Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT)
Strategic Dialogue Cycle 2 Reflections on Performance

Prerequisites

A cycle 2 self-evaluation report has been received from Dundalk Institute of Technology.

All sections have been completed, reporting progress against the 2014 targets as set out in the published compact.

Two appendices were provided as follows:

- Appendix I SIDF project presentation
- Appendix II DKIT work placement Academic Year 2014 - 2015

Overview

- The compact report and the compact more generally suffer from a lack of strategic clarity, with excessive detail on individual objectives and targets. A key consideration for the HEA will be how the institute can focus on reduced number of more high level strategic objectives that would better set out the strategic direction and intent of the institution.

- 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.

- The Institute does appear to be meeting its stated targets in access and participation. It would be beneficial to reconsider target choices when developing future compacts.

- In relation to objectives for teaching and learning, while not all targets are met, supporting examples are given and opportunities identified for further data resources and their development.

- DKIT can demonstrate success in attracting research funding. DCU/DKIT Graduate School will benefit DKIT students.

- There is extensive evidence of work in the engagement area, with several tangible results so far. DKIT note that there is an absence of national data against which to benchmark. There are some targets that were only partially complete as at year end 2014, but on the whole, targets have been achieved. DKIT should reflect on whether the 2016 targets are still valid, in the sense that some are extremely close to being achieved at year end 2014, or have already been surpassed.

- In the compact, DKIT projected that a Business Plan for Internationalisation would be developed by 2014 however this has now been pushed out to 2016. DKIT has largely met its enrolment targets for EU/Non EU which includes cutting the incoming Erasmus numbers by almost a third. It is understood that a factor in this decision is the

difficult financial situation of DKIT but the loss of income to the wider economy in Dundalk should be borne in mind as well as a range of lost academic opportunities.

Self-evaluation report - domain level review

1. Regional clusters:

Institutional objective 1: Develop a multi-faceted alliance with DCU. A Memorandum of Understanding to establish Strategic Alliance was signed between DCU and DKIT and two institutions are working cooperatively.

Institutional objective 2: 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.

Institutional objective 3: 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.

The cluster objectives in relation to governance arrangements were met. The institutions are working collectively and collaboratively and a Regional Cluster Board which includes Presidents and Registrars has been established. This cluster was the only collaboration to be awarded funding under the SIDF programme.

2. Participation, equal access and lifelong learning:

DKIT returned two objectives: To support Lifelong learning and increase their level of part time programme provision and to improve response to needs of unemployed in the region.

The institute notes two of their core strengths as attracting international students and students from Northern Ireland. The inclusion of these strengths as Participation, Equal Access and Lifelong Learning warrants some consideration. Certainly these could count a diversity contribution by EU measures but they might consider a fuller justification of these data as a metric here.

In relation to supporting lifelong learning and increasing PT provision, the institute feel that they have achieved their targets with several FT programmes now being offered on a PT basis including full awards as well as short courses and modules towards eventual full awards.
An RPL policy has also been developed and staff members have been trained as academic advisers and assessors of Recognition of Prior Certified Learning RCPL (RCPL) and Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL).

DKIT self-report as amber in relation to improving responses to meeting the needs of the unemployed. In terms of success under the Springboard+ initiative, they were awarded funding for 11 programmes resulting in 242 places in the 2015 round. In contrast, in 2014 they received funding for 4 programmes, with 75 places.

DKIT draws attention to being unable to provide more places through RCPL and RPEL due to budget constraints. This should be discussed at the upcoming meeting.

Teaching and learning retention rates are a concern. DKIT set a number of compact targets around increasing student engagement with various supports, which should be examined and perhaps renewed.

It is also notable that DKIT part-time/flexible numbers are still well below sectoral averages and targets would therefore seem unambitious.

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

Institution objective 1: Continue to enhance learning through the development and implementation of learner- centred strategies in all programmes (including learner-centred assessment strategies).

Target is met.

Institution Objective 2: Promote excellence in learning, teaching and assessment.

Target met and exceeded regarding professional development events in learning and teaching. Target met regarding learning and teaching showcase. Target not met regarding staff members on MA in learning and teaching, however, further numbers are to commence the course in 2015.

Institution Objective 3: Improve the first year experience to support learners' transition to higher education and improve retention.

Target met and several examples of supportive quantitative data shown through student learning resources.

Institution Objective 4: Ensure that curriculum development embeds the core strategic themes and fosters graduate qualities identified in the DkIT Strategy.

