

Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
Strategic Dialogue – Bilateral Session
Friday 8th September 2017
14.00 – 16.30

IADT Attendees

Dr Annie Doona, President
Dr Andrew Power, Registrar and Vice President for Equality and Diversity
Dr Josephine Browne, Head of Faculty of Enterprise and Humanities
Ms Jessica Fuller, Head of Creative Engagement
Mr Bernard Mullarkey, Secretary and Financial Controller
Mr David Smith, Head of Faculty of Film Art and Creative Technologies

HEA

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

External

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

Context

IADT has performed strongly against its compact targets throughout the duration of the current compact. This progress was underpinned by constructive internal self-evaluation and benchmarking. The institute has a clearly identified niche provision which complements the diversity of provision in the Irish higher education system.

Introduction

The HEA opened by welcoming the IADT 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.

IADT noted it was satisfied with initial HEA feedback from this round of dialogue. The report clearly identified the niche provision of the institute and how it is trying to differentiate its offering from other institutions. IADT particularly welcomed the opportunity to discuss the feedback on its international and research strategies particularly the description of its research as artistic creative based. The institute acknowledged the current configuration of the Dublin I cluster is difficult for it.

Research / Future Direction of the Institute

IADT described its research provision as falling under the common definition of research (i.e. academic staff publish papers, speak at conferences and undertake research projects) but its research profile also encompasses applied research based on staff engaging with industry. For example, IADT staff are involved with producing the Late Late Toy show which involves a high degree of background research underpinned by the institute's engagement with RTE. IADT emphasised it is easier to categorise and define scholarly research but it's difficult to define some aspects of research undertaken in the creative arts and this is negatively impacting on its ability to apply for and secure research funding. Creative arts researchers need to be mobile, build relationships and have a good grasp of the language and learnings which inform practice in order to be successful in drawing down funding. The institute was recently a successful production partner at the prestigious Venice Biennale and plans to use the learnings from this experience to develop a strategy for underpinning future projects.

IADT clarified its plans to continue to enhance the research culture across the institute and emphasised it will support the research interests of its academic staff but that they must be aligned with the vision of the institute. Once interest and priorities are identified, IADT builds supports and mechanisms to support this research. The institute tries to identify the opportunities it may have over a three year period and align its expertise and capacity to meet this ambition. Furthermore, IADT continuously surveys staff to establish the relationships they have developed with both industry and other institutions. The institute currently has established links with institutions in countries such as the UK, Germany and Canada on the creative arts side and is partnering with a North American institute to develop its Business School.

IADT acknowledged its current PhD provision is comparatively small but the institute wants to consolidate its NMQ Level 9 offerings before it seeks to develop its Level 10 provision. The institute has delegated authority up to Level 9 but through its embedded links with TCD and UCD, some of the institute's staff co-supervise PhD candidates.

IADT currently has c.100 staff members who are research active; some of these are very experienced and well renowned while others are undertaking smaller research projects predominately underpinned by innovation vouchers. As per the compact self-evaluation, IADT wants to foster a research culture across the institution. It has identified three activity pillars for all academic staff: practice of design; teaching and learning; and research. IADT has also identified 30-50 projects it wants to facilitate, however, this will require the 'buying out' of teaching hours and additional funding and supports to assist with the administrative elements of these projects.

IADT outlined that its faculty has evolved over time and that the institute is moving away from the traditional art & design portfolio. IADT is currently reviewing other internationally recognised institutions to both benchmark performance and establish if there are other successful models which would be appropriate to IADT's provision matrix. For example, the institute is looking at Goldsmiths University of London which has a similar profile of delivering creative arts and business programmes.

Overall, the ambition of the institute is to develop its international recognition. The institute has a well-established film school but it acknowledges it needs to promote its visibility more.

Cluster

The HEA acknowledged the current Dublin I cluster configuration may not be functioning as initially imagined; on this basis, IADT was invited to set out where it fits in the current system. IADT stated that Ireland doesn't have any thematic clusters but it does have thematic institutions. The institute emphasised it still wants to be aligned to a cluster but due to its niche provision and collaboration with other institutions within the Dublin region, it would be better aligned to a Creative Arts cluster. From a future perspective, IADT clarified it did not wish to pursue TU designation as it felt it might lose some of the value of its current creative industries engagement.

Creative Arts Review

The HEA clarified the report of the Creative Arts Review is due before the Board shortly with some proposed recommendations for consideration. The institute stated it has engaged with the process since the McCarthy report but now requires direction and legislation from the Department if it is to progress such matters. For example, IADT sees itself as being complementary in provision with NCAD and is open to the possibility of closer cooperation. As per the compact self-evaluation, the institute proposed the state could take a bold approach and establish a federated model under the umbrella of the Dublin Creative Arts Institution involving IADT and NCAD.

Internationalisation

IADT outlined that for it, the definition of 'internationalisation' incorporates a number of different elements; it doesn't just mean recruiting more students but includes visiting academics and the relationships that can be leveraged through peer review. As per the compact self-evaluation, the institute's strong focus and allocation of additional resources in the area have led to growth in a number international partnerships particularly a significant partnership with George Brown College to deliver a collaborative Masters programme. IADT stated that it needs to continue to build its international brand and reputation if it is to attract students to the institution, but that it is working from a low base (40-50 students). The institution is aiming to be more proactive than reactive in developing an international strategy, however, the lack of physical capacity available to the institution is challenging. If the IADT had additional funding and capacity it could enrol more international students.

Benchmarking

IADT explained that benchmarking a bespoke institution is a complex process. The institute does incorporate external peer reviews and does compare elements such as retention rates and graduate survey results with other institutions but has struggled to benchmark itself appropriately against institutions it has links with. IADT does undertake internal programmatic reviews and individual departments are accountable for the performance of their programmes, and the institute is continuing to develop its external benchmarks.

Campus Developments

Due to the limited physical capacity of the institute, IADT confirmed it is has reached a crossroads of considering closing some programmes where demand has dwindled so as to be able to meet the additional demand on other programmes. For example, IADT's animation programme is oversubscribed and there is a large market demand for these graduates. The institute has engaged with other institutions to try and deliver this programme to meet the additional demand but it hasn't been fully successful. A decision needs to be made that if the government wants the sector to meet student and industry demand then it needs to invest in additional capital and possibly develop centres

of excellence. IADT stated it does partner with industry in the provision of specialised equipment to assist, where possible, with programme delivery but the current restrictive human resource policies need to be addressed.

Next steps

The HEA intends to circulate a minute of the meeting in mid to 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.

IADT has a clear and distinct provision in the Irish higher education landscape. The continuing evolution of its provision: moving on from a traditional creative arts institution to expand its humanities and other provision will be an interesting development.

The HEA notes the institute's commitment to further the creative arts in education and welcomed its willingness to engage with partners in this regard.

The engagement in benchmarking is a positive development and IADT should continue to embed this process across the institution and be mindful to consider both national and international peers to measure performance. This level of benchmarking would greatly assist the institute with building its international brand and reputation.

IADT highlights that due to physical capacity constraints, it is not in a position to meet the demand for some of its programmes. IADT is asked to consider whether adopting the apprenticeship model to assist with meeting this demand and this type of provision would reduce the burden on the campus.