Institute of Technology, Tralee
Strategic Dialogue Cycle 4 Reflections on Performance

Self-evaluation report – institution overview

IT Tralee has sought to use the compact process and engagements in a developmental way, and to enhance their capacity and strategic approach. The institute has struggled financially on foot of the economic downturn but is working to address this. The institute is engaged with CIT in a merger process for TU designation, and, despite some IR issues, and delays arising from national legislation, has sought to engage positively and to progress that process. IT Tralee is therefore to be commended on its management of the significant change process that is underway in the institute. The institute has engaged in sincere self-reflection over the compact period and has undertaken to reflect the feedback it has received in subsequent iterations of the process, particularly in the greater use of benchmarking, higher level strategic focus and the setting of stretch targets.

Institution overview:

A cycle 4 self-evaluation report has been received from Institute of Technology, Tralee.

All sections of the report have been completed and reports progress on the 2016 objectives as set out in the published compact.

The report also contained 5 appendices:

- uMultirank - Results of Institutional Ranking 2017 (IT Tralee)
- Star Pupil Summary
- Enhance supports of Students with Disability, Student with Learning Difference and Pathfinder Students
- Staff Research Publication Outputs
- Employment Creation TRADEIT – readytopub
- Sample of Enterprise Monthly Brochure
- Final Cantillon Programme

Institutional data was also supplied in PDF format.

Self-evaluation report - domain level reviews

1. Regional clusters:

Initial commentary:

As in the 2016 self-evaluation, Institute of Technology, Tralee, University College Cork and Cork Institute of Technology have provided a collaborative response to the cluster objectives, of which there are three.

- Create a formal regional cluster between the named member institutions.

- Improve Student Pathways

- Shared Academic Planning.

The status of all three is orange, i.e. partially achieved.

The institute reiterates a shared view that the Southern Cluster is particularly complex in terms of both its geographic span and its institutional composition (with two sets of IOTs working towards merger and TU designation (CIT/IT Tralee & Carlow/Waterford).

All institutions have also recently been re/appointing presidents, which they claim drew focus away from cluster activities. Tralee and its partners also cite the Regional Skills Forum and the Regional Action Plan for Jobs as having to some degree "usurped the goals and priorities of the regional cluster" (This is a point also made by the two South-East colleges).

IT Tralee states that it is an active participant in a number of cluster initiatives such as the Regional Skills Fora and Acton Plan for Jobs. The VPRDEE is currently the chairperson of the South West Regional Skills Forum, in addition to sitting on the board of the South East Regional Skills Forum. A number of the Institute's Executive team are also members of the Action Plan for Jobs implementation committee. The Institute is an active member of the Regional Skills forum and is fully cognisant of the ambition and objectives as set out in national policy. The Institute has prioritised the delivery of programmes in a flexible and innovative manner, addressing the skills within the region. The success of this strategy is reflected in the Institutes flexible and part-time programme intake for AY17/18 which has seen a 58% increase in applications. Specific clients which IT Tralee provides bespoke programmes for: Liebherr; FEXCO; Dairymaster; Kostal, Bons Secour Hospitals; BorgWarner BERU Systems; etc.

National Policy Context:

The national policy environment around regional clusters (HEA mapping) and skills fora (DES version of clusters) is somewhat uncertain.

IT Tralee, and other cluster members note that: "All of the member institutions are fully engaged with Government-led initiatives, namely the Regional Skills Forum and the Regional Action Plan for Jobs, which involve significant collaboration with regional partners including further education and enterprise. These initiatives have, to some degree, usurped the goals and priorities of the regional cluster." (SER, 2017, p4)

Critical evaluation and feedback:

Challenges in this domain had been previously highlighted in cycle 2 and cycle 3 of the process.

The geographical span and the institutional composition seem to be the main means of performance comparison between Southern Cluster and other regional clusters in Ireland. Its composition proved challenging within the national policy environment.

