



Support for higher education landscape

restructuring, consolidation and collaborative projects

Call for submissions March 2019

Context

The National Strategy for Higher Education provides for substantial and appropriate restructuring, consolidation and co-operative approaches within the landscape of Irish higher education, including the development of Technological Universities and the incorporation of HEIs in the Initial Teacher Education area.

The HEA, with the support of the Department of Education and Skills, recognises that such reforms carry additional costs and has provided for a fund to support consortia engaged in implementing reforms of the higher education landscape, including in particular those designated, or seeking designation, as Technological Universities.

In addition to the primary objective of supporting the creation of Technological Universities (TUs) as provided for in the Programme for Government, this 2019 call will also offer co-funded support to strategic alliance building with particular emphasis on the post-Brexit North/South context and, subject to the availability of funding under the call, to regional clusters of higher education institutions which will collaboratively, including with Further Education and Training (FET) and/or local authorities, seek to address challenges or opportunities around higher education's contribution to social, economic and regional development in line with Project Ireland 2040 and the National Development Plan.

The fund is not expected to be able to cover all costs arising, but to make a contribution to those costs.

The HEA is now inviting submissions for funding support in respect of the costs arising from landscape reform. The total funding available under this call will be c. €14 million as allocated by the Department of Education and Skills.

This call follows the allocation of similar landscape reform funding by the HEA in 2018.

Policy Environment

The report on the *Reconfiguration of the Irish System of Higher Education, 2012*¹, set an outline structure for the higher education system, including numbers, types and locations of institutions and their agreed missions. Aligned to this, the HEA evaluates the performance of institutions, based on their missions, through a process of strategic dialogue and performance funding.

In recent years, the HEA agreed to provide funding to support the sorts of changes recommended in the above report, given that such mergers and reconfigurations have costs attached. The HEA provided such funding to assist the institutions concerned in proceeding with the actions required.

The National Strategy for Higher Education made recommendations for the creation of Technological Universities (TUs) which will be distinguished by a mission and ethos that is aligned and consistent with the current mission and focus of Institutes of Technology, with an emphasis on programmes at levels 6 to 8 and industry-focused research. In this way, TUs will address the social and economic needs of their region and will engage in science and technology programmes that are vocationally and professionally oriented. TUs will also be expected to play a pivotal role in facilitating access and progression particularly through relationships with the further education and training sector.

The enactment of the Technological University legislation in March 2018, (Technological Universities Act, 2018) set out a process whereby consortia can now apply for TU designation. The format and contents of an application is a matter for the applicant institutes seeking an order under the Technological Universities Act 2018 in accordance with the process set out in the Act. The creation of a Technological University requires the consolidation of at least two institutions. Each consortium applying for designation will be required to meet the designated criteria and achieve high standards across a range of areas before being designated as a Technological University. These include standards relating to the qualifications of staff, the quality of research output, the proportion of students engaged in lifelong learning, amongst other areas.

In addition, proposals relating to the incorporation of certain HEIs in the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) area, as set out in the report of the international review panel on the structure of ITE provision in Ireland, will also be supported as appropriate by the 2019 call.

The 2019 call will offer support for proposals relating to strategic alliance building with particular emphasis on the post-Brexit North/South context and, where the availability

¹ See: <http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/International-Panel-Report-on-Reconfiguration.pdf>

of funding permits, to regional clusters of higher education institutions, including with FET and/or local authorities, collectively and in co-operation seeking to address challenges or opportunities relating to the furtherance of regional development priorities under Project Ireland 2040.

Criteria

The call requires that those making a submission should set out progress to date, where continuation of a previously funded project is involved, expected costs and milestones for each phase of the proposed project, along with an overall cost and expected completion date in order to demonstrate a long-term strategic approach to the collective engagement and strategic alliance building of HEIs and other partners in the context of higher education landscape reform.

The HEA has developed this call, mindful of Government policy to support the development of appropriate higher education landscape restructuring and other strategic North-South and regional co-operative capacity building projects, with particular emphasis on the development of Technological Universities and established TU progression, the incorporation of HEIs in the Initial Teacher Education area, cross-border initiatives and the furtherance of regional development priorities in the context of Project Ireland 2040.

At the same time, there is a need to ensure appropriate accountability and value for money in respect of funding to be allocated.

Ranking of Proposals

Proposals related to **TU development or progression** will be accorded the highest priority.

Proposals related to the **incorporation of HEIs in the Initial Teacher Education area** will be accorded a high priority.

Proposals relating to **cross-border North-South strategic alliance building in the post-Brexit context** will be accorded a high priority.

Proposals relating to **regional clusters of higher education institutions which collaboratively, including with FET and/or local authorities**, advance projects relating to the **furtherance of regional development priorities under Project Ireland 2040** will also be considered where the availability of funding under the call permits.

The capacity of institutions and the broader tertiary education system to **mainstream beneficial project outcomes** will be regarded as an advantage in the prioritisation of proposals to receive funding support under the call.

Proposals will be ranked in order of priority with no guarantee that any or all proposals submitted will be funded under this call.

As in previous calls, in allocating funding, the HEA will have regard to the following criteria:

- Scale of the project – e.g. numbers of students, staff, affected by the reform, number of collaborating partners;
- Level of co-funding provided by institutions;
- Track record of success in the development of the project to date. This might include:
 - Previous institutional funding allocated;
 - Significant milestones achieved;
 - Progress on project plans as provided under earlier landscape funding rounds;
 - Evidence of quality improvements and/or capacity improvements and/or of cost efficiencies achieved in the process to date; and,
 - Costs and expenditure to date.

Process

Following receipt of applications, the Executive will review submissions and make a recommendation to the HEA Board for consideration. In reviewing applications under this call, the HEA may seek external assistance and may meet with consortia to better understand the detail of applications and to provide a level of oversight and accountability for the landscape reforms underway. It is expected that such meetings, as required, will be scheduled before the end of May 2019.

Format of submissions

Lead Higher Education Institutions/Consortia are asked to complete the attached template having regard to the following format in making submissions.

Strategy and objectives

Institutions should set out:

- Alignment with stated national strategy;
- Specific objectives and indicators of success for the funding sought.

Funding sought

Institutions should set out the funding being sought in the application and the purposes for which it is proposed.

Institutions should also provide an annualised estimate of the total cost of the overall plan.

Insofar as the institution envisages that further costs, which are not being sought as part of this plan, will arise, the institution should provide details of same along with an indication of how these future costs might be met.

Co-funding being provided

Institutions should set out the funding they propose to provide for the project in question.

Closing date

Submissions should be received by the HEA in electronic format before **5pm, Friday 3rd May 2019** (systemperformance@hea.ie). A signed / hard copy is not required.

External assistance

The HEA may seek external assistance in assessing any submissions made.

Eligible institutions

Current TU development consortia, TU Dublin, ITE incorporation projects, regional clusters of HEIs and clusters involving HE, FET and/or local authority partners, cross-border strategic alliance partnerships.

Please note that proposals from single unaligned HEIs, or from HEIs which do not have a dedicated pay budget from either the HEA or the Department of Education and Skills and which are not encompassed by the Employment Control Framework, will not be considered eligible for co-funding support under this call.