

Performance Agreement 2024–2028 between the HEA and Dundalk Institute of Technology

Preamble

This Performance Agreement is established between the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Dundalk Institute of Technology in accordance with the System Performance Framework 2023–28. The agreement identifies Dundalk Institute of Technology’s performance objectives and the associated implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting processes.

This Performance Agreement will be used by the HEA to measure and assess the strategic performance of the institution via an annual cycle of reporting against the agreement and Strategy and Performance Dialogue. Dundalk Institute of Technology should notify the HEA in writing of any proposed modifications to the Performance Agreement with a supporting rationale when submitting the annual report. Any agreed amendments to the Performance Agreement will be recorded by the HEA with the supporting rationale. This information may inform future monitoring and review processes and inform HEA reporting at a system level.

The HEA and Dundalk Institute of Technology acknowledge that policy underlying some or all of this Performance Agreement is subject to review from time to time by the HEA or Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The HEA and Dundalk Institute of Technology agree that if changes need to be made to the Performance Agreement because of such a review, the HEA will notify the institution in writing.

This Performance Agreement will be published on the HEA website in line with the HEA mandate to measure and assess institutions’ strategic performance with a view to strengthening the performance of the higher education and research system and of Higher Education Institutions, and to ensure institutions’ accountability. It is the responsibility of the institution to ensure that the information presented in the Performance Agreement (including qualitative and quantitative data) is accurate.

The term of this Performance Agreement is from September 2024 to August 2028 unless terminated earlier by agreement.

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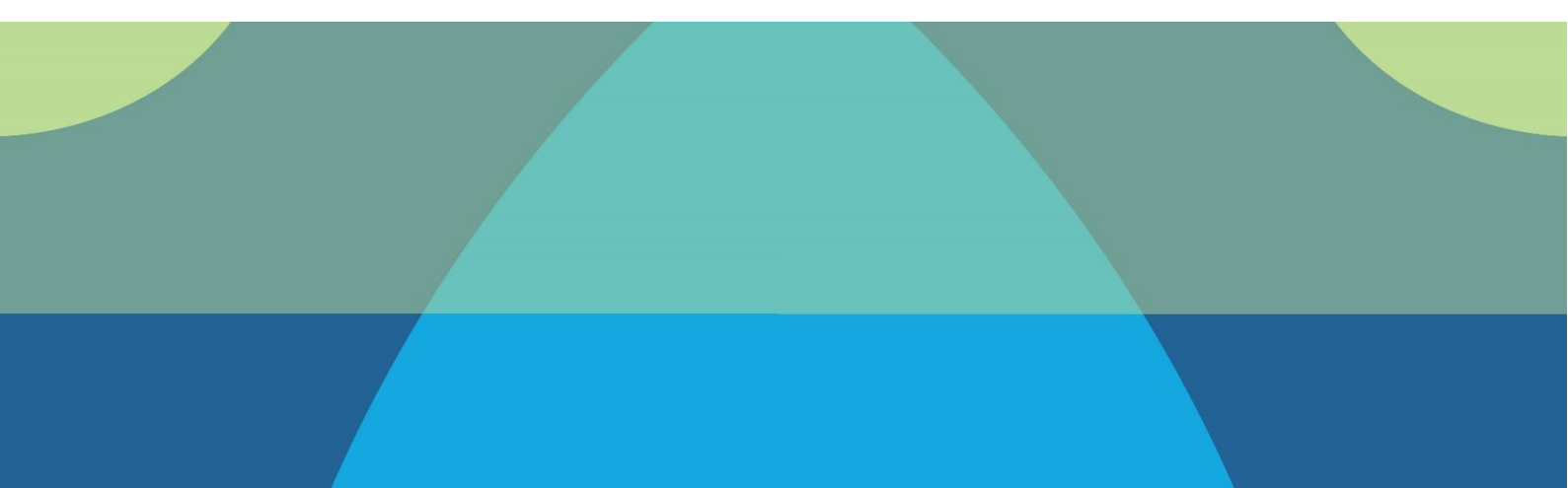
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Performance Agreement 2024–2028

Section 1: Context

Overview of the institution and its context

DkIT's mission is to advance the educational, social, economic and cultural development of the North East, the cross-border region and beyond. The Institute provides high-quality, accessible, inclusive, student-centred, practice-based higher education and apprenticeships.

[DkIT's Strategic Plan 2024–2028](#) focuses on a number of key strategic pillars: (1) Sectoral and Tertiary Coherence; (2) Excellence in Teaching and Learning and Quality of Student Experience; (3) Widening Access and Participation; (4) Excellence in Research and Innovation (R&I) and (5) Enhanced Engagement. These pillars are underpinned by the key enablers of People and Culture and Organisational Excellence, with the embedded strategic themes of Sustainability and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

A key enabler for DkIT to deliver on the Performance Agreement is to set out a vision and plan for the Institute which evokes a sense of common purpose and determined resolve to build on the Institute's unique achievements, and which positions the Institute as a positive driving force in the educational, economic, social and cultural development of the region. DkIT's Strategic Plan 2024–2028 sets out the Institute's ambition to position itself within the HEI landscape on a trajectory to achieving University status through the development of a strategic collaborative partnership with a university. The overarching aim is to achieve greater scale and enhanced provision to meet the ever-changing and dynamic needs of the region served and to achieve university awards for our students. The Institute is currently engaged in discussions with Maynooth University. The outcome of such strategic discussions is to determine the value proposition for any future collaboration in terms of: (1) strategically connecting regions and further enhancing regional impact through the delivery of joint collaborative initiatives of mutual benefit in teaching and learning, research and innovation and engagement, (2) significantly scaling provision such that the region and its constituent stakeholders can avail of an enhanced higher education offering and (3) delivering competitive advantage to provide credible and sustainable higher education in a broader catchment area.

DkIT provides quality learning and teaching to circa 6,000 students across four Schools in Business and Humanities, Health and Science, Engineering and Informatics, and Creative Arts, offering undergraduate and postgraduate degrees from Level 6 to Level 10, in addition to its track record of excellence in craft apprenticeships.

HEA Staff Return (FTE) (31st December 2023)	
Core academic	326
Core non-academic	186
Core total	512
Contract research	21
Other posts	52
Total	585

Table 1: Total number of staff

Programme Type	Student Enrolments 2023/2024
Certificate	577
Undergraduate Diploma	6
Ordinary Degree	1,169
Higher Diploma	95
Honours Degree	2,907
Postgraduate Certificate	94
Postgraduate Diploma	79
Taught Masters	178
Research Masters	12
PhD	72
Total Number of Students	5,189
Apprentices	764
Total Number of Students and Apprentices	5,953

Table 2: Total number of student enrolments

Approach to the development of the Performance Agreement

The development of the Performance Agreement was interconnected and interlinked to the development of the Strategic Plan 2024–2028. A number of core principles have been adopted: (1) achieving university designation; (2) serving our region to include employers, enterprise and community; (3) serving our students; (4) deepening our engagement with the Further Education (FE) sector; (5) strengthening existing relationships and building new alliances with key partners in Northern Ireland and internationally; and (6) achieving sustainability. Working groups were established to engage in the development of key areas and a three-phased process was carried out, as outlined below.

A review of the key policy documents and sector reports was carried out to provide a contextual background for the development of the Strategic Plan and Performance Agreement. This review aided in identifying and scoping the external factors and macro-environment within which the Institute plans its future strategic trajectory. In addition, a range of data sources were collated and reviewed to inform the overall process.

Following the review of the external environment, the internal factors that may impact on the strategic direction of the Institute were considered. This involved an analysis of the Institute's current position, informed by the following data:

- internal data and statistics showing trends on key metrics including student numbers, internationalisation, research funding, enterprise data, engagement etc.
- a SWOT analysis examining the Institute's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats with a view to identifying its key differentiating factors vis-à-vis the rest of the HEI Sector in Ireland.
- any additional internal or external data or consultations needed to inform the work.

This process resulted in a set of draft Strategic Goals and Objectives with associated KPIs for each of the seven priority areas. A series of consultations took place to seek the views of a wide range of internal and external stakeholders on the future strategic direction of the Institute and to reflect on the draft strategic goals and objectives. This included consultations with Schools/ Functional Areas, internal committees, students, employers, the FE sector, Local Authorities, Unions, the HEA and a number of relevant Government Departments. There was ongoing engagement with the senior executive team and Governing Body throughout this process.

Before selecting indicators of success for performance objectives, the draft strategic goals and objectives and associated KPIs from the Strategic Planning Process were reviewed by the Executive Board and streamlined to ensure that there were no duplications and that the goals and objectives were strategic and not operational in nature. These reduced draft strategic goals and objectives were the subject of further internal (i.e. with staff) and external consultations (both face-to-face and through written feedback). The Executive Board reviewed the feedback and reflected on the System

Performance Framework and Performance Agreement requirements. The Institute focused on key areas of strength, how it differentiates itself within the sector and the contribution it makes to overall system performance. The core mission is to deliver high-quality, practice-driven teaching and learning, underpinned by research and innovation, resulting in work-ready graduates.

