

Dublin Institute of Technology
Strategic Dialogue – Bilateral Session - Agenda
Friday 29th September 2017
10.00 – 12.30

DIT

Professor Brian Norton, President
Professor Michael Devereux, Director and Dean, College of Sciences & Health
Professor Gerald Farrell, Director and Dean, College of Engineering & Built Environment
Mr Paul Flynn, Director, Campus Services & Relocation
Dr Katrina Lawlor, Director and Dean, College of Business
Dr Michael Mulvey, Director, Academic Affairs & Registrar
Mr Denis Murphy, Director, Corporate Services
Professor Mike Murphy, Director, Digital Campus & Learning Transformation
Mr John O'Connor, Director and Dean, College of Arts & Tourism
Dr Noel O'Connor, Director, Student Development
Professor Brian O'Neill, Director, Research Enterprise & Innovation Services
Ms Margaret Whelan, Head of Strategic Planning, Development & Corporate Relations

HEA

Dr Graham Love, CEO
Mr Fergal Costello, Head of System Development and Performance Management
Mr Andrew Brownlee, Head of System Funding
Mr Tim Conlon, Senior Manager
Ms Valerie Harvey, Head of Performance Evaluation
Mr Mark Kirwan, Executive Officer

External

Dr Richard Thorn, Expert Panel member
Mr John Malone, Process Auditor

Context

DIT has undertaken, and made good progress on, two major challenges over the duration of the compact, with the relocation to the Grangegorman campus and the continued work, with TU4Dublin partners, to meet the criteria to achieve Technological University designation.

Introduction

The HEA opened by welcoming the DIT delegation to the meeting and noted that it was the fourth strategic dialogue meeting to date. As their initial observation, the HEA remarked their view of how the sector has responded well to the challenges of providing quality education in an increasingly constrained environment, and it is important to sustain this in the future. An agenda had been prepared to inform the discussion. In terms of the strategic dialogue process as a whole, the HEA, for its part, considers that this has overall become an essential part of the HEA – HEI relationship, and for

wider system performance and accountability. Given that a new cycle will commence shortly, the HEA will consider how this might evolve, and will seek views from the sector on how the process can be improved.

DIT noted that there has been profound and pervasive change in the institution which is being relocated and merged with two other institutions. These two drivers are being used to position the institution, and the intended future institution, as a practice driven HEI, with the necessary changes in its curriculum, teaching and learning, and research; ensuring that programmes are fit for purpose, and links with industry are strong.

Research and Development

DIT's objectives in its compact submission included increasing the number of academic staff with a PhD; increasing the value of external research awards and increasing the number of research publications per year. The institute is also engaged in increasing its doctoral student numbers in order to reach the criteria to achieve Technological University designation.

DIT set out its vision that it will shortly progress to be a Technological University, with three full-service campuses and online education. The institute has four research themes – new materials and devices; information, communications and media technologies; environment, energy and health; and society, culture and enterprise. The institute has invested in research manpower, and in its doctoral programme. A DIT graduate will have a creative, practice-based approach to work. The institute is also looking towards new, flexible and alternative routes to research, using models for accessibly engaging industry partners in the research processes. DIT noted the challenges associated with measuring research activity amongst staff; and explained that a number of factors are taken into account when considering the promotion of staff from Assistant Lecturer to Lecturer. These include engagement with industry, research and teaching of undergraduates.

The institute is steadily developing and deepening its research capacity, delivered through an internal compact process with its 26 schools. It has set a 3-5 year timeline in terms of developing each school's research capacity.

The institute ensures that teaching is informed by research through programme development and through the quality enhancement process. The currency of research is raised at the undergraduate level through events such as project fairs.

