

Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)

Strategic Dialogue Cycle 2 Reflections on Performance

Overview

DIT has made significant progress in the implementation of an ambitious strategic plan and is performing well against the targets contained in the Performance Compact.

DIT is experiencing a period of significant change with two major strategic initiatives, the development of the new campus at Grangegorman and the Development of the Technological University for Dublin (TU4Dublin); the latter comprises the institute's contribution to the regional cluster agenda.

The level of progress on both major strategic initiatives is impressive.

Significant, specific and measurable progress has been made on the development of the TU4Dublin. One major concern of the TU4Dublin Steering Group is that of the TU legislation and the difficulty involved in maintaining momentum amongst colleagues and other stakeholders. Progress on the legislation continues to be delayed.

The TU4Dublin institutes have all relied on very similar data for appendices 1, 4 & 7 which demonstrates further the level of collaboration between them.



In the light of delays in implementing TU designation legislation, the consortium should consider the implications of non-enactment of the legislation. DIT has clarified that it is the goal of TU4Dublin Alliance to achieve technological university designation and that the merger is a step on this journey. It was further confirmed that neither TU designation, nor indeed the merger, is possible without the Technological Universities legislation which is currently being developed.

Research performance and activity – the number of Masters Research students is static, a big increase is anticipated between 2014/15 and 2016/17 (102 > 253). Similarly, in PhD students (303 > 640). The HEA will look for further detail on this issue at the meeting.

In terms of internationalisation DIT international student numbers are growing but the HEA requests that the institute address the management of the increased risk arising at the meeting.

Self-evaluation report - domain level review

1. Regional clusters:

DIT has achieved its institutional objective “to be an active participant in the Dublin/Leinster Pillar II cluster, so as to enhance DIT’s contribution to Dublin’s regional development”. DIT listed four active collaborative initiatives namely the DRHEA, Green Way, The Global City Innovation Initiative and the Creative Dublin Alliance with an interim target to maintain current engagements. While two of these initiatives have formally ceased to exist (DRHEA & Creative Dublin Alliance), DIT has largely achieved the target. One could state that this target was not ambitious enough, however DIT is clear within the performance compact that the focus of DIT, ITB & ITT in terms of cluster development is the significant consolidation of the partners in creating the TU4Dublin. The DRHEA has effectively ceased to exist as a formal network once funding concluded, however DIT states that it has maintained relationships and some activities with one example provided. DIT states that it continues to “engage” with DCC and others in progressing the Dublin city agenda for the Creative Dublin Alliance.

Appendix 1 provides a summary of some key achievements in the development of this ‘sub-cluster’/TU4Dublin Alliance. Some of the key points to note is the establishment of the TU4Dublin Graduate Research School, the establishment of the TU4Dublin Curriculum Commission with the introduction of a pilot initiative in a small range of disciplines. The institutions are also progressing steadily on issues such as Governance, Organisational Design and Professional Services with an extremely coherent and professional approach being taken.

2. Participation, equal access and lifelong learning:

DIT proposed two objectives in this category. Objective one included 5 performance indicators of which three have now been achieved two significantly surpassed and two missed by substantial margins. The missed targets are part-time undergraduate students which have reduced from 3,700 in 2010/11 to 1,731 in 2014/15 while the target was 3,000 i.e. a manageable decrease. The second missed target is postgraduate research students which have reduced from 400 in 2010/11 to 282 in 2014/15 while the interim target was to maintain 400 students.

Objective two included 5 performance indicators of which three have been achieved. The missed targets are the number of mature students as a percentage of new entrants and this target is some 3% below target at 12% (12% baseline) and the flexibility of accessing provision as indicated by the percentage of part-time, distance and e-learning students which has reduced from a baseline of 28% in 2010/11 to 20% in 2014/15 (well below the interim target of 28%).