There are two key cross-cutting strategic themes reflected within all aspects of the Strategic Plan 2024–2028, namely, Sustainability and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). DkIT's ambition is to become a sustainable campus and an exemplar institution that supports and embeds EDI in all its dimensions. In the selection of the Performance Objectives (POs) and targets, DkIT considered how these strategic themes would be enhanced. This consideration was achieved by ensuring that Climate and Sustainable Development and EDI are transversal themes across teaching and learning, research and innovation, access and participation, and engagement. For example, the Institute, through its Programmatic Review process, aims to embed the principles of sustainability across its programmes. DkIT's Climate and Natural Resources Research and Innovation Institute is particularly focused on renewable energy. Within Access and Participation, these themes are reflected in the sustainable approach to apprenticeship training and equality of access to education (particularly through the FE–HE model), respectively. The Institute observed that there is a negative effect of recruiting and attracting international students (in terms of the climate consideration). Whilst this aspect cannot be mitigated against, the overall embeddedness of sustainability within the curriculum brings increased awareness of the need to counteract negative climate-impacting activities.

Specifically, under the Technological Sector Advancement Fund (TSAF), the Institute has recruited a dedicated Climate Action and Sustainability Manager to build awareness and implement the actions and outputs set out in DkIT's Climate Action Roadmap 2024 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve energy efficiency. DkIT has established an overall cross-functional Sustainability Council to ensure the Institute adopts a holistic approach in all aspects of the four recognised interrelated pillars of sustainability (social, human, environmental and economic sustainability). Within each of the POs, consideration has been given to ensuring that the Institute is fostering an enhanced awareness of climate and the environment. This includes the provision of training for the Institute's Leadership and Functional Areas on how activities within the Institute's remit affect climate and the environment and mitigate against negative impacts.

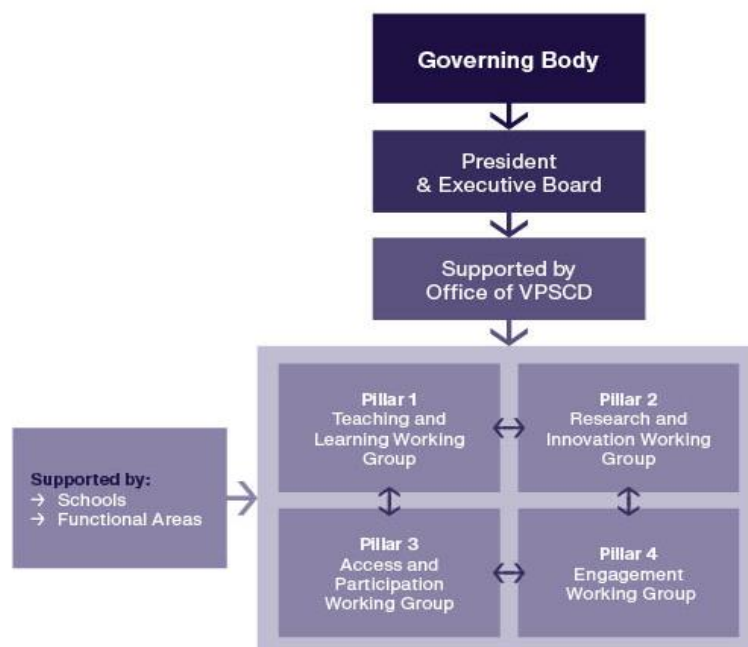
The Institute is a strong advocate of embedding EDI principles and a sense of belonging across all its activities. DkIT will continue to actively promote these values in its culture, behaviours, interactions and operations. Within each of the POs, consideration has been given to ensuring that the Institute is fostering an enhanced culture of EDI. In this regard, DkIT is:

- progressing with the renewal of its Athena Swan Bronze accreditation and will work towards Silver accreditation;
- in the process of developing a Race Equality Action Plan, along with the preparation of a College of Sanctuary Application; and
- raising awareness and providing training to staff on building a campus where both staff and students can have a true sense of belonging.

The Institute considered baseline data to inform performance objectives and targets and to ensure that these targets could be consistently measured over time. The findings from other evaluation processes and data analyses were central to the development of the objectives and to the identification of key performance indicators to allow for embedded self-reflective learning processes. The inclusive approach to the development of the Performance Agreement ensured buy-in from all key stakeholders, thus ensuring better outcomes. Reviews are key to improvements in processes and outputs, and it is important to re-engage following feedback on any reviews. The final Strategic Plan 2024–2028 was approved by the Governing Body in February 2024. The Governing Body reviewed and approved the Performance Agreement in July 2024.

Structures in place for evaluation

The management, review and reporting on the implementation of the Performance Agreement is the responsibility of the President, via the Executive Board. A working group will be set up for each pillar of the System Performance Framework. Each working group will meet once a quarter to review progress on performance objective targets. A report of progress against targets will be collated by the office of the Vice President of Strategic Planning, Communications and Development and provided to the Executive Board once per quarter. The Executive Board will review progress and address any deviations. Annually, a full report will be compiled and presented to the Executive Board for review and approval. This report will be forwarded to the Governing Body for review and approval before submission to the HEA. This reporting structure is depicted below:



In line with best practice, risk profile and risk mitigation options have been identified for each pillar. This feeds into the overall risk management process of the Institute. Each area is benchmarked against national and international benchmarks. External and internal factors that may impact on the achievement of the overall performance objectives are identified and subsequent contingency options scoped.

Section 2: Performance Objectives

Performance Objective 1

To enhance the curriculum and provide student-centred, practice-based, research-informed, inclusive approaches to Teaching, Learning and Assessment to ensure that all students can achieve their potential and contribute sustainably to society.

Pillar: Teaching and Learning

Transversals: Student Success; International; Climate and Sustainable Development.

Rationale for Performance Objective 1

DkIT offers programmes from Level 6 to Level 10, across Business, Humanities, Health, Science, Informatics, Creative Arts and Engineering (full-time and part-time) and craft apprenticeships. The selection of this performance objective reflects the Institute’s strategic focus on student-centred, practice-driven teaching and learning and its commitment to ensuring graduates are work-ready.

The [Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy](#) plays an important role in implementing strategic goals in learning and teaching. This uses the [national understanding of student success](#), as set down by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, as a framework to understand and enhance the student experience. Together with the [DkIT Student Success Strategy](#), it will inform the Programmatic Reviews in 2023–2025. These reviews involve a comprehensive assessment of programme goals and learning outcomes to ensure that programmes remain relevant and supportive of student success. The following themes will be included in programme(s), reflecting DkIT, and national, strategic priorities: (a) employability and graduate attributes; (b) education for sustainable development (ESD); and (c) inclusive learning, teaching and assessment, including Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

Supporting the development of knowledge and skills is increasingly important ([National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland](#)). The values of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion foster an environment where all students and staff are valued and can thrive. Including UDL principles involves designing and implementing features and strategies that cater to diverse learners' needs and preferences and removes barriers to learning. This work is also informed by the Sustainable Higher Education Futures Framework currently being developed as part of the N-TUTORR project.

Indicators and targets for this performance objective have been based on a review of quantitative data sources (StudentSurvey.ie and the HEA SRS) and are intended to support analysis, insight and reflective consideration of outcomes over the timeframe of this agreement.

StudentSurvey.ie provides important information regarding student engagement and the student experience. The survey reports on ten indicators of engagement; three of these, ‘Effective Teaching Practices’, ‘Quality of Interactions’ and ‘Supportive Environment’ are directly relevant to this

performance objective as they capture key aspects of the student experience in relation to learning and teaching, inclusion and belonging. They also resonate strongly with DkIT’s core mission. Table 3 shows DkIT’s scores on these indicators and the effect sizes relative to the technological higher education sector for the period 2019–23. The small positive effect sizes in 2019 indicate comparatively good performance on these indicators. Relative performance declined in 2020 and, unsurprisingly, in 2021, during COVID. Performance recovered following the return to campus and it is likely that this, at least to some extent, is attributable to the considerable work to promote belonging and inclusive learning and teaching. The targets set for this objective for 2024–2028 reflect the goal of maintaining strong performance in these areas and benchmarking positively against the sector norms for all HEIs on these indicators (as shown below).

	2023	2023		2022		2021		2020		2019	
All HEIs Score	Score	DkIT Scores									
		Effect Size	Score	Effect Size	Score	Effect Size	Score	Effect Size	Score	Effect Size	
Effective teaching practices	33.1	35.4	+0.16	37.0	+0.27	33.3	-0.04	36.6	+0.07	38.2	+0.22
Quality of interactions	40.5	42.2	+0.13	40.7	+0.19	31.1	-0.01	40.0	+0.08	42.2	+0.19
Supportive environment	29.2	31.7	+0.26	31.7	+0.33	25.5	-0.08	28.0	+0.07	30.1	+0.20

Effect size relative to the technological higher education sector average: <0.1 = trivial effect, >0.1 = small effect, >0.3 = medium effect, >0.5 = large effect. Information on effect size interpretation available [here](#) and [here](#).

Table 3: DkIT performance on the three target indicators, 2019–2023

Given that 2024 is a fallow year for StudentSurvey.ie, it will not be possible to report on indicators 1.6–1.8 in 2024. As the review of the survey will not be complete for 2025, a working group is being established to develop a proxy survey to capture this information for 2025 and to identify if aspects are captured in any other data source. From 2026, reporting will be based on StudentSurvey.ie results data. As engagement indicators may differ in the revised Student Survey, these indicators and targets may need to be amended accordingly. As soon as the revised survey is available, DkIT will identify the indicators that assess learning and teaching practices, supportive environment and key aspects of inclusion and belonging. Targets will be set to promote objectively positive performance on these, as benchmarked against the technological sector.

