

5 December, 2014.

Dr. Brendan J Murphy,
President,
Cork Institute of Technology,
Cork

Dear President,

I refer to the plan submitted on 6th June.

The role of the HEA in Stage 3 of the process for the development of technological universities has been to manage the process on behalf of the Minister for Education and Skills. The process has now concluded and attached is the report of the expert panel which forms the decision at this stage.

The Panel have made a number of observations and recommendations in their report. These are set out in the Appendix to this letter.

These observations and recommendations constitute an essential outcome from Phase 3 of the TU process. As such, further development of a technological university is dependent on their implementation by the consortium. The HEA sees these observations and recommendations as creating a very significant challenge for the consortium as it aims to achieve the criteria for a technological university and merger of the institutes. They will be matters to be specifically reviewed at Stage 4 of the process.

I would also like you to note that any expectation that might be taken from the panel report that additional finance will be given to the consortium to enable it proceed, needs to be tempered against the backdrop of likely available public finances and higher education funding policies. You should also be aware that, in relation to the issue of the expertise/qualifications of staff who can be considered professionally equivalent to PhD level, the HEA plans to consider this further and set out the appropriate requirements for applicant institutions.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge that both institutes have invested a lot of time, resources and energy into developing your plan. The shared agenda of all concerned is that any technological university created meets the highest quality standards.

Yours sincerely

Tom Boland,
Chief Executive.

Recommendations for follow-up

Mission and Vision

In relation to the articulation of mission and vision in the plan the consortium should have regard to –

- the features that would distinguish MTU from other institutions and how the MTU would contribute to the diversity of the landscape of Irish higher education and demonstrate value to the Irish higher education system,
- the range of challenges that will arise from the merger of the two institutions into a TU structure, and
- the effects of TU designation on participation, demand, future offerings and relationship with industry.

Staffing profile

In relation to the staffing profile outlined, the consortium should have regard to –

- the proportion of staff who can demonstrate a sustained level of research activity, and the proportion of staff who can provide appropriate supervision of PhD students, in addition to
- the proportion of staff holding level 10 qualifications or the professional equivalent.

Academic structure

In relation to the proposed academic structure the consortium should have regard to –

- the risks associated with the proposed academic management structure,
- how academic offerings will be rationalised under the proposed academic management structure in accordance with the promotion of a high quality student experience, and
- the need to consider possible programme delivery approaches in the provision of joint programmes across multiple campuses, ensuring enhanced and consistent quality across a multi-campus institution.

Financial information

In relation to the financial information the consortium should have regard to –

- the need to engage and use diverse sources of research funding and non-exchequer income; and the need actively to pursue co-funding from industry and enterprise,
- the value of ongoing risk analysis of costings and future cash flow, and
- a much more robust analysis of sustainability and economic impact of the proposed merger.

Student number projections

In relation to the student number projections the consortium should have regard to –

- the importance of stress testing on student number projections,
- the resource implications of increased research student number recruitment,
- the importance of carrying out a sensitivity analysis of student numbers and student types for the next three to five years, and
- the need to take account of the impact of regional demographic change, and to test assumptions about the participation rate in the merged institution.

.../...

HR/IR issues

In relation to HR/IR issues the consortium should have regard to –

- how future appointments will be made in the merged institution,
- the risk of cost increases associated with any staff upgrades which might arise from TU designation, and
- the need for ongoing effective communication and consultation with staff and students in the two institutions.

5 December, 2014.

Dr. Oliver Murphy,
President,
Institute of Technology, Tralee,
Tralee,
Co. Kerry.

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