Only those with Level 10 qualifications and with a sustained record of research publications and mission-appropriate research outputs will be engaged in the delivery and supervision of Level 10 programmes.

5 Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Development

5.1 A technological university will have the curriculum and the teaching, learning and assessment processes to support its core mission to develop graduates who have a focus on the world of work. The full opportunities provided by the National Framework of Qualifications for enhanced teaching, learning and curriculum development will be incorporated, with a particular focus on-

- Curriculum development focused on knowledge, skills and competencies developed in conjunction with business, professional organisations and, workforce, student and occupational organisations;
- Curricula that embed the full range of generic attributes linked to employability and citizenship;
- Curricula that embed engagement in the workplace as part of its programmes;
- Research-informed and practice-led teaching, learning and assessment that uses problem-oriented, practice-based and is community engaged.

6 Research

6.1 The research dimension of a technological university will-

- Focus on applied, problem-oriented research and social and technological development and innovation, with direct social and economic impacts and public and private benefits in the region in which the university is located;
- Support and sustain research activity among its staff that can be compared to appropriate international benchmarks. Such benchmarks will include *inter alia* evidence of cooperative research groups of a viable scale, success in winning competitive research funding nationally and internationally and inter-institutional research collaboration;
- In linking research to teaching, demonstrate methodological approaches to the formation of level 10 knowledge, skills and competencies that are appropriate to the institution's research mission and meet national PhD level standards. This will be through the integration of practice-led, professional, and industrial doctorate structures alongside more traditional PI-led approaches, all within the context of national policy for structured PhD provision.

6.2 An applicant institution will, at the time of application, –

- have existing research capacity to support on-going programmes, projects and doctoral training in at least three fields of knowledge/study as defined by ISCED fields of study at the 2-digit level (ISCED2 – "Narrow fields"); [1]
  and
- demonstrate a developmental trajectory showing that the institution can extend research and doctoral activity to sufficient capacity to support two further fields, as defined by ISCED2 within five years of designation as a technological university.

7 International Profile

7.1 The international engagement of a technological university will specifically reflect its mission and orientation.

7.2 At the time of application, an applicant will demonstrate a developmental trajectory for the enhancement of internationalisation related to teaching and learning, research and staff development and a sustainable range of international collaborations such as joint projects, student and staff exchanges including the collaborative provision of academic and training programmes.

8 Leadership, Management and Governance

8.1 The leadership management and governance arrangements in place will be fully reflective of and in line with the stated mission of the institution. In practice this will mean -

- governance structures that reflect the external orientation of the institution and the engagement focus of its programmes of study;
- an integrated academic governance structure that gives coherence to multiple units, with consolidation of previously autonomous institutions where these existed, within the framework of the institution's mission.
- a leadership team that combines strong academic credentials and experience with experience in enterprise and professions relevant to the institution's mission.
- effective institutional-level academic governance with the authority, processes and competence to ensure the quality of programmes of study and the quality and integrity of other academic matters;
- workplace practices and employment contracts are reflective of a modern university including, *inter alia,* such matters as the flexible delivery of programmes for diverse learner groups, the length and structure of the academic year, the efficient utilisation of the institution's physical resources and other infrastructure.

[1] ISCED codes are outlined on the HEA website at
http://www.hea.ie/files/files/file/statistics/SRS%20User%20Files/EurostatISCED.pdf