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# Trinity College Dublin

## Strategic Dialogue Cycle 4 Reflections on Performance

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### Self-evaluation report – institution overview

A cycle 4 self-evaluation report has been received from TCD.

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

Of the 24 objectives that are reported on, 16 of these are indicated to be green (target achieved). Just 6 KPIs are reported as yellow (partially complete, on track) and two as red (not complete, not being actioned).

In the overview of institutional progress, TCD sets the wider context for developments in the university and also enhances the updates provided in the main report. TCD notes that while its aim is to ensure that it maintains its status as a leading international research-led university it is also seeking to incorporate national priority goals around access; teaching and learning; research and innovation; regional engagement and internationalisation.

In the overview, TCD has also welcomed the Cassells Report while noting that they see the main issue facing the sector as one of sustainability, with uncertainty in the longer term being an obstacle to meaningful future planning. TCD state that, given our national demographics and published projected growth in third level, “there is an urgent need to identify a funding model that will provide for sustainable, targeted, growth in student numbers in a manner that does not simply reward opportunistic, short-term increases in the undergraduate student population, but works toward an agreed vision of a sustained, differentiated sector”. Furthermore, TCD states that the key to this is an “agreed base price per student” and that TCD “strongly supports” a cap on fully-funded numbers, with options for accommodating demand outside of the (proposed) cap.

From the overview, the following is noted and commended-

TCD has:

- been invited to join the League of European Research Universities (LERU) which involves 23 universities
- been invited, as the first university outside of the USA, to join the Consortium of Advanced Studies Abroad (CASA) which is a consortium of nine universities facilitating international mobility
- developed relationships with Higher Education Institutions in Singapore, India, USA, Vietnam, and Korea. Closer to home, ties with Royal Irish Academy, Marino Institute of Education (MIE) and Carlow College have deepened
- signed an Memorandum Of Understanding with Intel, which includes secondment of TCD researchers to Intel
- developed a Trinity Employability Award to support increased awareness of the Trinity Graduate Attributes initiative

- worked with University of California, San Francisco to philanthropically fund the Global Brain Health Institute (GHBI), with plans to train 600 people over 15 years in areas of dementia and wider health care practices.
- Supported three companies (along with UCD) through the Bridge Investment Fund
- Been ranked number one in Europe (Pitchbook Universities Report 2016) for the number of undergraduate alumni who go on to establish companies backed by venture capital
- Produced 114 entrepreneurs, 106 companies and raised \$655m in investment capital between 2010-2015
- Approved a new academic structure which now includes exams by semester and new institutional-level progression regulations (replacing older programme-specific ones).

Overall, TCD have largely delivered on their strategic dialogue compact. Significant progress has been made in research and internationalisation. To take one example of the former, TCD accounts for half of Ireland's success in attracting ERC funding.

In addition they have developed, and are in the process of implementing fundamental change to their teaching and learning via the Trinity Education Project.

Where progress is clearly not evident is in relation to the regional cluster. While there has been some bi-lateral progress between TCD and its partners there is no definitive sense that as a foursome, the 'Dublin I' institutions have meaningfully engaged to advance a regional cluster.

## Self-evaluation report - domain level reviews

### 1. Regional clusters:

#### Initial commentary:

This area is the one under which the least progress has been made by TCD over the course of their compact. There are five regional cluster objectives and all five are commented upon. Two objectives are listed as achieved, two are not achieved and one is partially achieved.

In relation to those not achieved-

- one was the objective to implement the Sahlberg Report and 'set up a new collaborative institute of education'. There are three sub action targets for 2016 in this overall objective and none are fully completed.
- The other objective not met is to 'progress a more coherent system of higher education (HE) provision within the regional cluster'. TCD state that these discussions at the cluster level "have so far been inconclusive on this issue".

The creative arts collaboration objective is partially achieved.

- In general collaboration has taken place, with Lir and Royal Irish Academy of Music, however, the development of a joint Master of Arts with GradCAM has not been progressed due to 'resource limitations'.