Appendix 2 provides robust justification as to why a number of targets have not been attained whilst some have been exceeded. DIT notes particularly that new full-time undergraduate students have exceeded the target by over 10% (1,178 above interim target of 11,500) and generally attributes this growth to increased demographics within the population. It is noted that programmes in property and construction are returning to growth following dramatic decline experienced in the recession years. Science programmes have continued to be popular with constant, if small, increases in the period. New programmes introduced in the period, such as the honours degree in Law also attracted additional students to the institute.

With respect to part-time student numbers, DIT suggests that the weakness in demand in this area is directly linked to the economic situation that prevailed in recent years and refers to the reduction of “earner-learners” who were funded in whole or part by their employers. In some cases where few employment opportunities existed (example of former apprentices provided) these students embarked on full-time studies – thus reducing part-time numbers with a corollary that the full time numbers increased.

The national challenge in the funding and recruitment of PhD students is referenced to explain the decline in postgraduate research numbers. Appendix 4 refers to the establishment of a joint TU4Dublin Graduate Research School to lead the integration of graduate education arrangements for TU partners and to promote new PhD recruitment. Measures include fully-funded as well as fees support for approved applicants, international marketing and the development of new doctoral pathways. 100 additional PhD places have been secured through external funding – these numbers are not reflected in the 2014 numbers. The establishment of the Graduate Research School along with the delivery of new research facilities at Grangegorman (Environmental Sustainability and Health Sciences Institute (EHSI) and the co-location of incubation facilities along with key consolidation and coherence objectives within the strategy should arrest decline in this area.

A target of 15% of new entrants was set for mature students; however, only 12% was achieved. The figure of 12% is however in line with the national average. DIT refer to a “general stalling” of numbers in this cohort and again references the economic situation which, without doubt, is having a significant impact.

With respect to students with a disability, DIT utilises some internal data for students who avail of the Disability Support Service and attributes these numbers to a short list of areas. This data should be clarified at the next round of strategic dialogue.

The decline in flexibility of access is attributed to the significant decline in part-time student numbers.

More generally on benchmarks, DIT’s percentage-based compact targets might not be fully reflective of the breadth of access activity undertaken by the institution, particularly targeting socio-economic target groups. This is something that DIT might discuss at the meeting with the HEA.

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

In its compact, DIT set out two institutional objectives. The first objective includes 5 performance indicators with the second including one such indicator. Significant progress has been made by DIT in the area of non-presence rates by discipline and further consideration is being given to appropriate national benchmarks at programme level where like-for-like comparisons are difficult to achieve. DIT should be asked to discuss the difficulties being experienced in this area and to reconsider its summary finding. Institutional objective 2 has also been achieved.

The Irish Survey of Student Engagement for 2014 gives DIT an overall satisfaction rating of 60.4%. This is somewhat behind the rate of 67.3% for other institutions and the institution appears to fall down in areas such as learning, development and higher order thinking. The strategy summary, however, would provide confidence that DIT and the TU4Dublin will improve this position in future years. The delivery of the Grangegorman campus should also improve the student experience at DIT.

4. High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation:

In its compact DIT set out one institutional objectives which included 4 performance indicators. DIT has achieved the interim target with only one of the four indicators but is very close on another and cites a common trend as an explanation for the drop in publications per year. Postgraduate research student numbers are significantly down. However, a detailed action plan to increase research student numbers is being implemented (as mentioned at 2 above). Research income also failed to meet the interim target of €20m by some €8m and will also be a focus of the research action plan.

In Appendix 4, DIT states that overly ambitious targets, a difficult research environment, reduced sectoral funding and a delay in the implementation of the institute's research action plan has meant that a number of stimulus measures have not yet had time to take effect.

There has been good progress in increasing the number of full-time academic staff holding a PhD qualification and TU partners are on course to reach TU staff profile criterion. Staff development measures have been implemented including fee support policy and time release buyout scheme for PhD completion in order to achieve these targets.