IT Tralee has worked closely with CIT and UCC on the regional cluster domain, which is reflected on the answer to the specific domain across the three institutions. A strong engagement with the Regional Skills Forum and the Regional Action Plan for Jobs has been reported by all the three institutions in their compact.

The self-evaluation under the regional cluster domain reflects the ongoing commitment to the cluster and the collaboration activities. However, it is important to note that the institutions would welcome the opportunity to review both configuration and goals of the cluster in the context of the new national performance framework and new institutional compacts.

2. Participation, equal access and lifelong learning:

Initial commentary:

There are five objectives in this section, all with status green, i.e. fully achieved.

Commentary of objectives and targets:

Increase the progression of students with disabilities who successfully complete the first year of their programme of study

The 62% target is the % of SWD progressing from year 1 to year 2 of their course. Note the 30% non-progression rate is higher than the 22% institutional non-progression rate (2013-14 figures) (HEA, 2017, p50 [Progression study]). There are clearly challenges in the retention rates of this cohort. Nevertheless, IT Tralee are to be commended for reaching their target under this objective.

To increase the participation rate of mature students entering full-time undergraduate programmes of study at the Institute.

The 2016 target was set at 26%. The 2016 mature new entrant rate was 16%, as per the IT Tralee SRS. While the institution acknowledges, this target has not been realised, it codes this objective Green, citing the external environment as a mitigating factor. Given that the regional and national figures show a gradual decline in Matures as a % of NE (to 2016/17), then we should accept this self-evaluation of their progress in this area.

To increase the participation rate of students from the non-manual, semi and unskilled worker groups on full-time undergraduate programmes of study at the Institute.

This target has been exceeded (31% against the 27% target, as per IT Tralee Access Data).

To increase the participation rate of students from the Travelling Community on Institute programmes.

The target in this objective is the "national target" of 80 (as per the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019). The institutions commitment to the inclusion of the travelling community in HE is not in doubt and the HEA has commended IT Tralee as one of the few HEIs with a specific objective in this area. There is also an increase in numbers enrolling on the institutes Star Pupil traveller second-level access programme from Cycle III.

Increase the participation rate on Institute programmes of new entrants with specific sensory, physical or multiple disabilities.

Following on from the feedback received as part of Cycle 2 (where the target had not been achieved), the target was reviewed. Consequently, the performance indicator and targets have been modified and now focus on strategic initiatives targeting potential students. On this basis, the target has been achieved. Note also that students with multiple disabilities are no longer referenced in this objective as this cohort is no longer cited as a target group in the *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, 2015-2019*.

National Policy Context:

IT Tralee makes a number of references to the *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, 2015-2019* (multiple disability and national traveller participation targets).

Critical evaluation and feedback:

IT Tralee is very strong in this area and contextualises its strategy and performance in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019. This national context is a positive part of the institutional self-analysis, here and elsewhere.

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

Initial commentary:

There are five objectives in this section, all of which are at status green, i.e. fully achieved.

Increase completion and progression rates through enhanced generic and specific student supports leading to greater retention in specific categories: Students with Disability, Students with specific learning difference, Pathfinders.

In the preamble to this section, the institution states that, across the institution the retention and progression rates of their students have come "ever increasingly into focus". In the original compact, the indicator was numerical targets. Following the feedback from Cycle II, the objective now focuses on "strategic initiatives rather than on a purely numerical scale". Appendix 3 provides more details on programmes of support for the three target cohorts.

Development of postgraduate qualifications profile of the Institute's Staff.

The target of 36 has almost been achieved, with 34 staff members registered on post-grad study, 26 of whom at PhD level.

Increase the number of students involved in civic and community engagement activity.

This target has been achieved. The institute have cited the offering of credit-bearing civic and community modules across two academic schools.

To increase the number of programmes delivered using blended learning approach.

This target has been achieved with 8 programmes and 175 students enrolled.

Increase the level of health awareness among staff and students.

