

# St. Angela's College (STAC)

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## Strategic Dialogue Cycle 2 Bilateral Meeting 5th October 2015

The HEA welcomed St. Angela's College Sligo (STAC) to the meeting and gave an overview of the strategic dialogue process and the context in which the process operates. STAC was invited to provide an update on their institutional progress.

St. Angela's College Sligo outlined an updated and resubmitted a self-evaluation report, revised to reflect the finalised compact, rather than an earlier circulated version. The HEA noted the high number of objectives to be reported on, which are largely process driven, with small increases year on year. In addition, the HEA recognise that the plan for incorporation is the overriding and critical feature of the compact. STAC responded that they are working through the strategic dialogue process and have tried to take a streamlined and focused approach. As a small college, they are stretched to achieve all they want to within the resources they have. The approach under the first cycle was therefore quantitative in nature rather than qualitative. This is not a major concern, given that St. Angela's main strategic goal of merger with NUI Galway is progressing well and is understandably resource intensive. STAC responded that they expect that their approach to strategy setting and review will change and deepen once the NUIG consolidation is achieved.

The self-evaluation report notes outstanding issues highlighted in Appendix E in relation to consolidation with NUIG, for example, preparations to enable STAC students to register as NUIG students in September 2016 is underway, but it is noted that significant MIS and ICT investment is needed for system alignment. STAC note that the process is still on track for 2016 for their programme provision to be incorporated within a joint School of Nursing and within a joint School of Education and Home Economics at NUIG, with a centre of excellence for Home Economics based on the Sligo campus. There will be significant costs associated with MIS, broadband connectivity and ICT infrastructure of the order of €1M; a serious funding issue that needs to be addressed. In addition, CAO matters are being progressed.

Discussions on the academic contract with TUI are on-going and have yet to be finalised. This will need to be resolved before merger. The matter will be referred to the LRC if the negotiations fail to resolve this issue. The main issue relates to summer leave. St Angela's position is that Academic staff are entitled to six weeks annual leave during the summer period and short breaks at Christmas and Easter.

In terms of property, STAC is currently accommodated under a 999 year lease from the Ursuline Order and there is some additional land owned by the order. NUIG's preference would be to maintain the entire package as, one.

In terms of participation, equal access and lifelong learning, the HEA noted the rather granular participation targets, based around filling HEAR/DARE/mature entry quotas. In addition, St Angela's are requesting to reduce their interim target for DARE, end 2015, to 2 students and

the final target, end 2016, to 2 students. STAC explained that they find the recruitment under such schemes to be outside of their control. That said, they maintain and promote the schemes and perhaps a more qualitative approach to this target would have been a better approach to take.

The HEA invited STAC to set out their definition of “research active” which includes those publishing, pursuing PhDs and those involved in projects or getting experience in research activity. STACs Academic staff teaching loads are significant, up to 15 hours per week. Research activity is undertaken by staff who want to be research active. STAC’s specialism relates specifically to the core academic disciplines. Research funding is reasonably small scale but they have had some success under European funding rounds. The MSc programme in Health Sciences sees some students registered to undertake a year of research.

The STAC Research Committee provides support to staff applying for funding, and it is intended that STACs Academic staff will be members of GRC’s within NUI Galway going forward. While HEIs may adopt their own local definitions of “research active”, the HEA would encourage more specificity and alignment across the sector.

The HEA queried how quality can be sustained in a time of expansion. STAC responded that they have increased undergraduate numbers but have sought to maintain quality. In large part this involves the ability to retain the staff with the right academic expertise to deliver on their programmes. They have also looked for synergies across programmes where possible too. A five year BA/PME in Home Economics (BA Four year, Level 8 and a PME (One Year, Level 9) has been agreed with the Teaching Council. Student demand, as an indicator of quality, remains strong despite the fifth year being self-funded, at a rate of €4,500 for the final year. Programmes are reviewed regularly so as to ensure that they remain responsive to changing market needs.

On the subject of internationalisation, as outlined in the strategic dialogue meeting in February 2015, the institute is constrained in offering teacher training placements abroad in terms of compliance with the Irish curriculum. STAC has pursued a one year top-up degree for Indian nurses. In addition, they have developed an MEd online in Home Economics. STAC intends to further develop their internationalisation targets with NUI Galway.

The College has a long standing positive working relationship with NUI Galway. An area of possible future development relates to English language programme provision. The requirement to have 6.5 IELTS on entry is posing a challenge for International student recruitment.

STAC was invited to discuss engagement-related activities. Quite a lot is happening in terms of engaging with second level schools- a wide range of access school programmes are in place including those with links to schools, ETBs etc. within a 20 mile radius of the institution. A number of initiatives are hosted at STAC including oral Irish classes, biology practicals, summer camps, and a Junior Certificate competition for student self-improvement initiatives. They are working with IT Sligo too where they have secured a research bursary for a project in Home Economics research. IT Sligo also offer access to sports facilities for STAC students and there is wider engagement with IT Sligo on online and distance provision. Finally, gender

balance is impacted by the nature of the academic provision at the College and this is a historically issue.

Appendix

Members of the Senior Management Team and HEA Executive, along with an External Advisor, met with the institutional representatives as set out below. The meeting was chaired by HEA Chief Executive, Tom Boland. A process auditor was also present at the meeting.

**STAC representatives**

Dr Anne Taheny, President

Mr Declan Courell, Registrar

Dr Maria Gallo, Development Manager, NUI Galway Partnership

Ms. Nicola Finlay, Human Resource Manager