One measure of how well the Institute delivers on a student-centred approach to its Learning, Teaching and Assessment is the proportion of students it retains in its programmes. There is a direct correlation between student success and student progression rates. Non-progression rates in DkIT increased from 18% to 27% between 2016/17 and 2021/22, as shown in Table 4 below. This increase is reflected against a technological sector non-progression rate increase of 19% to 23% in the same period. Whilst the national trend was upwards, DkIT’s increased non-progression rate was substantially higher. There are significant and complex challenges affecting student progression. Review of data and trends indicates that DkIT students are particularly affected by certain factors,

which include HE factors (e.g., chosen course of study; NFQ level) as well as socio-demographics (e.g., higher rates of socioeconomic disadvantage) and mid-lower leaving certificate points. The online or blended approach does not suit all students. The Institute seeks to address this trend in non-progression by continued enhancement of student supports, including maths learning centre supports, smaller class sizes, tutor and first-year convenor engagement, etc. The inclusion of two indicators (indicator 1.9; 1.10) to measure non-progression rates in new entrants and in 2nd/3rd year reflects the Institute’s strategic focus on enhancing the student learning experience and on addressing the trend in non-progression rates.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Non-Progression New Entrants						
Technological Sector	19%	19%	17%	14%	18%	23%
DkIT	18%	20%	18%	16%	21%	27%
Graduation Rates						
Technological Sector	66%	63%	Not available			
DkIT	67%	64%				
Completion Rates						
Technological Sector	66%	67%	64%	Not available		
DkIT	69%	67%	64%			

Table 4: Non-progression, graduation and completion rates for new entrants

The key outcome of supporting students to reach their potential is the student graduating from their programme, measured by the completion rate, coupled with graduate outcomes, measured by the % of graduates in employment and/or further study nine months after graduating. A review of the analysis of graduation figures and completion rates shows that DkIT is in line with technological-sector and all-HEI averages. DkIT’s graduate employment rate of 84% in 2022 compares favourably with the average rate for all HEIs of 83% and the ‘graduates in further education’ rate (9%) is just slightly lower than the average rate for all HEIs (10.2%). DkIT’s completion rate in 2018/2019 reflects the technological sector average of 64%. The Institute seeks to exceed its graduation figures and maintain the completion rates averaged over the next four years. The total enrolment target (indicator 1.1) is a stretch, but nonetheless a realistic target based on the Institute’s new entrant intake and non-progression rates over the six-year period 2016/17 to 2021/22, as discussed earlier. The non-progression targets for new entrant, 2nd Year and 3rd Year undergraduates are stretch targets that seek to align with sectoral norms.

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 1

This pillar and performance objective will be overseen by the VP for Academic Affairs and Registrar in conjunction with the Heads of School. A group will be established to deliver on this objective, to include representatives from the Schools, the Centre for Lifelong Learning, the Centre for Learning and Teaching, the International Office, the Careers and Employability Office and those engaged in the N-TUTORR project. Quarterly reporting on progress against targets will be produced and reviewed by the Executive Board.

Specific strategic actions to achieve the performance objective are as follows:

1. Enhance embedding of priority themes and graduate attributes within programmes as part of the Programmatic Review 2023–2025, to ensure graduates are globally minded and work ready.
2. Further develop and deliver a Student Strategy that directly supports the delivery of improved ISSE scores.
3. Develop and implement retention strategies that tackle challenges to progression and address feedback from such initiatives as:
 - a. Provision of additional mental health resources.
 - b. Ongoing pastoral care to identify and support vulnerable students.
 - c. Implementation of early feedback initiatives.
 - d. Implementation of the SATLE-funded “Talk Before You Walk” initiative.
4. Enhance engagement with secondary schools and FE colleges on providing quality higher education to meets the needs of diverse learners, following review of participation rates annually.
5. Develop and implement 2+2 Programmes whereby DkIT programmes are seamlessly aligned with FE sector programmes. This facilitates students to study Year 1 and Year 2 of a programme within an FE college and transition to Year 3 of a matched ordinary or honours degree programme to complete their studies in DkIT.
6. Successfully complete the N-TUTORR project and the ongoing development and implementation of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.
7. Develop and implement a strategically focused marketing and recruitment plan in conjunction with all internal stakeholders, to ensure challenges and barriers to recruitment are addressed and innovative strategies identified and implemented following review of CRM (customer relationship management) data.

The Institute will work within current resource allocations through the prioritisation of the strategic actions and outcomes and workloads.

Challenges and risks

A key risk is the changing needs of learners in respect of work–education balance. Many students “earn as they learn” and seek flexibility in terms of provision, requiring a greater balance between classroom and blended provision. Another risk relates to the retention of students and ensuring students remain engaged in their educational outcomes. This requires further engagement with students through greater use of technologies and personal engagement. Innovation in teaching, learning and assessment mitigates against these challenges, e.g. the provision of blended learning programmes, to include apprenticeships. The risk of student non-retention is mitigated through the establishment of a Retention Working Group to specifically identify and address the challenges relating to non-progression. This risk is further mitigated through additional student supports, to include additional student counsellors to assist in delivering a more responsive service to meet student needs. DkIT is committed to student supports and to the development of an online student support hub on Moodle that offers more flexible access to support 24/7.

Evaluation and learnings

Evaluating progress will be managed using data analysis processes. The Institute has recently invested in a CRM system to manage student recruitment queries and applications, which feeds into the Banner system. This allows for accurate data provision on potential student numbers across all non-CAO student cohorts. The access to live recruitment data allows for proactively addressing deviations from projected targets and responding effectively to market needs. The annual StudentSurvey.ie results will provide real insights into the student experience. Data provided to Schools for inclusion in the annual programme monitoring process is reviewed by Academic Council and an action plan prepared and agreed.

Following student surveys and data on student recruitment numbers and retention, all Schools and key functional areas review the data and reflect on how improvements can be made. In particular, the Institute seeks to identify and mitigate barriers to access and progression. Consideration is given to the student voice and, where applicable, measures are put in place to support enhancement and delivery of the student experience.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 1

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
1.1	Number of students enrolled (headcount, excluding apprentices)	HEA SRS	Quantitative	2023/24: 5,218	Maintain 5% market share of Technological sector (100,390 total enrolments in the Technological sector in 2022/23)	5,270	5,322	5,374	5,426	4-year average increase of 52 student headcount per year 4% increase on baseline
1.2	Number of graduates (headcount)	HEA SRS	Quantitative	2022/23: 1,620	Maintain 5% share of Technological sector (32,950 graduates from Technological sector in 2022)	1,645	1,670	1,695	1,720	4-year average number of graduates (headcount) of 1,680 6% increase on baseline
1.3	Completion rate (%)¹	HEA SRS and Non-Progression and Completion Dashboard	Quantitative	2018/19: 64%	Maintain TU sector average completion rate (64% in 2018/2019)	64%	64%	65%	65%	4-year average of 64%

¹ Completion rate does not include Advanced Entry

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
1.4	Graduate Employment rate (%)	HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey	Quantitative	2022: 84% of graduates in employment	Exceed average rate of graduates in employment, all HEIs (83% in 2022)	85%	85%	85%	85%	4-year average of 85%
1.5	Graduate Further Education rate (%)	HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey	Quantitative	2022: 9% in further education	Achieve average, all HEIs rate (10.2% in 2022)	10%	10%	10%	10%	4-year average of 10%
1.6	Student Survey Effective Teaching Practices Score	Student Survey.ie	Quantitative	2023: 35.4	Exceed average score, all HEIs (33.1 in 2023)	N/A	35 (+/- 1)	35 (+/- 1)	35 (+/- 1)	3-year average of 35
1.7	Student Survey Quality of Interactions Score	Student Survey.ie	Quantitative	2023: 42.2	Exceed average score, all HEIs (40.5 in 2023)	N/A	42 (+/- 1)	42 (+/- 1)	42 (+/- 1)	3-year average of 42
1.8	Student Survey Supportive Environment Score	Student Survey.ie	Quantitative	2023: 31.7	Exceed average score, all HEIs (29.2 in 2023)	N/A	32 (+/- 1)	32 (+/- 1)	32 (+/- 1)	3-year average of 32
1.9	Non-progression rate (%) new entrants	HEA, SRS	Quantitative	2021/22: 27%	Achieve Technological Sector average by 2028 (23% in 2021/22)	26%	25%	24%	23%	4-year average of 24.5% 4 p.p. improvement

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
1.10	Second- and third-year non-progression rate (%)	Internal (Registrar's office)	Quantitative	2022/23: 2nd and 3rd year non-progression rate: 19% and 12% respectively	Maintain ranking within the Technological Sector	19% and 12%	19% and 12%	18% and 11%	18% and 11%	4-year average 18.5% and 11.5% respectively 1 p.p. improvement in both

Performance Objective 2

To continue to drive research and innovation excellence with a focus on growing and building research clusters of scale with sustainable impact in the region.

Pillar: Research and Innovation

Transversals: Region; Society; Climate and Sustainable Development.

Rationale for Performance Objective 2

This performance objective is informed by DkIT's strong track record in delivering in research and innovation and engagement with industry. It is aligned with the Institute's research strengths and informed by relevant national strategies.

DkIT's Connected Health & Wellbeing Research and Innovation Institute aims to enhance industry links through the development of a sector-specific cluster of companies. Additionally, the Institute aims to undertake translational research and engage with industry on research projects, thus increasing the overall number of Level 9 and 10 students. This work is underpinned by the establishment of the Connected Health and Wellbeing Cluster initiative and the dConnect project in the Digital Health sphere, along with the EI-funded digital health project (DigiBio).

DkIT's Climate & Natural Resources Research and Innovation Institute brings together three research centres, five research groups, and the Technology Gateway, CREDIT, with a focus on renewable energy research in land-based energy systems and offshore energy systems. The transition to a low-carbon economy (Climate Action Plan 2023) presents a transformational challenge for enterprise; the North-East Regional Enterprise Plan 2024 calls on DkIT to assist companies in this agenda. Key sectors include Advanced Manufacturing/Engineering, Bioeconomy/Renewable Energy, Food/AgriTech, and ICT. Hence the performance objective aligns with and contributes to the achievement of national strategies in the area of climate action and sustainable development.