Progress has been made in the final three objectives -

- one which promotes collaboration between TCD and MIE (which is obviously not one of the 4 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in this cluster) and
- to 'progress a more coherent system of HE within the regional cluster'. On this TCD report progress on three sub-actions, but note that in last year's update there was four sub-actions. One pertaining to "implement the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy" is not reported on in the end-2016 update. The update for this action at end-2015 was that the RPL policy had been approved by Council in May 2016.
- The other three sub-actions include Foundation course students receiving a level 6 award (to facilitate admission to other HEIs as required); TCD and UCD aligning Further Education Training (FET) admissions requirements; and to progress a Widening Participation Working Group for widening FET entry in support of TCD's objective of 25% of undergraduate entrants coming from disadvantaged cohorts by 2019.

#### Critical evaluation and feedback:

Progress on a regional cluster basis for 'Dublin I' has been slow to non-existent if one considers that progress would be defined by all four HEIs working in partnership to develop a cluster, working towards agreed goals. Unfortunately, the appetite for this appears to be lacking amongst some of the HEIs involved.

## 2. Participation, equal access and lifelong learning:

### Initial commentary:

By way of overview TCD included some additional information as well as an update on the objectives from the compact.

This includes that the Trinity Access Programme (TAP) programme is now being used as a template for Oxford University to facilitate participation of low-income students. TCD note that their Trinity Access 21 and College Awareness Week “dovetail” with the National Access Plan and that 23% of total undergraduate admissions through the CAO are via alternative routes. It is noted that Irish Research Council (IRC) funding has been provided to examine the impact of the TAP foundation course, the foundation year in Oxford and the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) scheme. These findings will be of interest to the HEA National Access Office and the wider sector. TCD might update HEA on the status of the research.

TCD state there have been 100,000 enrolments on their MOOC courses but also note that targets set for postgraduate online courses have been problematic. Therefore a review of their online strategy has been undertaken. Details of the external assessors has been provided to the HEA.

There are four objectives under this heading, three are complete and one is partially complete-

- The target to increase the proportion of non-traditional entrants is at 23% (the target was 24% but has been classified as green/complete). This also the data that was supplied in last year’s compact. It would be beneficial if TCD could clarify if it is the same data or has the outcome for 2015 and 2016 been the same
- Objective 2 was to implement the three components of the Trinity Access 21 project and scale the model to three other HEIs. TCD note that funding has been secured for a scaling up of the project and collaboration with NUIG, DIT and Education Training Boards (ETBs) in further education, with a target of intervention in 60 schools by 2020 (currently in 11 schools)
- Objective 3 was to increase participation and access through provision of flexible learning for credit and not for credit courses and modules. TCD aimed for 200 postgraduate students taking courses for credit online. The outcome was 102. Also TCD sought to have three not for credit modules run. Three have taken place, with almost 100,000 enrolments. However, no information is provided on outcomes or outputs from this.

TCD states that there are three instruments used to evaluate Trinity’s MOOCs hosted on the FutureLearn platform Post course survey – used to evaluate learner satisfaction, perceptions and suggestions for the course, Learner comments within the course – used to investigate learner perceptions during the course itself, FutureLearn engagement activity data report – used to investigate individual step types (eg video, articles) to determine learner activity.

After each course iteration, qualitative and quantitative survey results are consulted to make any changes to the course content and structure. In addition, FutureLearn data was

consulted. Some of the learnings resulted, for example, in discussion questions being amended or clarification in learning objectives or content.

Students in postgraduate programmes delivered online are invited to provide evaluation on the programmes in the same way as for postgraduate programmes taught on campus. Trinity's Quality Officer, together with other colleagues, has contributed to the QQI Flexible and Distributed Learning Working Group to develop a set of Quality Assurance Guidelines for Flexible and Distributed Learning and the university awaits the approval and publication of the Guidelines by QQI so that they can inform on our own processes.