As agreed during Cycle 3, the target for 2016 has been updated to incorporate key goals from 'Healthy Ireland HSE Action Plan 2013-2025'. The SER seems to be missing some information in the summary column.

National Policy Context:

It Tralee didn't seek to contextualise its performance or challenges in the context of national strategy. There is no reference to flexible, innovative and interdisciplinary skills provision, to meet the changing needs of participants, enterprise and the community as set out in the *Action Plan(s) for Jobs*; the *National Skills Strategy 2025*; and, the *National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship*. There is no commentary on the implementation of the *Transitions agenda* (the vision underpinning the portfolio of undergraduate programmes, how planned provision is aligned to institutional mission, reducing the number of entrance points into higher education). There is a specific objective on retention/progression of SWD. However, there is no reference to the most recent progression report - *A Study of Progression in Irish Higher Education 2013/14 – 2015/16* (2017) report. There is no commentary or reaction to *The Irish Survey of Student Engagement* (ISSE) Results from 2016.

Critical evaluation and feedback:

IT Tralee states that, across the retention and progression rates of their students have come "ever increasingly into focus". This is not in doubt but there is no reference to the most recent progression report - A Study of Progression in Irish Higher Education 2013/14 – 2015/16 (2017). IT Tralee has noted the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) Results from 2016 for use in future Strategic Dialogue/Compact activities.

IT Tralee has benchmarked its performance with reference to IT Tralee EU MultiRank Results as follows (SER pg. 37):

Teaching & Learning (indicators)	Score	Rank group
Bachelor graduation rate	89,85 %	1
Masters graduation rate	97,73 %	2
Graduating on time (bachelors)	91,32 %	1
Graduating on time (masters)	86,27 %	2

4. High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation:

Initial commentary:

There are six objectives in this section, all fully achieved.

Continue to grow and develop the level of research being undertaken within the Institute, ensuring that the quality and standard of research engaged in is of an international standard

The target was 70 researchers. The numbers cited as per end 2016 are 64.

Grow in the number of publications across the research community within IT Tralee.

The Research Office has records of 28 research publication outputs (conference/journals/books/book chapters) from staff in 2016. This exceeds the original target of 16, but not the revised target (as per Cycle 3) of 40. The institute acknowledge that this revised target was premature considering "the progressive growth in publications over the course of this compact". This objective has been coded green. Amber might be more appropriate given the (revised) target has only been partially achieved.

Grow number of research projects delivered with industry.

The target of 65 research collaborations with Enterprise has been achieved.

Increase commercialisation activity within the Institutes research centres through licences, invention disclosures and patent applications.

The target of 15 commercial activities as agreed in cycle 3 (Original target 10) has been achieved: ITT has reported 25 commercialisation related activities via our TTO to Knowledge Transfer Ireland in 2016. As per the SER, "This example is one where the idea of "stretch" targets has led to boundaries being pushed and tangible success being realised".

Alignment of the postgraduate numbers to TU criteria.

This target was decreased from 70 to 55 during Cycle 3. This reduced target has not been met as of end 2016, with only 43 postgraduates registered. The institute has cited the problem in attracting fee-paying students (given the limited SUSI support for post-graduate students). The institute is pursuing a proposal for external sponsorship of postgraduate students: "A number of our partners have expressed interest and we expect to secure external funding from these partners to recruit an additional 5+ students via this funding mechanism".

Recognising that the Institute should not overly rely on exchequer funding for research the Institute will actively pursue non-Exchequer sources for investment in research with particular focus on the existing research centres.

The institute had proposed to increase the % of non-exchequer funding for research to 42%. As of end 2016, the 35% cited is short of the target. Nevertheless, the institute feels that "when the size of the Institute and associated research portfolio is considered the final 35% displays progress towards less reliance on exchequer funding over the course of

the compact."

Total Research Funding 2016 = €783K

Non-Exchequer Funding €277,190 from EU Interreg and Erasmus programmes.