A key and critical component of the student learning experience is that all teaching and learning is research informed. The Institute has successfully secured funding for the delivery of the CREATE TU Research and Innovation Supporting Enterprise (RISE) Initiative, which involves a collaborative partnership between DkIT's research, innovation, and teaching agendas and over 100 enterprise partners in the region. Key actions include:

- Targeted research projects that address real-world challenges faced by enterprises.
- Education and upskilling initiatives to produce highly skilled professionals.
- Capacity building through support for postgraduate and career researchers.
- Increasing student engagement by embedding research and innovation in undergraduate programmes.

The performance indicators and targets selected will enable the measuring of progress against the performance objective. The number (and completion rate) of research student enrolments (indicators 2.1–2.4) and the number of commercially relevant technologies (2.8) directly link to the building of research clusters of scale, to include the outputs from the TU RISE, DigiBio and Technology Gateway projects as well as DkIT’s ongoing work within technology transfer initiatives. The indicator for research income per academic (2.6) reflects the degree to which clusters of scale are increasing funding secured under the DigiBio and TU RISE projects and the work of the CREDIT Technology Gateway. TU RISE has secured dedicated support staff to assist in the development and delivery of external funding submissions from national and EU sources. The indicators relating to citation impact (2.5) and the number of collaborations, applied projects and service agreements with industry and the community (2.7) directly reflect the role of research in informing teaching and learning and engagement with the wider key stakeholders. The TU RISE project specifically aims to deepen the connection of research and innovation with teaching and to increase student industry placements by embedding research and innovation in undergraduate programmes via delivery of 700+ hours of research-led teaching, 6 summer schools, 40 guest lectures and 4 structured PhD pathways. This work feeds directly into these indicators. The DigiBio project addresses this via structured sector-specific innovation training.

The targets selected are reflective of the insights and trends observed from baseline and available data. DkIT has performed slightly below the technological sector (including DkIT and IADT) average in its percentage of research enrolments (2.2%, against the sectoral average of 2.5% in 2022/23). The figure below shows DkIT’s steady increase in Level 10 registrations from 2016/2017 to 2022/2023. This reflects the trend of postgraduate research students seeking to undertake level 10 qualifications, reflecting the smaller number from baseline on the Level 9 uptake.

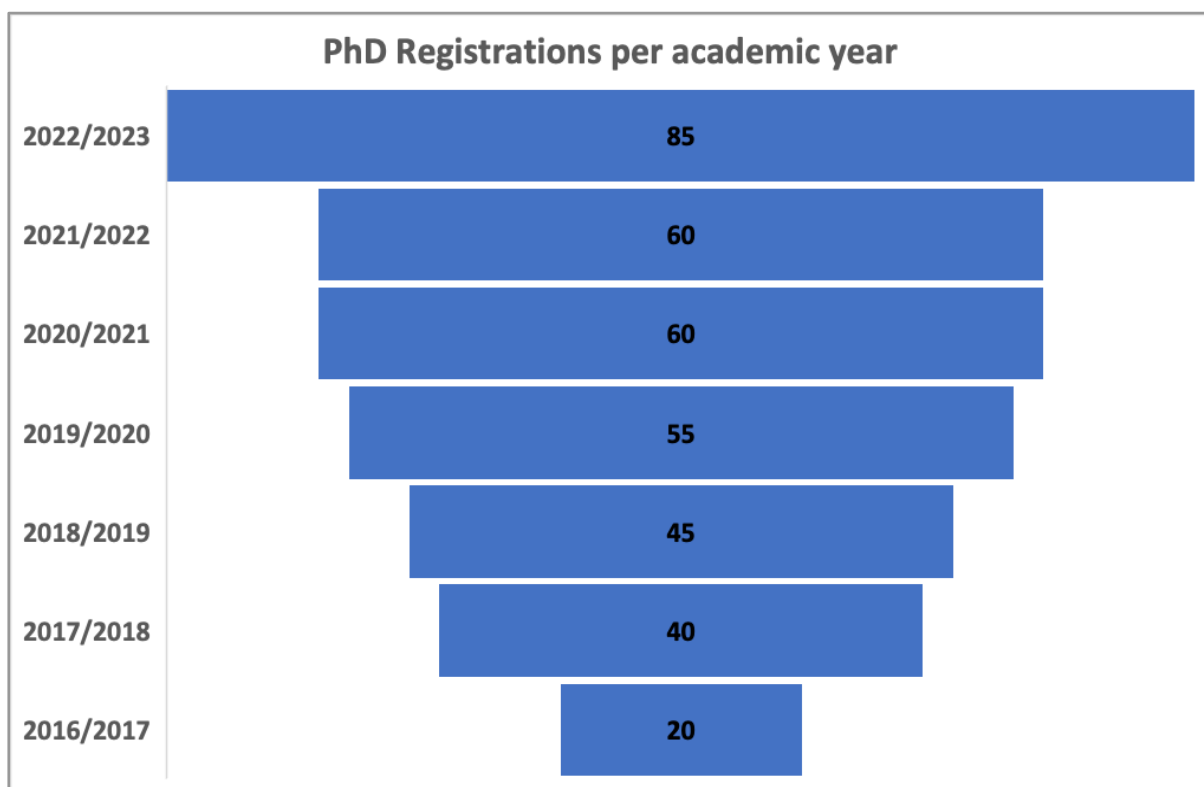


Figure 1: DkIT Level 10 registrations per academic year

Research income is dependent on success of research funding submissions. Trend analysis reveals that the Institute has been successful in seeking and securing external sources of research funding and performs well against its peers when taking into account the relative size of institutions. DkIT’s research income/academic staff (FTE) is €15,237, compared to the technological sector average of €17,347.

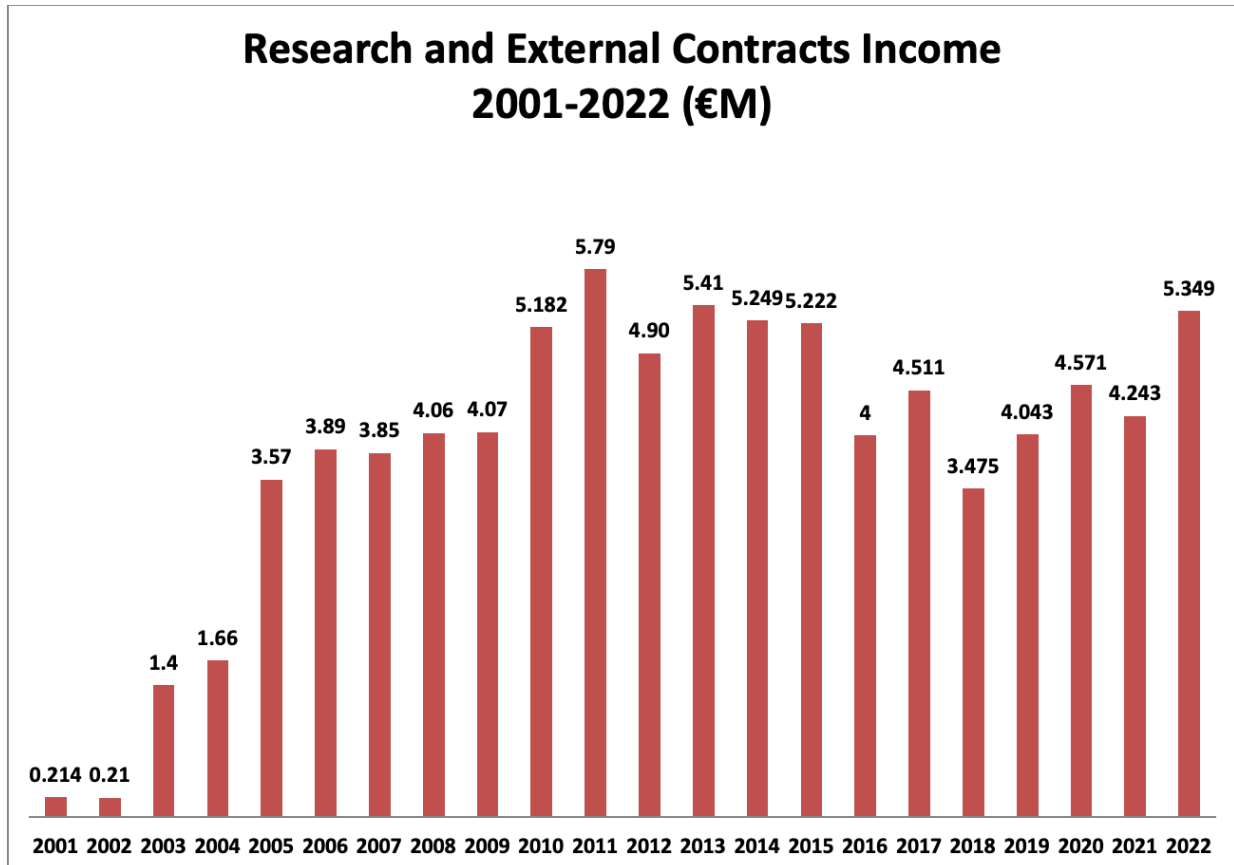


Figure 2: Research and external contracts income 2001–2022 (€M)

The targets selected (indicator 2.6) reflect a steady growth and outputs from successes to date in securing external research and innovation funding, such as that provided by TU RISE, SFI and the IRC.