Rolled out in two departments. Progress has been made in development of the systems to monitor the deployment of the strategic themes across all courses under the examples given. Work is ongoing and explained.

Institution Objective 5: Support the personal and academic development of learners through our support services.

Target is not met. In 2014, 53% of first years attended information literacy sessions in the library. Awareness of services ranged from 35% to 83% across seven service areas but collective data is not available. It would be useful to know if this information exists and is there a more definitive way to account for awareness of services available. DKIT should consider this and respond at the HEA meeting.

Benchmarking would also assist. Are these services successful and by what measure? Examples of DKIT student resources are given and several examples of the number of students using the services are reported which will be a useful input to DKIT's own analysis in this domain.

Institution Objective 6: Develop and strengthen the work and community based components of academic programmes.

Target not met. DKIT is working hard to achieve their targets but they are numerous. Looking at what has been completed, targets appear ambitious. Supporting examples and supporting links given but some risk analysis would be of benefit.

Institution Objective 7: To offer a suite of programmes that is responsive to local and global needs.

Target met. DKIT provide supporting details including qualitative data noting that a suite of programmes provide a response to local and global demands. More in-depth baseline information, such as confirmation of the local/global demands and DKIT's response would be of benefit.

Institution Objective 8: Implement learner-centred approaches to blended and technology enhanced learning (TEL).

Target is met and progress demonstrated e.g. reports from CELT survey which was distributed to each individual school to identify training needs. Several other examples provided and considerable time and effort have been expended on this objective.

In general, all teaching and learning and quality of student experience objectives are met and supporting examples are given. Sources were provided with additional supporting information. DKIT have also identified opportunities for further data resources and their development.

4. **High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation:**

Institution Objective: Focus on research led by global needs that has societal and economic impact

Targets mostly met. 2 publications with private partners (Intel and Blue Bridge Technologies) and approximately €3.4m of research funding secured in 2014 involves research with potential commercial benefit. The Institute also had a target of increasing commercialisation outputs by 25% - no baseline data was provided and the Institute states that "the targets for commercialisation outputs are realised through the four year operational plan …. In this regard, the outputs may not be met within a given year but achieved over the lifetime of the project". The Institute reported 1 invention disclosure, 4 IP clinics/promotional events and 35 research projects with industry.

Institution Objective: Ensure the learning and teaching agenda remains research informed

Targets met. 4 School and Departmental Research Days and 1 Summer School was held as targeted. In excess of 70 students undertook their undergraduate research projects in partnership with academic researchers in the institutes' research centres.

Institution Objective: Drive research excellence in prioritised areas

Targets mostly met. The Institute report that they have met their target of 55 Level 9 and 10 postgraduate research students with 35 students on the Masters Research register and 24 on the PhD register. Our statistics indicate 22 Masters and 18 PhD students. In addition, their response is somewhat vague in terms of delivery of 2100m2 of research space stating that space is allocated on the basis of needs and facilities are in operation or near completion. The Institute has been very successful in securing €3.78m in research funding (€3m target). It is envisaged that the President's Research Excellence Award will be operational in 2015. Citations exceed target and number of peer publications was 44 (45 target).

Institution Objective: Engage and support researchers

Targets for career planning workshop, number of research supervisors, % of staff with level 10 qualification and formally trained research supervisors were all met or exceeded. The emerging research awards has been delayed. 137 staff (target 35) are supported through formal research skills programmes. 5 staff are supported through research career development programme (target 6).

Institution Objective: Identify and build strategic partnerships particularly with alliance partner DCU

The target associated with the delivery of a structured PhD National Institutes of Health Programme was not achieved. The DCU DKIT Graduate School was formally launched in 2014. The % of joint research funding applications was 66%, falling slightly short of the target of 70%. Targets associated with participation in 1 SFI Centre, 4 visiting research awards and number of international authors on joint research publications were met or exceeded.

Institution Objective: Enhance the visibility and impact of our research

The Institute held school and departmental open days as highlighted above. The target of 20 peer reviewed conference papers was not achieved. While 3 papers were reviewed, it did not follow the trend from 2012 to 2013 where there was 41 peer reviewed conference papers. Also fewer research conferences/workshops attended due to need to reduced funding.

As in other places, some targets are not being met. DKIT needs to give some consideration as to the range of different targets and the level at which they are set. It is notable that as an IOT DKIT is very successful in attaining research funding.

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

Institution Objective: Promote the Regional Development Centre as the commercially oriented interface between DkIT and the commercial, industrial and business life of the region

Quantitative targets were set for the number of representations on business and industry committees; number of publications and promotional events etc. DKIT

has exceeded all targets set and in fact, the 2015 and 2016 targets have already been surpassed.