- Objective 4 was to complete an 'Admissions Feasibility Study' (AFS), with the aim at end of 2016 to extend it to a third cohort. This has been achieved. [Note that an incorrect date appears to have been provided in relation to the date of the research findings being available]. To also note, last year's self-evaluation report referenced a review of the AFS was underway; no information is provided on the outcomes, learning and impact on the study going forward.

TCD has provided the following outcomes for the Admissions Feasibility Study:

A team in CAVE (the School of Education's research centre for higher education) has been involved with research project around the study, interviewing students admitted through the new admissions route, and looking independently at how it operates, how effective it is, and the validity of the different parts. The report (18 May 2017) shows the students admitted under the new route are performing well academically and that the different aspects of the study are working as designed. From this perspective, there is potential in this alternative system of admissions. The challenges lie in scaling the project to involve more students, and exploring ways of upscaling and hence mainstreaming the system are currently being explored.)

#### National Policy Context:

As noted above, TCD feel the policies they have actioned dovetail with the objectives of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, 2015-2019.

#### Critical evaluation and feedback:

TCD's achievements regarding 23% of their undergraduate enrolments coming from alternative routes is notable. In addition, this section of the report would benefit from both national and international benchmarking to put their progress in further context. Finally, TCD has significant and well established links across the inner city with second level schools and some additional information on this outreach work would also be welcome.

TCD has updated with the following breakdown:

	<b>2015/16 UG New Entrants</b>	<b>2016/17 UG New Entrants</b>
<b>Total CAO entrants</b>	2,838	2,855

<b>Socio-economically disadvantaged</b>	256	230
<b>Mature students</b>	188	191
<b>Students with a disability</b>	221	225
<b><i>Non-traditional entrants total</i></b>	<b>665</b>	<b>646</b>
<b>As % of CAO entrants</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>23%</b>

As mentioned above, the findings of the IRC funded research will be of interest to HEA's national access office and others in the sector. For example, will the research inform wider discussion or reviews of the HEAR scheme nationally - this may be the intention but is not made clear in this update.

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

#### Initial commentary:

During the period of the compact TCD began implementing the Trinity Education Project. TCD state that it will have a 'transformative impact' on the undergraduate curriculum, academic and administrative staff and systems, and changes for students which they have sought.

TCD outlines a full review of the undergraduate evaluation process to address student concerns and note that the review fed into the development of a Student Partnership Agreement to facilitate a 'student as partners' engagement model.

In addition, TCD is taking further steps to improve the use of learning technologies by staff and students, with a new policy nearing approval. The policy will define a minimum standard for all modules.

Finally, TCD note that there was a strategic review of the Careers Advisory Service (Oct 2015), with a consequent renewed focus on employability of graduates and the opportunities for placements/internships as part of the undergraduate curriculum.

There are five objectives in this section, with four completed and one partially completed-

- Quality reviews of the development of structures to implement review outcomes. Examples provided include four distinct entry routes for science to replace the general entry route (based on an external review). The outcomes from the Business Economic Social Studies review are being worked through
- To embed student evaluation at module and programme level. The update for end-2016 is that 94% of undergraduate modules and 96% of postgraduate taught programmes were evaluated. Both were at 90% last year. Irish survey Student Engagement responses were 22.8%, down slightly on the previous year's 23.2% response rate
- TCD plan to provide opportunities for undergraduate students to undertake modules in innovation and entrepreneurship, and to design an optional certificate in these disciplines. A Level 7 cert has been developed and will be delivered in 2017/18
- In terms of increasing effective learning technologies (termed VLE) 55% of modules have VLE activity (from a target of 60%). In addition 249 academic staff have participated in professional development in increasing digital capacity (target of 120)
- TCD sought to increase provision of professional development in academic practice and created three modules for a Special Purpose Certificate. To date 8 have graduated with 29 others having completed two modules. In addition, there was a Research Supervisor Development Programme (joint exercise between TCD and UCD) which has been evaluated with good feedback from participants in both universities.