National Policy Context:

There is no reference to research activity around the regional skills fora or targets as set out in *Innovation 2020* and *Enterprise 2025*. There is no cross-reference to any specific strategy changes, reviews or alignment of research activity with T&L or enterprise.

Critical evaluation and feedback:

IT Tralee has benchmarked its performance with reference to IT Tralee EU MultiRank Results as follows (SER pg. 37):

Research

Citation rate		100
Research publications (absolute numbers)	6,00	4
Research publications (size normalised)	0,00	4
External research income	18,99	3
Art related output		0
Top cited publications (% of total publications)	%	100
Interdisciplinary publications (% of total publications)	%	100
Post-doc positions	1,20 %	4
Strategic research partnerships	1.361,00	1
Professional publications	204,20	3

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

Initial commentary:

There are five objectives in this section, all have been given status green, i.e. fully achieved:

Employment Creation.

There are three targets under this objective, which in total would have created 12 employment positions. 18 Positions in total have been created across these three targets, although this is due to one of the sub-targets been exceeded (16 jobs) and thus compensating for the other two.

Regional Enterprise Collaboration.

There are two targets for this objective, both of which have been "achieved and exceeded". The targets are (1) to award 6 local innovation support schemes to a value of €2,000 each and (2) to complete 3 Enterprise Ireland Innovation Vouchers to a value of €5,000 each. However, as per the cycle III SER, there is little reference to other HEIs in the region.

IT Tralee responds that:

In this case the measurement focused on regional enterprise collaboration. In addressing this, the focus adopted was to provide detailed examples (as requested in previous cycles) to demonstrate the level of enterprise collaboration. While IT Tralee has multiple joint collaborations with partner HEIs this was not the element being assessed in this section. For information – IT Tralee works with other HEI's throughout the Cluster on defined initiatives such as TTSI3 which is led by UCC. Further to the first discussions with the HEA and their recognition of the challenges associated across the geographical spread of the Southern Cluster as defined by the HEA the Institute would appreciate clarification regarding the future operation of the Cluster.

Community Engagement

There were six targets in the compact for this objective. Only four are referred to in this SER (the two missing are "Host the DiscoverITT showcase" and Develop the Social Entrepreneurship Programme).

Interactive and Applied Learning.

The target of target 12 market research projects and 600 work-based placements has been achieved. In response to feedback from cycle III, supporting detail has been included by way of commentary and supporting data.

Alumni engagement.

The target of 800 active business alumni has been achieved.

National Policy Context:

IT Tralee made no explicit reference to flexible, innovative and interdisciplinary skills

provision, to meet the changing needs of participants, enterprise and the community as set out in the *Action Plan(s) for Jobs*; the *National Skills Strategy 2025*; and, the *National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship*. It did mention the Regional Skills Forum and the Regional Action Plan for Jobs, in its earlier cluster commentary.

IT Tralee received approval for Springboard 100 places and 50 ICT Skills Conversion under the combined Springboard+ 2016 call. As of June 2017, 59 students registered on these places.

Critical evaluation and feedback:

IT Tralee has benchmarked its performance with reference to IT Tralee EU MultiRank Results as follows (SER pg. 38):

Knowledge Transfer

Co-publications with industrial partners (% of total publications)	%	0
Income from private sources (per FTE academic staff)	3,19	4
Patents awarded (absolute numbers)	0,00	5
Patents awarded (size normalised)	0,00	5
Industry co-patents (% of total patents)		100
Spin-offs	5,04	1
Publications cited in patents	%	100
Income from continuous professional development (% of total income)	1,49 %	1
Graduate companies	12,30 %	1

Regional Engagement

	Score	Rank group
Bachelor graduates working in region	%	1
Master graduates working in region	%	1
Student internships in region	81,18 %	3
Regional joint publications (% of total publications)	%	0
Income from regional sources	0,00 %	5
Strategic research partnerships in the region	68,50%	3

6. Enhanced internationalisation:

Initial commentary:

In the introduction to this section, the institution states that "While the Institute has always maintained an active Internationalisation Strategy the Strategic Dialogue process has contributed to a more reflective approach to how we develop strategies, identify goals and set targets. Over the past year and over the duration of this compact, targets were achieved and often exceeded under the objective of "Enhanced Internationalisation".

