

Waterford Institute of Technology Agreed Minute

The HEA acknowledges and appreciates the work undertaken by Waterford 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 Waterford 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 Waterford 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 Waterford 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 16th January 2014. **The following issues are taken from the Strategic Dialogue Meeting held on 16th January 2014. It is recognised that this does not represent a full minute of the meeting but focuses on issues of particular importance.**

Broader Context

HEA noted the importance of the ambition to be designated as TU for the institution and its partners and, the importance of managing this process carefully to ensure the institute continues to contribute to national objectives such as human capital, access, student demand and others. The institute confirmed that this is their approach and that the TU is seen as an enabler for the future rather than an end in itself. They confirmed that work is underway in this regard and that they are aiming to meet the process set out by the HEA including full consolidation before seeking designation as TU.

WIT noted that they have recently concluded their strategy process, developed in the context of the forthcoming consolidation and plan for application for designation as TU. They have sought to align the strategy with national strategy and the compact format and have included a range of KPIs in this regard.

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. WIT agreed and outlined how it is contributing to job creation, skills, job support and graduate employability.

WIT stated that they are very actively involved in meeting human capital needs with extensive engagement with industry about their needs, both in terms of graduates and research outcomes. They have also successfully participated in Springboard programmes and engaged with NALA to meet identified needs. The WIT ArcLabs and other R&D activities have contributed to the provision of 700 direct jobs over the last 8 years. Metrics in terms of knowledge transfer and outcomes from the incubation centre have been included in the knowledge transfer part of the compact.

Regional Cluster

While WIT expressed support for the cluster they were concerned that the cluster may inhibit other collaborations with non-cluster members. They would consider also that the creation of the TU would allow for a more effective operation of the cluster. They felt more HEA guidance would be helpful on key issues such as governance and objectives for cluster operation.

HEA noted that they have set guidance in terms of initial objectives, and explicitly did not prescribe forms of governance to allow the clusters to consider this themselves. HEA also warned against the initial discussions focussing on problematic areas and instead should consider issues of mutual benefit for the institutions and students and other stakeholders.

Participation, Equal Access and Lifelong Learning

WIT explained that the projected decline in under-represented socio-economic groups arises from financial pressures applying to that group. They are revising their access programme to provide better targeting. HEA emphasised the importance of developing pathways for progression. WIT explained that they already have considerable work done in this regard and could, as part of the cluster, find ways to demonstrate this.

Excellent Teaching and Learning and Quality of the Student Experience

WIT noted that student survey data wasn't available at time of preparation of the compact, but could consider this again. They also noted increasing capacity issues in managing the data required to undertake proper strategic planning, not just in relation to teaching and learning, but on a whole of institution basis.

High Quality, Internationally Competitive Research and Innovation

WIT responded to HEA feedback and concerns in relation to collaboration with Carlow IT in research, research income, isolation, and future provision of PhD education. They noted their intention to create a single graduate school with Carlow and to pursue research collaborations with Carlow in a number of areas. They noted that research income can have spikes and ebbs, but on a 3 year rolling average their target for research income was broadly in line with the last 3 year average. They set out a range of examples to demonstrate the connectivity of their research programmes, with other Irish HEIs, enterprise and internationally. In terms of meeting the new framework for research education, they considered that this would be challenging but suggested new, and national, approaches.

Enhanced Internationalisation

HEA noted the ambitious goals set here and queried their feasibility and sustainability. WIT explained that they have grown quickly in this space, and from their perspective, the targets are not ambitious and indeed may already be achieved