The Institute performs in line with its peers on citation impact, with a citation impact of 1.2 compared to the technological sector average (including DkIT and IADT) of 1.29 in 2020/21. The target is set to maintain DkIT’s citation impact score at this level (indicator 2.5). DkIT has set a stretch target for the number of collaborations (indicator 2.7) to address limited growth in this area in recent years and improve performance relative to the technological sector average, which stands at 132 collaborations per HEI in 2023/24, with DkIT reporting 26 collaborations.

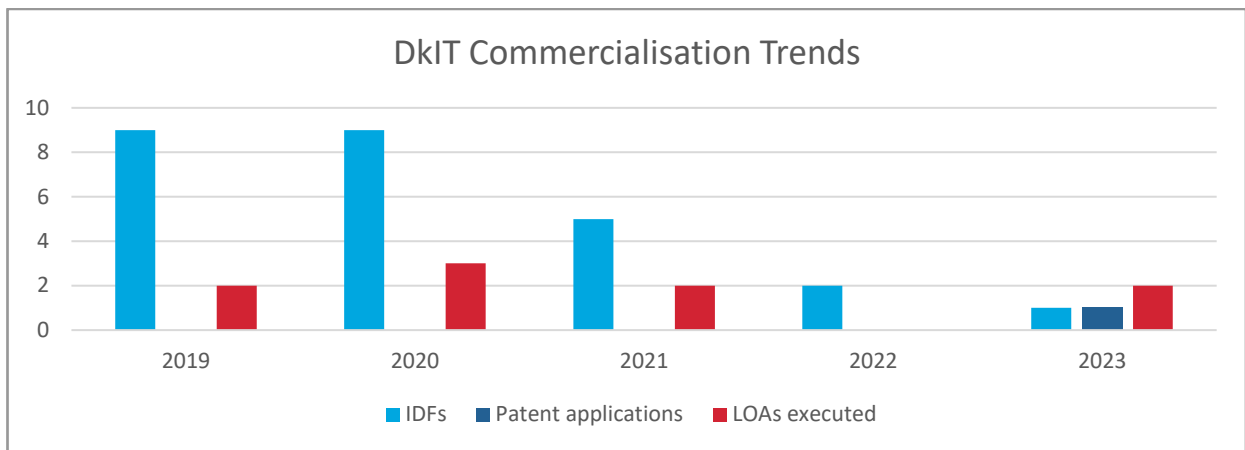


Figure 3: DkIT Commercialisation Trends [Source: KTI Annual Knowledge Transfer Surveys]

While the targets set for the delivery of commercially relevant technologies in indicator 2.8 maintain the baseline, this represents a stretch for the Institute in the context of limited and declining growth between 2019 and 2023, as shown in the figure above, and relative to the technological sector average of fourteen commercially relevant technologies per HEI in 2022.

The quantitative targets chosen allow for effective tracking of performance; consideration is given to capturing data over a five-year period to allow for analysis, insight and reflective consideration of outcomes. Targets are benchmarked against sectoral norms, nationally and internationally (KTI, Scopus, SciVal, U-Multirank). The performance objective represents a continuing development in this priority area.

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 2

An implementation research and innovation steering committee, co-chaired by the Head of Research and Graduate Studies and the Head of Innovation and Business Development, shall be responsible for the ongoing monitoring and reporting of this objective to the Executive Board. The committee shall have representatives from the three primary research institutes, academic schools, and research subcommittee. Quarterly reports on progress against targets, as set out above, will be produced and reviewed by the Executive Board.

Specific strategic actions to achieve the performance objective are as follows:

1. DkIT's leading role in industry cluster development in the two key areas of Connected Health and Wellbeing and Climate and Natural Resources will be leveraged for access to industry engagement opportunities. Through the DkIT CREATE project, the Corporate Partnership programme, DkIT will target external organisations to explore opportunities in CPD, student placements, student projects, corporate sponsorship, guest lecturing and research and innovation collaboration. Through the CREATE project and the KT Assist project, tailored CPD for academic and research-focused staff will be rolled out that will support industry engagement and commercialisation across these two broad areas of focus. DkIT will continue

its network membership of EIT Health Ireland–UK Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC).

2. Implement a research leader mentoring programme for early-career researchers and encourage co-supervision of postgraduate research students aimed at enhancing capacity building for postgraduate research students, career researchers and dedicated support staff.
3. Ensure that research and innovation underpins teaching and learning through the Programmatic Review 2023–2025 process.
4. Implement a dedicated research funding training programme for researchers, to increase research funding from national and international sources including SFI, EI Horizon, Peace Plus etc.
5. Increase research supervision and principal investigator capability through training and CPD.
6. Develop and implement a focused marketing and recruitment campaign to increase the number of postgraduate researchers at Level 9 and 10 particularly aligned to research institutes and industry in the region, where appropriate.
7. Provide training and CPD workshops to increase the number of research-active academic staff.
8. Encourage open-access research publications to support researchers to increase the number of peer-reviewed publications and citations.
9. Facilitate a range of one-to-one and one-to-many supports to: a) encourage and assist researchers/academics to define/explore the commercial potential of a project; b) to provide workshops in the areas of IP and defining a commercialisation strategy; and c) give researchers/academics a forum to promote their research to industry and to gain an insight into industry challenges.

The Institute will work within current resource allocations to the Schools, Research Office and the Regional Development Centre to include resources provided under TU RISE. Additional resources will be sought through national and international research and innovation funding submissions to scale and grow researchers within research centres and groups. Recruitment at academic school level shall include recruitment of research-active academics, where appropriate, so as to build the critical mass across the three research institutes. The success of this performance objective will be achieved through the prioritisation of the strategic actions and outcomes.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 2

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
2.1	Number (headcount) of postgraduate research enrolments (Level 9)	HEA SRS	Quantitative	2022/23: 25 (headcount) (0.5% of DkIT total enrolments)	Maintain performance relative to the Technological Sector Average (1.1% of total enrolments in 2022/23)	10	10	10	15	4-year average 11
2.2	Number (headcount) of postgraduate research enrolments (Level 10)	HEA SRS	Quantitative	2022/23: 85 (headcount) (1.7% of DkIT total enrolments)	Exceed Technological Sector Average (1.4% in 2022/23)	80	85	90	95	4-year average 88
2.3	Postgraduate Research (Level 9) completion rate (%)²	Internal (Research Office)	Quantitative	2022/2023: 95%	Maintain the average L9 PGR completion rate for the Technological Sector	95%	95%	95%	95%	Maintain completion rate of 95%
2.4	Postgraduate Research (Level 10) completion rate (%)	Internal (Research Office)	Quantitative	2022/2023: 95%	Maintain the average L10 PGR completion rate for the Technological Sector	95%	95%	95%	95%	Maintain completion rate of 95%
2.5	Bibliometric	SciVal	Quantitative	2020/2021:	Maintain performance against	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	Maintain

² Completion rates for Level 9 and Level 10 refer to the percentage of research students who commence and complete a programme.

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
	Citation Impact			1.2	the Technological Average Impact (1.29 in 2020/21)					impact 1.2
2.6	Research Income (€)/ Academic Staff (FTE)	Financial Statements and HEA System Performance Dashboard	Quantitative	2019/20: €15,237 per Academic Staff (FTE)	Maintain performance against the Technological Sector Average (€17,347 in 2019/20)	€15.5K (+/- 5%)	€15.5K (+/- 5%)	€15.5K (+/- 5%)	€15.5K (+/- 5%)	Maintain per annum average €15.5K (+/- 5%)
2.7	Number of Collaboration, Innovation Voucher and Consultancy Agreements with industry/non-commercial entities	KTI Annual Knowledge Transfer Survey	Quantitative	2023: 9.2 per 100 academic FTE	Maintain performance relative to Technological Average (2.8 per 100 academic FTEs in 2023)	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	Maintain baseline of 9.2 per 100 academic FTE
2.8	Number of Licenses, Options and Agreements	KTI Annual Knowledge Transfer Survey	Quantitative	2023: 2	Technological Average (32 in 2023)	2	2 (+/-1)	2 (+/-1)	2 (+/-1)	8 over 4 years Maintain baseline

Performance Objective 3

To provide accessible and inclusive approaches to Learning, Teaching and Assessment by offering a wide range of programmes and access routes that ensures all students can flourish and achieve their potential.

Pillar: Access & Participation

Transversals: Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging; Climate and Sustainable Development.

Rationale for Performance Objective 3

Underpinned by trend analysis, performance indicators and targets for this performance objective are focused on ensuring the Institute’s learning and teaching are accessible to all student cohorts, as set out in the *National Access Plan 2022–2028 (NAP)*, including disadvantaged groups, students with disabilities, Travellers, mature, FE, HEAR and DARE students, part-time students and apprenticeship students.

DkIT seeks to expand craft apprenticeship provision in existing crafts (motor mechanics, carpentry and joinery, electrical and plumbing), introduce new crafts (refrigeration/AC, electrical instrumentation and pipefitting) and accommodate higher-level apprenticeships in manufacturing, civil engineering, building surveying and industrial electrical engineering. The rationale for the strategic focus on higher-level apprenticeship is the requirement to address the skills necessary for reskilling and upskilling in Ireland’s transition to a green economy (NDP) with the addition of 300 higher apprentices in manufacturing, building surveying and civil engineering and 150 additional CPD learners. This project will enhance the capacity to conduct research and innovation in the area of renewables and the transition from fossil fuels to low carbon or carbon neutral through the CREDIT research centre and Technology Gateway Centre. Through the work of this centre in land-based and offshore energy systems, DkIT can assist companies, in sectors such as Advanced Manufacturing/Engineering, Bioeconomy/Renewable Energy, Food/AgriTech and ICT, to operate as energy efficiently as possible.