Institution Objective: Encourage and support new venture creation

Quantitative targets were set for the number of entrepreneurs/ start-ups supported and occupancy in incubator facilities. The target relating to the number of entrepreneurs has been met and in fact, the 2016 target has already been surpassed. The level of occupancy is a little behind target at 78% rather than 80%.

Institution Objective: Support established enterprises aimed at business development and sector-specific development.

Quantitative targets were set for the number enterprises engaged in business development and a sector-specific programme on a regional and cross-border basis. The target relating to the number of enterprises supported has been met and in fact, the 2016 target has already been surpassed. The sector-specific programme has also been established.

Institution Objective: Provide knowledge transfer services

Quantitative targets were set for the number of IP clinics, increase in invention disclosures, campus companies and research projects with industry and these appear to have been met. It is unclear why DKIT have chosen to flag this objective as partially complete. They also note that the targets for commercialisation outputs are realised through the four year operational plan under the TTSI initiative and so, they aim to complete all within the timeframe of the project.

Institution Objective: Special Development Projects of a strategic nature undertaken on behalf of the Institute and in partnership with external partners and agencies.

It would appear that the Campus Entrepreneurship Enterprise Network has been established, along with other such initiatives and they have been listed in the progress report. It is unclear as to what will happen, above and beyond this, in 2015. The 2016 target is proposed for revision – to include a stipulation "subject to funding".

Institution Objective: Develop strategic partnerships to support regional economic development.

Quantitative targets were set for the number of strategic partnerships and amount of external funding to be secured. DKIT has exceeded all targets set and in fact, the 2015 and 2016 targets have already been surpassed.

Institution Objective: Encourage an entrepreneurship culture

Quantitative targets were set for the number of student enterprise interns, student-led extra-curricular activities and the President's Awards for enterprising students. The latter does not appear to have happened in 2014. In all other instances, targets have been met and in fact, the 2016 targets appear to be surpassed.

Overall, there is extensive evidence of work in this space, with several tangible results so far. DKIT note that there is an absence of national data against which to benchmark but what about benchmarking internationally?

There are some targets that were only partially complete as at year end 2014. On the whole, targets have been achieved. It should be queried whether the 2016 targets are still valid, in the sense that some are extremely close to being achieved at year end 2014 or have already been surpassed.

6. Enhanced internationalisation:

In its compact the Institute projected that a Business Plan would be developed by 2014 however this has now been pushed out to 2016. DKIT has largely met its enrolment targets EU/Non EU - includes cutting the incoming Erasmus numbers by almost a third. It is understood that a factor in this decision is the difficult financial situation of DKIT but the loss of income to the wider economy in Dundalk should be borne in mind as well as a range of lost academic opportunities.

7. Institutional consolidation:

Not applicable

8. Compact revisions:

DKIT suggest revisions to compact targets for 2015 and 2016, marking those changes in the self-evaluation template in purple. Target revisions will be discussed at the upcoming meeting.

Teaching and Learning

5.3.2 Promote excellence in learning, teaching and assessment.

2015 target revised:
Master Classes and Professional Development events in Learning and Teaching organised each semester will be aligned to institutional needs determined by recommendations from programme boards, ISSE reports and other verifiable sources and subject to resources available
11 staff members to complete MA in Learning and Teaching (MALT);
MALT runs over 2.5 years, therefore: 33 colleagues are expected to progress throughout 2015.
Continue to offer Certificate in Arts in Learning and Teaching externally, for example, to NEFHEA partners: minimum target 12 participants.
Subject to the criteria for National Teaching and Learning Excellence Award nominations, support the submission of nominations where appropriate.

2016 target revised:
New intake for Certificate of Arts in Learning and Teaching in 2016
12-14 staff members are expected to complete the MALT 2016.

5.3.3 Improve the first year experience to support learners' transition to higher education and improve retention.

2015 target revised:
As per 2014 with the exception of:
82% of first-year students to pass all examinations on their first attempt;
12% of first-year students to gain exemptions giving them the opportunity to repeat;

2016 target revised:

As per 2015 with the exception of:
83% of first-year students to pass all examinations on their first attempt;
11% of first-year students to gain exemptions giving them the opportunity to repeat;

5.3.4 Ensure that curriculum development embeds the core strategic themes and fosters graduate qualities identified in the DkIT Strategy.
(Core strategic themes are: Sustainability, Entrepreneurship and Local & International Engagement)

2015 target revised:

Continue to develop systems to monitor the deployment of the strategic themes across the Institute and make recommendations on how to evaluate them.
Establish an energy working group to analyse energy data and make recommendations.
Water data usage to be analysed and recommendations made.