DIT has explained that a number of interim targets have not been met as there was a delay of approximately 18 months in the implementation of the institute's Research Action Plan that underpinned the targets provided in the Performance Compact. A number of additional environmental factors were subsequently discussed at the meeting, including; an adverse funding environment, a national decline in PhD numbers and what the institute views as an inappropriate RGAM weighting for doctoral activity. As recommended, the Institute has now undertaken a strategic review to ensure progress is made in the delivery of the plan and appropriate revised targets are now presented.

It is useful to note that a number of steps have already been taken to address performance in this area:

- Filling of the vacancy for the position of Director for Research, Enterprise and Innovation Services from November 2014;
- Restarting the Research Action Plan (RAP) from calendar year 2015 with new stimulus measures to attract greater research income;
- Development of a research recruitment programme to kick start research development in order to meet targets for the Performance Compact and TU designation;
- Implementation of capacity building and new structural initiatives such as the Joint Graduate Research School to support development of TU4Dublin-wide research culture

Accordingly, the focus of this work has gain renewed momentum and the revised targets – highlighted in red and provided in the Appendix, reflect the initial projections under the RAP with the timeline adjusted to take account of the delayed start. New interim targets for 2015/16 are included to calibrate the adjusted targets. To date, measures taken have brought research student enrolment back on track with further strong enrolment projected in the remaining two years of the Compact. Research income targets have been adjusted to take account of the revised timeline for the implementation of the Research Action Plan.

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

In its compact DIT sets out one institutional objective and four performance indicator targets. The interim targets under performance indicator 1 & 2 have all been achieved with some targets exceeded considerably which is commendable. The existing levels of active participation in regional/civic networks is impressive and DIT are clearly very strong in this area.

Appendix 5 provides a list of the 26 organisations participating in the DIT Corporate Partnership Network and some examples of member engagements. While some of the engagements are tentative, some listed are quite embedded and impressive. DIT also provide an overview of plans for Knowledge Transfer in the TU4Dublin and outline how DIT, ITT & ITB have prioritised enterprise engagement as a key element of their respective strategic plans and list a number of supports to enterprise. A good overview of the Dublin Region Innovation Consortium (DRIC) established in 2013 by DIT, ITB, ITT, IADT and the National College of Ireland is also provided. Its primary purpose is to maximise the impact of research, commercialisation and innovation activities in the member institutions. The DRIC consortium has been quite successful to date.

Also in appendix 5 are some details of the impressive relationship and levels of engagement with Dublin City Council. This relationship appears to be long-standing and supported within multiple areas and levels of each respective

institution. Highlights of achievements from the Grangegorman Learning and Labour Forum are also included in appendix 5. The success of this initiative is impressive and could be used as a model for institutions to engage with the communities around them.

DIT's award-winning Innovation and Technology Transfer Office - The DIT Hothouse also appears to be a major driver of success in this area.

6. Enhanced internationalisation:

In its compact DIT sets out one institutional objective and performance indicator targets based on numbers of international student enrolments. DIT has comfortably achieved this interim target. The final target is to quadruple existing numbers.

DIT states an intention to implement an International Strategy with a particular emphasis on enhancing the student experience within DIT by further internationalisation of the curriculum and through student and staff mobility strategies and agreements between institutions. It is not clear from this statement how progress in this area will be measured or indeed who will be responsible for implementation of the strategy.

Appendix 6 provides details of an ongoing review of the DIT approach to internationalisation. A management group has been established to assist in this regard and a number of initiatives are listed including the provision of additional staff resources to the DIT International Office to support the implementation of this strategy. One new staff resource is dedicated to support the student experience. No metrics are provided to support this additional information and the information bears little relationship to the strategy summary contained in the mission based performance compact.

DIT states that initial discussions have commenced that may lead to delivery of DIT provision on a dedicated campus overseas.

DIT has clarified that much work has been undertaken around internationalisation within DIT over the academic year 2014/15. As has been shared with HEA, the DIT International Strategy identifies 3 main strands:

I. Student Recruitment –

As the Self Study has indicated in terms of student recruitment, the numbers have grown and currently stand at 900. The balance between inward and outward bound Erasmus students has been addressed and the census numbers for 2015/16 will see a closer alignment in numbers. This recruitment effort is supported by an enhanced staffing of the International Office aligned to target markets for recruitment and partnering.