Access and Participation

The institute's compact submission had set out its strong performance in the area of participation, access and lifelong learning. In particular, the self-evaluation set out helpful data on how DIT is the largest provider nationally in terms of STEM undergraduates, ICT undergraduates, part-time enrolments and part-time undergraduates. HEA queried how, in that context, DIT can take a further step in its benchmarking process to look for new areas for improvement. In response, DIT stated that it was committed to being a learning organisation, and would therefore be exploring how it might improve its use of data to help in setting further goals and targets. DIT noted that it had adopted a good process of gathering, understanding and using this data to inform institutional direction, and was committed to building on the progress made in recent years.

DIT outlined its ongoing commitment to the apprenticeship model. Not only has the institute maintained capacity across its existing trades over the last number of years, it has made three applications to the new apprenticeship call.

DIT also has a digital campus plan which will continue to develop the capability to support a digital learning environment.

In relation to benchmarking, DIT noted its participation in the U-Multirank process and its involvement in European and international networks.

Internationalisation

DIT stated that internationalisation is critically important and permeates through the institute, and reaches beyond outgoing and incoming students. DIT considers that its programmes and graduates should be international. Previously the institute had focussed on the recruitment of international students but is now trying to embed internationalisation into all aspects of the HEI, including the curriculum and research. There is a cultural element to this and the institute attempts to recruit staff who are international, and to engage with international companies.

The HEA noted DIT's very credible discussion of its approach to internationalisation but noted that given the significant work the institute is undertaking in terms of TU and relocation that not everything can be a priority.

Technological Universities

It was noted that a separate meeting had taken place on the Dublin Technological University process with the three TU partners.

DIT considers that whatever delays have occurred in the delivery of TU legislation, the work that has been undertaken with the TU partners has still been important, and will have fruitful impacts. For example, the partners' experience of collaboration on research has been very positive, and they have built trust. There have been accomplishments in relation to the graduate school, the innovation space, the sharing of technology transfer facilities, and managed services. The commitment from the TU partners is now a given.

Grangegorman and Capital Developments

DIT stated that in two years' time, there will be 10,000 students in Grangegorman, with only Business students and Engineering students in Bolton St. to follow two years after that. DIT noted that the Luas connection will open shortly and this will provide a seamless link between campuses.

Consolidation of the campuses is fundamental to the institute, and it will shortly close on two PPPs. DIT has submitted its capital plan, which includes the library, catering, and relocation of business and engineering. In relation to student accommodation and student services, the institute considers that it is hampered by not being able to borrow.

Next steps

The HEA intends to circulate a minute of the meeting in late October. HEIs will have the opportunity to respond on matters of factual accuracy or clarification prior to the publication of the full suite of documents. It is expected that the aggregated outcomes from the sessions will inform the publication of a system level performance report in 2018.

Summary/ Outcomes

The outcome presented below is based on the key inputs of this process i.e.:

- the institutional self-evaluation;

- the review by HEA, and external experts;
- the strategic dialogue meeting between HEI senior management, the HEA, and external experts.

DIT submitted an analytical and probing self-evaluation report demonstrating good progress in monitoring and implementing compact objectives.

DIT is to be commended on its management of the significant change process that is underway in the institute. It is clear that the institute is engaged in extensive restructuring, both in terms of physical relocation and merger with two other institutes. DIT has taken a logical approach to both the merger and the relocation, demonstrating a sound approach to risk management. However, the institute is invited to consider its process of prioritisation of objectives, with the alignment of institutional capacities, particularly given the demanding nature of both the relocation and TU processes.

DIT has articulated clearly, its practice-based approach to the formation of doctoral graduates and its strong connections to industry. It has set out ambitious targets in respect of growing PhD numbers – both in terms of the immediate 4% target as part of the TU criteria, and the longer term 7% target. There has been considerable growth already in these enrolments, though not to the original compact goals. The institute may need to give further thought on how this will be delivered.

The institute is addressing challenges and is making progress, with strong activity in knowledge exchange and industry links. The institute has also improved its reporting and performance since the initiation of the compact process and can continue to improve on the presentation of a clear and concise narrative. DIT is asked to consider how it continues to be active in setting aims, standards and targets with the goal of constant self-learning.