There are four objectives in this section, all Green, i.e. fully achieved:

Grow Fee Paying [International] Student Recruitment.

The target under this objective was to increase the numbers of students, year on year, by 10%, to lead to a number of 146 Fee-paying international students by 2016. This target has been exceeded (167). It is to be noted that IT Tralee has cleared up an anomaly in the reporting of the data to support this objective. Therefore, EU-Fee paying students from outside Ireland are excluded from the numbers. Notwithstanding this downward revision, the target has been comfortably achieved.

Grow and maintain a sustainable portfolio of international student markets, thus reducing over reliance on any fee-paying market(s). This will also enhance the internationalised learning environment within ITT.

The target of 28 different nationalities (as opposed to numbers of students) joining via the international office has been achieved. In response to the cycle III feedback, the institute has outlined its activities in Hong Kong, Korea and Nigeria, while stating that further recruitment initiatives are underway in China and Malaysia.

Maintain and manage the ITT/RCSI Medical Commencement Programme.

As per cycle III, the target for students recruited on to this programme was reduced in light of the cap on clinical placements (Q – is this still applicable?). The target of 155 has been largely (or not quite) achieved. Nevertheless, the institute feels that "success in maintaining the collaborative IMCP activity and resultant revenue stream demonstrates ongoing success in this objective."

Maintain and manage the population of international students at ITT in line with the percentages of international students attending higher education in the top performing destination countries for internationalised education.

IT Tralee has a wide variety of International students *including* those studying the International Medical Commencement Programme, students on Erasmus and fee paying international students. On this basis, IT Tralee's target of 15% has been slightly exceeded. However, it would be better to have a breakdown of the total of 405 cited in the SER in order to be better able to compare with HEA metrics, which treat Erasmus students separately to International Students.

National Policy Context:

There is no reference by IT Tralee to the international strategy, *Irish Educated, Globally Connected: An international education strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020.*

Critical evaluation and feedback:

IT Tralee has benchmarked its performance with reference to IT Tralee EU MultiRank Results as follows (SER pg. 38):

International Orientation

Foreign language bachelor programs	0,00 %	5
Foreign language master programs	0,00 %	5
Student mobility	0,14 %	2
International academic staff (% of total academic staff)	%	0
International joint publications (% of total publications)	%	100
International doctorate degrees (% of total doctorate degrees)		

7. Institutional consolidation:

Initial commentary:

The single objective under this heading, namely to achieve designation as a technological university through merger with Cork Institute of Technology has not been achieved.

Both Munster Technological University (MTU) partners have given coordinated responses to this section of the SER. The responses state that both partners remain fully committed to the establishment of the Technological University via the merger of their two institutions. The respective Governing Bodies have signed a detailed integration agreement and work on programme governance, project management, project initiation and planning is ongoing. However, progress delayed by the failure to enact enabling legislation. A secondary (and related) factor is industrial action on behalf of the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI). However, the partners are confident that progress can be achieved once these issues have been addressed and believe that the merger and designation programme can be completed within 18 months of these barriers to progress being removed.

National Policy Context:

It is true that CIT and its partner are somewhat reliant on resolutions of issues around technological universities at national rather than local level.

Critical evaluation and feedback:

IT Tralee and CIT remain committed to the Institutional consolidation programme. Progress has been somewhat restricted due to external factors previously mentioned. IT Tralee and CIT should however continue to progress together where they can and be prepared to move when the opportunity arises.

8. Additional Notes:

None.