II. International Partnering –

DIT has established a very wide range of partnerships across the world. During 2014/15 an audit of these partnerships were

undertaken in order to assess the activity underway. In the case of China a member of staff was designated with particular responsibility for this country with a view to focussing partnerships with institutions of strategic fit. In addition a special Sub-committee of Academic Council was established to review and approve proposals for partnerships between DIT and other academic institutions.

III. Internationalisation of the curriculum/ the student experience –

This is a real challenge for any institution. Within DIT in practical terms a member of staff has been designated to interact with international students on a full time basis to promote engagement. Programme committees have appointed coordinators on the ground to again enhance integration of international students and these activities are supported by teams in the Campus Life function such as chaplaincy, counselling, sports and the medical centre.

It is recognised that internationalisation has to be an Institute-wide commitment and pervade all Institute activities from academic to non-academic areas and DIT is working towards that goal. In terms of the TU4Dublin, a DIT colleague has also taken a leadership role to progress the internationalisation agenda. Senior colleagues from each of the 3 partners have been meeting throughout 2015, with a view to revising strategies and developing a common focus. In this regard key principles have been identified and a range of objectives, metrics, time-frames and allocation of responsibilities have been drafted, to be considered and approved by the Alliance. In 2016 this work will be continued.

7. Institutional consolidation:

DIT is committed with its Dublin TU Alliance partners, ITB and ITT to the integration of the three institutions to create the Dublin Technological University. In its compact DIT sets out three institutional objectives, only two of which have been reported on. Objective one “establishment of a DTU” includes 16 interim targets of which 15 have been achieved with the 16th target dependent on the TU legislation being in place. Objective two “progress the relocation of DIT to its new campus at Grangegorman” includes one interim target which has been achieved. Institutional objective three “to complete the structural and process change phases of the organisation of DIT and excellence in administration (EIA) programmes” is recorded as ‘targets achieved’ in the DIT self-evaluation report.

Notwithstanding the delays in the preparation of the TU legislation, it is very welcome that the three partner institutions are working on important administrative changes, e.g. TU4D financial model including internal resource allocation framework, engagement with trade unions (‘safe space’ forum under the auspices of the LRC), engagement with student body. These could serve as a model or guide for other future HEI consolidations. The partner institutions

should be asked to provide an update on this work at the Strategic Dialogue meeting.

In September 2014, DIT opened the Grangegorman campus with 1,100 students and 80 staff moving on to the site. As a result of this move, DIT has been able to exit a major leased building at Portland Row and smaller leased buildings in Temple Bar. Work on the campus continues with planning lodged for two major PPP projects. The campus will enable the consolidation of DIT's activities onto a single campus, representing almost 10% of Irish higher education provision.

8. Additional Notes:

DIT has provided an update regarding one missing target relating to institutional consolidation (structural and process change phases, section 7). DIT might discuss these challenges overcome and achievements in more detail.

DIT supplied the missing traffic light summary for performance indicator targets 3 & 4 – (section 5) “enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange”.

APPENDIX 1

Proposed modified performance indicators under Objective 5.4, DIT Performance Compact, to reflect significant changes in the environment in which the HEI operates

Baseline (Year 2012/13)

CATEGORY	2012/13
% of Academic Staff with PhD	39%
Research Students (FTE)	300
Research Income (€m)	10
Publications per year	588

Interim target (Year 2014/15)

CATEGORY	2014/15
% of Academic Staff with PhD	40%
Research Students (FTE)	300
Research Income (€m)	15
Publications per year	800

Interim target (Year 2015/16)

CATEGORY	2015/16
% of Academic Staff with PhD	40%
Research Students (FTE)	450
Research Income (€m)	18
Publications per year	800

Final target (Year 2016/17)

CATEGORY	2016/17
% of Academic Staff with PhD	45%
Research Students (FTE)	650
Research Income (€m)	23
Publications per year	1,000