This performance objective aligns with the Institute’s strategic objectives in improving equality of opportunity through its continued commitment to engagement via the FET2HE Network and the North East Further & Higher Education Alliance ([NEFHEA](#)). Progression pathways have been identified to ensure a more inclusive approach to progression and to promote equal access. DkIT offers a number of programmes with a common first year and permits students to transfer internally to an alternative programme after the close of CAO offer rounds, subject to availability and provided applicants have the necessary entry qualifications/points. The Institute is engaged with the FE sector, regionally, in the development of tertiary programmes and the development of direct programmatic alignments through articulation agreements. DkIT has submitted a Peace Plus proposal with enhanced and tangible linkages between DkIT and FE partners in the region. The proposal will facilitate the growth of industry within the region by increasing the number of highly qualified

graduates that are available to both multinational and indigenous organisations in Software Development/ICT/Connected Health; Biopharmaceutical/Agri-Food; Engineering/Green Skills; and Cybersecurity. Upskilling within industry is further enhanced by increased part-time provision. Overall certified part-time student enrolments (incl. Springboard) for 2022/23 were 995, as shown in Figure 4 below. This is up 4% on 2021/22, exceeding the national trend in part-time enrolments of minus 8%. Part-time students now account for 20% of DkIT’s total student headcount.

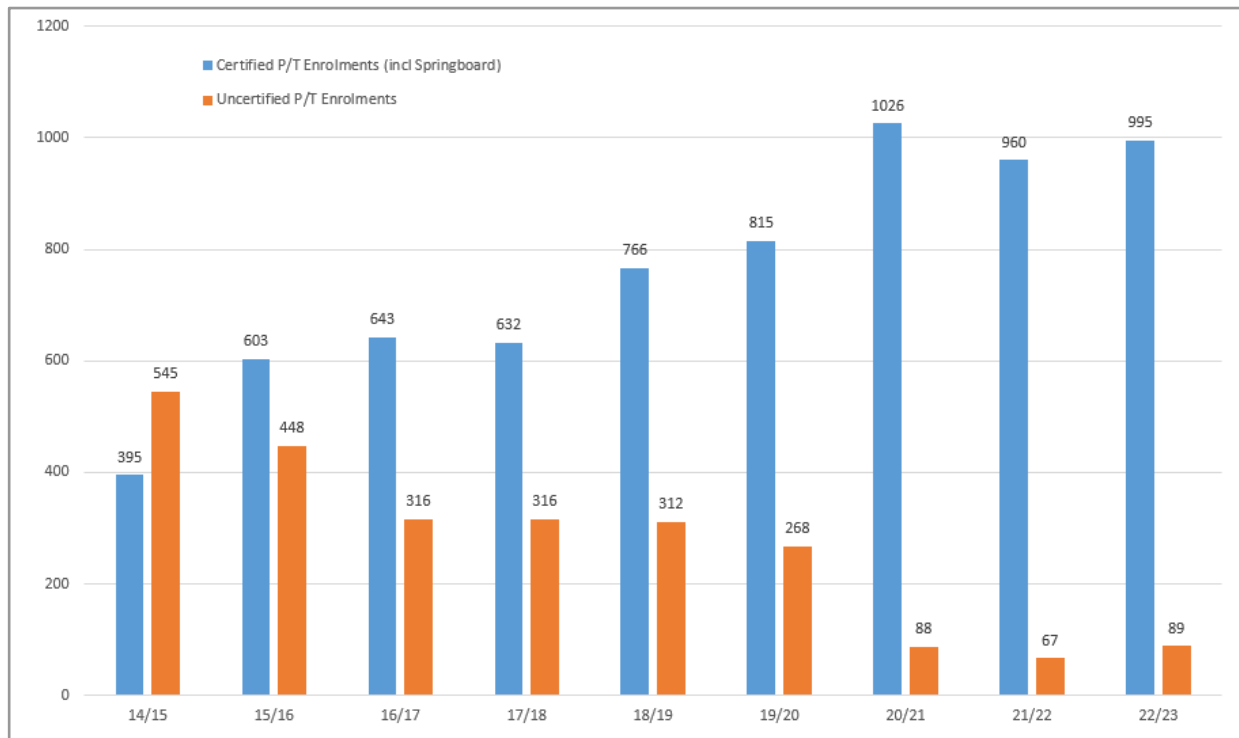


Figure 4: Part-time student enrolments

Trend analysis reveals that DkIT has consistently performed well and benchmarked positively on the range of selected indicators. In 2022/23, 9% of new entrants in DkIT were FET award holders (TU average including DkIT and IADT: 5.8%). Some of the larger FET institutions in the region are located in areas with populations experiencing a degree of socioeconomic disadvantage (Cavan, Monaghan, Drogheda and Dundalk). Increased numbers progressing from FET to DkIT will assist in reaching the NAP target that 20% of new entrants from disadvantaged areas should be mature entrants. DkIT undertakes to review and develop further agreements with our FET partners in the region to cooperate on new discipline areas which support and advance entry through the 2+2 pathway.

DkIT is committed to increasing access by members of the Traveller community to DkIT. Equal Access data for academic year 2022/23 shows Traveller students enrolled in DkIT as 0.2% of new entrants. This compares favourably to the national average of 0.1%. Using PATH 5 funding, DkIT has funded Traveller culture awareness sessions in local Youthreach and FET centres and created further awareness of the opportunities for third-level study. PATH 5 funding is critical to assisting the Institute’s efforts to meet the target set in the NAP of Traveller new entrants as 0.32% of all new entrants.

In academic year 2022/23, 18% of new entrants to DkIT were from a DEIS school, which compares to our Midlands, East, and North Dublin partners (referred to as MEND partners) in the same period as

follows: TUS (Midlands) 14%; DCU 9%; Maynooth University 13%. The national figure for new entrants to HE who attended DEIS schools is 10% (Source: SRS data). DkIT is taking steps to increase the access rate of students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds by targeting sub-groups within the second-level system, including DEIS schools, i.e. those that have heretofore been considered ‘hardest to reach’.

In order to increase the percentage of new entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas and other target groups, DkIT intends to offer a Certificate in Access to Higher Education (Special Purpose Award) from November 2025. This programme will offer an alternative pathway into DkIT for up to 30 students per annum and is supported through PATH 4 funding. This programme and the initiatives outlined above are crucial to increasing our percentage of mature new entrants from disadvantaged areas (11% in academic year 2020/21) to the target of 20% set in the current NAP.

DkIT conducted an internal review of 1916 Bursary recipients (2017/18 to 2022/23) and found that males account for 31% of recipients. DkIT is committed to increasing the overall application rate to the 1916 Bursary and to ensuring that males from a background of socioeconomic disadvantage are encouraged to apply.

In academic year 2019/20, 14.4% of new entrants to DkIT were in receipt of the Student Grant Scheme. The equivalent figure for 2020/2021 showed an increase to 15.1%. Meanwhile, DkIT is above the TU average for the number of new entrants that are mature students (8.4% DkIT, TU average 6.6%, 2022/2023). The NAP 2022–2028 target is a change from previous targets in that the aim is to increase the number of mature students from disadvantaged areas. DkIT students are from three of the most disadvantaged areas, as evidenced in the Deprivation Index Scores (2020) in Louth (-1.5), Monaghan (-2.4) and Cavan (-3.2), compared to Dublin as the most affluent (DIS = 6.3). DkIT does not perform to the technological sector average (including DkIT and IADT) in attracting HEAR and DARE new entrants. DkIT achieved 4% (HEAR 0.5% and DARE 3.5%), compared to 9.4% for the technological sector including DkIT and IADT (HEAR 3.9% and DARE 5.5%) in 2022/2023. DkIT continues to take actions to increase the access rates of both mature and non-mature entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas.

Student data in 2022/2023 showed 10.2% of new DkIT entrants declaring a disability, compared to the national average of 13.9%. The Institute is currently assessing the additional inputs needed to encourage declaration of a disability and supports to enhance the student experience.

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 3

This performance objective will be overseen by the VP for Academic Affairs and Registrar in conjunction with the Heads of School. A working group will be established to deliver on this objective, to include representatives from the academic Schools, Student Services, Access Office and the Centre for Lifelong Learning. Quarterly reporting on progress against targets, as set out above, will be produced and reviewed by the Executive Board.

Specific strategic actions to achieve the performance objective are as follows:

- Develop additional pathways for progression and implement measures to facilitate FE–HE advancement and Tertiary programme development.
- Enhance engagement with secondary schools/FE colleges in providing additional opportunities for accessing higher education.
- Continue to develop micro-credentials and tailored programmes across all disciplines.
- Identify opportunities for blended/online learning, to facilitate greater access and participation as part of Programmatic Review 2023–2025.
- Provide additional part-time programmes.
- Focus on the Traveller Communities using PATH 5 funding.
- Focus on Drogheda using the resource of a Community Connector (funded by PATH 3).
- Increase the number of applications from HEAR and DARE Schemes.
- Enhance the portfolio of extra-curricular experiences to ensure targeted groups feel a sense of belonging, to include the development of a first-year student peer-mentorship programme which will be followed up throughout the student lifecycle.
- Achieve a target representation from the student cohort at relevant Institute governance groups, including curriculum planning committees, to encourage and support active participation and engagement in decision-making and to ensure that everyone’s voice is heard and valued.
- Implement work packages through PATH 4 Phase 1, including:
 - Consider accessibility measures to support students with a disability, through a phased implementation of the accessibility audit.
 - Secure Autism Friendly Campus designation.
 - Enhance Digital Accessibility — implement technology-based solutions that support inclusive practices in teaching and learning.
- Continue engagement in the PATH and College Connect initiatives.
- Develop higher-level apprenticeships.
- Continue enhancing craft apprenticeship provision.