2016 target revised:
Targets as per 2015

5.3.5 Support the personal and academic development of learners through our support services

2015 target revised:
The SLDC will continue monitor feedback from service users and this will inform 2016 targets. Collaboration with academic departments to embed skills such as academic writing to be strengthened and recommendations to be made on how to measure this;
Continue to build and enhance 2014 results and to and monitor use of student services and respond to needs as appropriate subject to resources available.

2016 target revised:
Targets as per 2015.

5.3.6 Develop and strengthen the work and community based components of academic programmes.

2015 target revised:
Targets as per 2014
NEW: Develop systems to measure/capture details of industry/community student project links in a more centralised way.
NEW: Develop systems to measure/capture details of guest lectures invited onto campus.

2016 target revised:
Targets as per 2015 but implementing new systems.

Research
5.4.1 Focus on research led by global needs that has societal and economic impact.

2015 target revised:
3 publications with private partners;
External funding sourced for research commercialisation;
Targets as per TTSI 2 contract with Enterprise Ireland

2016 target revised:
4 publications with private partners;
External funding sourced for research commercialisation;
Targets as per TTSI 2 contract with Enterprise Ireland

5.4.3 Drive research excellence in our prioritised areas.

2015 target revised:
60 Level 9 and 10 postgraduate research students
and research dedicated space allocated based on needs;
€3.25M in external research awards;
1 President's Research Excellence Award;
280 citations;
50 peer-reviewed publications.

2016 target revised:
65 Level 9 and 10 postgraduate research students
and research dedicated space allocated based on needs;
€3.5M in external research awards;
1 President's Research Excellence Award;
300 citations;
55 peer-reviewed publications.

Enhanced engagement
5.5.2 Encourage and support new venture creation

2015 target revised:
65 entrepreneurs/start-ups supported;
80% occupancy in incubator facilities

2016 target revised:
65 entrepreneurs/start-ups supported;
80% occupancy in incubator facilities.

5.5.3 Support established enterprises aimed at business development and sector-specific development.

2016 target revised:
20 established enterprises engaged in business development.

5.5.4 Provide knowledge transfer services
2015 target revised:
5 IP clinics/promotional events;
Targets as per TTSI 11 contract with Enterprise Ireland;
0 campus companies;
40 research projects with industry.

2016 target revised
6 IP clinics/promotional events;
Targets as per TTSI 11 contract with Enterprise Ireland;
1 campus company;
45 research projects with industry.

5.5.5 Special Development Projects of a strategic nature undertaken on behalf of the Institute and in partnership with external partners and agencies.
2016 target revised

Engagement at a national/international level of the campus entrepreneurship initiative subject to funding;
Engagement with strategic partners in Technology Transfer and Enterprise initiatives subject to funding.

5.5.7 Encourage an entrepreneurship culture.

2015 target revised:
Student Enterprise interns (subject to funding);
1 President's Awards for Enterprising Students;
12 student-led extra-curriculum activities that support the development of an enterprise cultures among students; 17 student participants on an enterprise programme (subject to funding).

2016 target revised
2 Student Enterprise interns (subject to funding);
1 President's Awards for Enterprising Students;
15 student-led extra-curriculum activities that support the development of an enterprise cultures among students;
20 student participants on an enterprise programme (subject to funding).

Enhanced internationalisation
5.6.1 Develop a Business Plan for the promotion and recruitment of DkIT to the international student market.
2015 target revised:
To keep Relocation Agreement under review

2016 target revised
To develop a formal Business Plan

5.6.2 Widen learner experience and global awareness by increasing numbers of European and International Students.

2015 target revised:
500 non-EU students;
110 EU students (non-fee paying/ERASMUS);
8 EU students (fee-paying);
Identify new market opportunities.

5.6.3 Promote and support staff, student and research exchange programmes with our International partners.
2015 target revised:
20 students projected to take-up ERASMUS placements;
11 teaching staff exchanges;
3 non-teaching staff exchanges;
20 students going on **study abroad** through ERASMUS.

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

Several quantitative targets were set and have now been exceeded all targets – in some instances the 2015 and 2016 targets have already been surpassed. DKIT should reflect on revisions necessary to future targets.

General comment

More generally, DKIT should consider whether a reduced number of more high level strategic objectives might be appropriate in future compacts.