The Institute will work within current resource allocations. PATH 3 additional funding will fund extra tuition and other learning supports to the Traveller and Roma communities. The newly recruited Traveller and Roma Outreach Worker will work in a very focused manner with members of the Traveller and Roma communities in second-level and FET institutions. Additionally, through PATH 3, DkIT has identified Youthreach centres as valuable partners in making contact with young people who have left the formal education system and who have the potential to access FET and, later, HE. The DkIT Community Connector has forged valuable links, including links with TUSLA staff in the region. There is a focus on those communities and cohorts identified in the Geiran report (*Geiran Report 2021*). DkIT

has consistently used funding (Emerging Needs of COVID, PATH 3 and PATH 5) to support community groups and organisations offering youth diversion and probation projects. DkIT will continue to work with the Probation Service and our MEND partners to further develop the Kickstart Scholarship. The wider value of this scholarship is to signal to existing and potential students that DkIT is welcoming to those from this target group. The newly appointed Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) officer will play an important role regarding mature new entrants and direct-entry entrants by providing workshops on RPL, assisting recruitment and marketing teams with suitable materials for prospective students, and engaging in outward-facing activities.

Opportunities, challenges and risks

Opportunity exists for the successful implementation of a series of organically driven 2+2 FE–HE programmes to enable talent creation and retention within the region. A key challenge is attracting non-CAO students who have competing priorities in respect of work–life–education balance. The greater use of micro-credentials and apprenticeships is essential in ensuring students remain engaged and can acquire certification as they learn and work. The difficulty of attracting non-CAO students is further mitigated via tailored marketing and recruitment campaigns aimed at specific student groups.

Evaluation and learnings

Progress evaluation will be managed using data analysis processes. The Institute will utilise the CRM system, which feeds into the Banner system, to manage student recruitment queries and applications, and will monitor potential student numbers across all non-CAO student cohorts. The annual student survey will provide real insights into the student experience. These insights will be used to enhance provision and the student experience, with a focus on particular student cohorts.

Following student surveys and data reporting on student recruitment numbers and retention, all Schools and key functional areas will review the data and reflect on how improvements can be made. In particular, the Institute seeks to identify and mitigate against barriers to access and provision. An annual review of progress against targets and the identification of learnings and findings will be reflected upon and a list of actionable improvement areas identified and addressed. These will then be monitored to ensure they have effected the positive impact anticipated.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 3

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
3.1	Proportion (%) of new entrants that are from socioeconomically disadvantaged (SED) areas	HEA SRS and System Performance Dashboard	Quantitative	2020/21: 15%	Exceed Technological Sector average (14% in 2020/21)	15%	16%	17%	17%	4-year average, 16% 2 p.p. increase on baseline
3.2	Proportion (%) of new entrants from SED areas that are mature entrants	HEA SRS and System Performance Dashboard	Quantitative	2020/21: 11%	Increase DkIT’s % towards national target of 20%	11%	12%	12%	13%	4-year average, 12% 2 p.p. increase on baseline
3.3	Proportion (%) of new entrants with disabilities	HEA SRS and System Performance Dashboard	Quantitative	2022/23: 10.2%	Continual improvement towards Technological Sector average (16.9% in 2022/23)	10.5%	11%	12%	12.5%	4-year average, 11.5% 2.3 p.p. increase on baseline
3.4	Number of new entrants from the Traveller community³	HEA SRS and System Performance Dashboard	Quantitative	2022/23: ■ (0.2% of total new entrants)	Exceed Technological Sector average (0.14% in 2022/23)	Maintain baseline	No change	+ 1	Maintain increase	+ 1

³ The level of disaggregation of data disseminated publicly is subject to data protection considerations. Data disaggregated to a level which may allow individuals to be identified (even indirectly) is not disseminated publicly. See the HEA Statistics: [Privacy, Data Protection and Disclosure Control](#).

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
3.5	Proportion (%) of new entrants that are mature entrants	HEA SRS and System Performance Dashboard	Quantitative	2022/23: 8.4%	Exceed Technological Sector average (6.7% in 2022/23)	8.5%	8.7%	9.0%	9.2%	4-year average, 8.9% 0.8 p.p. increase on baseline
3.6	Proportion (%) of new entrants from FET	HEA SRS	Quantitative	2022/23: 9%	Exceed Technological Sector average (5.8% in 2022/23)	10%	11%	12%	13%	4-year average, 11.5% 4 p.p. increase on baseline
3.7	Proportion (%) direct-entry route new entrants	HEA SRS	Quantitative	2022/23: 12.3%	Exceed Technological Sector average (5% in 2022/23)	12.5%	12.5%	13%	13%	4-year average, 12.75% 0.7 p.p. increase on baseline
3.8	Proportion (%) HEAR and DARE new entrants	HEA SRS and System Performance Dashboard	Quantitative	2022/23: 4%	Continually improve towards Technological Sector average (9.4% in 2022/23)	4%	4%	4.5%	4.5%	0.5 p.p. increase on baseline
3.9	Proportion (%) of students who are part-time (headcount)	HEA SRS	Quantitative	2022/23: 20%	Achieve Technological Sector average (22% in 2022/23)	21%	21%	22%	22%	4-year average, 21.5% 2 p.p. increase on baseline

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
3.10	Number of Craft Apprentice Students enrolled (headcount)	National Apprenticeship Office	Quantitative	2022/23: 1,056	N/A	1,152	1,152	1,152	1,536	45% increase on baseline Blocks increased from 66 to 72 blocks
3.11	Number of Higher Apprentice Students enrolled (headcount)	National Apprenticeship Office	Quantitative	2022/2023: 0	N/A	20	80	140	180	4-year average, 105 higher apprentices p.a.

Performance Objective 4

To deliver on our remit to support regional development and work-ready, globally minded graduates through enhanced engagement with key stakeholders locally, nationally and internationally.

Pillar: Engagement

Transversals: Region; Society; International; Enterprise.

Rationale for Performance Objective 4

The Institute has a strong track record of successful engagement that delivers impact, with every €1 in state funding associated with €10.43 in total GVA (PMCA, 2022). The Regional Development Centre (RDC) has been an engine for regional economic growth and development since 1989. The RDC makes available the expertise, facilities and resources of the Institute for the wider benefit of the regional economy and the development of knowledge-based start-ups through its enterprise support programmes and incubation facilities, and through research projects with industry.

An important link to industry is the inclusion of work placements within programmes. A large percentage of students have a work placement or internship as part of their higher education journey. Currently, 84% of total undergraduate programmes have a built-in work placement/internship module. DkIT performs well against its technological sector counterparts, with 59% of graduates in 2022 having undertaken a work placement/internship compared to the 40.3% technological sector average (including DkIT and IADT). The Institute also leverages its strong engagement with industry through the hosting of the Industry Day and Careers Fair on campus, which provide opportunities for industry to meet with students and potential graduate recruits.

DkIT offers flexible lifelong learning programmes that enable workers to upskill. Provision of these programmes allows DkIT to respond to employers' needs and to forge connections with key industry and community stakeholders. It thereby supports DkIT's objectives to increase access & participation (PO3) and engagement (PO4). One of the key enablers to support flexible and lifelong learning provision is the current investment, via N-TUTORR, in DkIT Digi Campus, which [develops digital capabilities for the DkIT staff and student community](#). This allows for blended and flexible delivery to full-time and part-time learners simultaneously. The Institute's focus on micro-credentials allows those interested in flexible learning to accumulate and build a portfolio of credits. This flexible provision facilitates the upskilling of workers and stimulates talent retention in the region, thereby creating value-added engagement with regional industry and the community.

The performance, outputs, and impact of the HEA-funded project, Corporate Partnership Programme (CPP), have also informed the development of this performance objective. Particularly, with respect to upskilling provision, the CPP has delivered a range of both outreach and in-company courses. This has included sector-specific developments with partners, such as the Fundamentals of Blockchain Technologies Certificate that engaged the Fintech Corridor Initiative Industry Cluster, and significant

developments in operations excellence, such as the Supply Chain Management Certificate and newly validated Diploma in Operations Excellence for Supply Chain and Food Production Management.

In addition to engaging with industry and the local community, DkIT is committed to fostering global engagement. DkIT uses a wide range of international strategies and initiatives to contribute effectively towards the enhancement of the students' global experience and the development of globally minded graduates. In line with the *Irish Educated, Globally Connected 2016–2020* strategy, international experience and intercultural expertise have been identified as core competencies for graduates in an export-driven and innovation-based economy. Consistent with the principles of the *Global Citizens 2030 – Ireland's International Talent and Innovation Strategy*, the Institute will continue to promote the development of international competencies among learners, in order to prepare graduates to learn and work in multinational, multicultural and diverse workforces, both at home and abroad.

Enhancement of the Institute's internationalisation agenda is multi-faceted, encompassing recruitment of international students; promotion of international European mobility for students and staff through the Erasmus+ programme; and building global awareness, international diversity and integration on campus for all stakeholders.

The indicators chosen to reflect DkIT's progress in forming globally minded graduates pertain to both inward mobility (number of enrolments of international students) and outward mobility of students and staff. Trend analysis shows that DkIT is a strong performer in attracting international student enrolments (DkIT: 9.9% of total student enrolment against the technological sector average of 5.1%, 2022/23). International Registrations for the last five years show consistent performance:

Year	International Registrations
2019/20	445
2020/21	351
2021/22	370
2022/23	448
2023/24	438

Table 5: International Registrations 2019–2024

The number and percentage of enrolments from international students are affected by such factors as slower market recovery since COVID and delays or rejections in visa applications from some markets. However, performance in international recruitment will be monitored via indicator 4.6, and DkIT is targeting an overall increase in international enrolments by 2028.

Additionally, the number of international students entering Year 2 and Year 3 programmes is expected to be lower than in recent years as a result of fewer foundation and Year 1 enrolments, in addition to the factors cited earlier, particularly in respect of delays and rejection of visa applications. To monitor and mitigate these impacts, we have selected an indicator (4.7) to monitor progress on international student enrolments across programme years.

Outward mobility of DkIT students through Erasmus+ has also been consistent in recent years, as shown in Table 6.

Year	Students on Erasmus Study Semester	Students on Erasmus Work Placement
2021/2022	19 (+10 students on 1 BIP)	13
2022/2023	14 (+31 students on 5 BIPs)	10
2023/2024	18 (+45 students on 6 BIPs)	13

Table 6: Number of students on Erasmus Study Semester or Work Placement

As can be seen, the numbers of students engaging in Erasmus Work Placement and/or Study Semester remain steady. The Institute aims to maintain these numbers (indicator 4.8). However, a key observation from Table 6 is the growth in interest among students in participating in short intensive Erasmus mobilities (Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs)), as evidenced by increase in engagement in BIPs from one to six programmes and from ten to forty-five students. The Institute continues to prioritise mobility (indicator 4.9).

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 4

This performance objective will be overseen by the VP for Strategic Planning, Communication and Development in conjunction with the VP for Academic Affairs and Registrar and the Heads of School. A group will be established to deliver on this objective, to include representatives from the Regional Development Centre, International Office and Careers and Employability office.

Specific strategic actions to support the achievement of this PO include the following:

1. Enhance engagement with the FE sector to further realise FE–HE progression and engagement on apprenticeship provision.
2. Grow the supportive community of employers, entrepreneurs, start-ups and FDI companies to meet regional remits.
3. Continue the development and implementation of the Corporate Partnership Programme.
4. Enhance delivery of student internships and work placements in programmes.
5. Review work placement and internship inclusion in programmes as part of Programmatic Review.
6. Maintain and develop recruitment in established international markets.
7. Identify new markets to diversify recruitment opportunities.
8. Develop collaborations with international universities to provide advanced-entry study pathways for learners.
9. Sustain engagement in Erasmus+ Study Abroad and Work Placement exchange for inbound and outbound Erasmus students.

10. Develop student participation in Erasmus+ blended mobility projects (combining in-person and virtual learning).
11. Continue developing teaching, research and training opportunities for staff within the Erasmus+ framework.
12. Maintain and develop inter-institutional agreements with Erasmus+ partner universities and MOUs with international universities.
13. Develop intercultural learning opportunities on campus to foster Internationalisation at Home initiatives.
14. Apply to achieve the new statutory International Education Quality Mark (IEM).

The Institute appointed a second International Recruitment Officer in academic year 2023/24 to support recruitment, with key responsibility for Africa and for Eastern Europe (and to support other markets where needed). The senior International Student Recruitment Officer is working in a part-time capacity since May 2023, with responsibility for managing the agent relationship, developing new agency opportunities, and liaising on agency- and university agreements, with occasional travel only. The establishment of Regional Offices in India, China and Eastern Europe is instrumental in driving recruitment efforts on the ground in these territories (with India presently outperforming all other markets). The International Office has been expanded to meet the needs of inbound and outbound international and Erasmus students and to develop agent and university partnerships. A CRM system has recently been implemented to enhance the application system for the international market.

International competencies designed to develop students' adaptability; global-mindedness; engagement in global issues; intercultural learning; respect for equality, diversity and inclusion; commitment to sustainability; and international workplace readiness are fostered in a range of initiatives across the Institute including:

- Erasmus Intercultural Awareness Pre-Departure Workshop (for students)
- Intercultural Awareness Training Workshops (for Staff)
- International Welcome Days and celebration of cultural diversity events on campus
- Embedding of language-learning opportunities within programmes in the School of Business and Humanities (French, German, Spanish and Mandarin)
- Embedding of Intercultural Studies module within the Business Studies Department degree programmes
- Student ELEVATE Awards — fostering students' employability and professional development skills through service-learning projects
- Development and expansion of cultural summer schools aimed at international academic markets.

Challenges and risks

A key risk to the success of this PO is the coherence and integration of engagement with teaching and learning and research and innovation to ensure outcomes are realised. The Institute has strong engagement with industry and the community via participation as members on multiple external committees and forums. The risk is mitigated via the governance, oversight and implementation of both the Strategic Plan 2024–2028 and the Performance Agreement 2024–2028 by Executive Board, with key working groups established across the key pillars. This structure will ensure ongoing cross-collaborative dialogue and engagement to ensure outcomes are met. Key consideration is also given to external stakeholder engagement and measures put in place to support enhanced engagement.

There are a number of specific risks in relation to international recruitment. The risks and mitigation factors are set out below:

Risk	Mitigation
Political & economic conditions fluctuating in markets, affecting recruitment activities.	Market diversification.
High visa rejection rate in Africa & Pakistan, affecting the number of international students recruited.	Retargeting of recruitment efforts to Southern & Eastern Africa and to countries that do not require a visa.
Imbalance in inbound and outbound flows for Erasmus exchange. Availability of English-taught modules at partner institutions subject to change.	Continual creation of collaborations with new and existing Erasmus institutions to promote outbound Erasmus engagement and to have a sufficient number of partner institutions guaranteeing English-language delivery. Develop Internationalisation at Home through continued promotion of Erasmus opportunities to DkIT students via class visits and via greater DkIT Clubs promotion and hosting of International Week.

Evaluation and learnings

Quarterly reporting on progress against targets, as set out above, will be produced and reviewed by the Executive Board. Following data collation and review, the working group for the performance objective will ascertain how the learnings can be factored into future actions to deliver better outcomes. The annual review of progress against targets and the identification of learnings and findings will be reflected upon and a list of actionable improvement areas identified and addressed. These will then be monitored to ensure that they have effected the positive impact anticipated.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 4

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
4.1	Number of MOUs with key strategic HEI/ industry/ community partnerships	Internal (President's Office)	Quantitative	2022/23: 15	N/A	15	17	19	20	71 over 4 years 4-year average of 18
4.2	Number of entrepreneurs/ start-ups supported	Internal (Regional Development Centre)	Quantitative	2022/23: 60	N/A	60	65	70	75	270 over 4 years 4-year average of 68
4.3	Annual occupancy of incubation facilities	Internal (Regional Development Centre)	Quantitative	2022/23: 77% occupancy	N/A	80%	80%	85%	85%	83% average occupancy rate over 4 years 8 p.p. increase on baseline
4.4	Proportion (%) of graduates who undertook work placements/ internships	HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey and System Performance Dashboard	Quantitative	2022: 59%	2022 TU Sector Average: 40.3%	60%	62%	64%	65%	4-year average of 63% 6 p.p. increase on baseline
4.5	Number of new programmatic pathway articulation agreements to facilitate students progressing through Tertiary routes to HE	Internal (Registrar's Office)	Quantitative	2023/24: 0	N/A	5	5	5	3	18 over 4 years Average 4.5 per year

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
4.6	Full-time non-EU enrolment as % of total full-time enrolment	HEA SRS	Quantitative	2022/23: 9.9%	Exceed TU Sector Average (5.1% in 2022/23)	7%	8%	9%	10%	4-year average of 8.5%
4.7	Number of international students entering year 2 and year 3 of programmes	Internal (Registrar's Office)	Quantitative	2023/24: 11	N/A	6	8	9	10	33 over 4 years 4-year average of 8
4.8	Number of outward student/staff mobilities	Internal (International Office)	Quantitative	2023/24: 37 (31 students and 6 staff)	Total number of outward Erasmus mobilities nationally (7,844 students, 1,700 staff)	32 (27 students, 5 staff)	36 (30 students, 6 staff)	38 (32 students, 6 staff)	42 (35 students, 7 staff)	148 mobilities over 4 years 4-year average of 37 (maintain baseline of 31 students, 6 staff)
4.9	Number of students attending blended mobilities (BIPs) via Erasmus+	Internal (International Office)	Quantitative	2023/24: 45	N/A	40	40	45	45	170 over 4 years 4-year average of 43

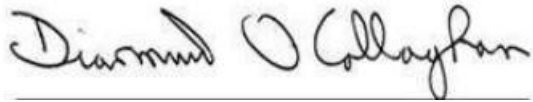
Section 3: Matrix and Signatures

Framework Matrix

		Pillars			
		Teaching & Learning	Research & Innovation	Access & Participation	Engagement
Transversal areas of impact	Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning			PO 3	
	Climate & Sustainable Development	PO 1	PO 2	PO 3	
	Student Success	PO 1			
	Enterprise				PO 4
	Society		PO 2		PO 4
	Region		PO 2		PO 4
	International	PO 1			PO 4
	Digital Transformation				
	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging			PO 3	
	Institutional Leadership & Culture				
	Sectoral & Tertiary Cohesion				

Signatures

On behalf of Dundalk Institute of Technology



Dr Diarmuid O'Callaghan

President

Thursday, 5 December 2024



Professor Thomas Collins

Chair of the Governing Body

Thursday, 5 December 2024

On behalf of the Higher Education Authority



Dr Alan Wall

Chief Executive Officer

Thursday, 5 December 2024



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