National Policy Context:

No reference to national policy made, however, the Student Partnership Agreement dovetails very well with the HEA-QQI-USI led National Student Engagement Project (NStEP). It should be noted that TCD does not actually participate in the NStEP programme, and are instead implementing their own student engagement processes. TCD and the NStEP co-ordinator are due to meet soon to discuss synergies and sharing of good practice.

Critical evaluation and feedback:

As mentioned last year, it clear that the TEP is a priority for TCD with significant time and other resources assigned for successful delivery. HEA should be kept up-to-date on further developments.

In terms of general progress, TCD has delivered on four of the five targets and is well on the way to completing the fifth.

In relation to the careers services review and the renewed focus on employability and the opportunities for placements/internships as part of the undergraduate curriculum, it would be informative to hear more about what the review process involved. Was it an internal only process or was the review done only; were industry partners engaged in the review to formulate the focus on employability; has the process for curriculum review changed; is there a (new) role for industry in this process; will the work placements be a credit-bearing part of the course; how will it work for H&SS courses.

TCD clarified that the review of the Careers Advisory Service was conducted by external experts: William Dávila, Associate Professor, IE Madrid and Consultant, StudyPortals(Netherlands); Elspeth Farrar, Director Careers Service, Imperial College London; Bob Gilworth, Director of College Services, The Careers Group, University of London; Amber Wigmore Alvarez, Executive Director Career Services, IE Madrid. The reviewers met a range of stakeholders including students and representative employers.

The certificate in innovation and entrepreneurship is a welcome development in the context of national policy arising from H2020 and the National Skills Strategy. It also fits well with TCD's strategic career services review and the focus on employability of graduates.



## 4. High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation:

### Initial commentary:

TCD notes, as per HEA comment last year, that they will provide a wider set of information in the next iteration of the Compact on research developments and outcomes to better capture developments in this area.

For this reporting cycle, TCD have provided a number of additional non-compact updates, some of which are that the university was 1<sup>st</sup> in Ireland and 29<sup>th</sup> in Europe for granted research projects under H2020; TCD accounts for 50% of national European Research Council grants; and TCD was awarded three basic research grants from the US Government.

There are four objectives in this domain, two of which are complete and two partially complete-

- In terms of percentage of non-exchequer research income TCD reports 32% from a target of 36%.
- Percentage of research active staff is 82% (target of 85%) with a note that emphasis is focussed on quality over quantity – reported as complete.
- Research impact (citations per paper) are reported as 1.84 (exceeding target of 1.78).
- Percentage of TCD research papers on ‘Open Access’, is 46% (target of 60%).

### National Policy Context:

No specific references to national policy strategies but metrics are reported above in relation to H2020.

Would be useful, in future iterations, that as TCD report more widely on research and innovation developments, that the updates are referenced to national policy priorities in this domain, where feasible.

### Critical evaluation and feedback:

As mentioned in last year’s analysis and subsequently acknowledged by TCD, in the future iteration of compacts, TCD should supplement their metrics / quantitative targets with more expansive information that sets out developments in this area and progress nationally and internationally.

In addition, more emphasis and use of national and, in particular, international benchmarking would be welcomed in this domain (and others).

TCD’s success should be commended and their success in ERC grants and H2020 is impressive.

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

### Initial commentary:

TCD provide an overview of wider developments in this domain and related to implementation of TCD's industry engagement strategy. TCD report a 75% increase in individual engagements and a "clear improvement in the quality and diversity of engagement" noting higher revenues per engagement, repeat contracts and long term agreements. The performance of their research centres AMBER, ADAPT, and CONNECT are noted in this success.

More generally, TCD state they have almost doubled their enabling capacity for start-up companies since 2010/11. TCD also note two KTI awards for 2016. Of particular note is the work of the multi-university research programme ENABLE, led by TCD, which will focus on challenges related to smart cities, communities, transport services, reducing pollution and improving the workplace. ENABLE has 25 industry partners who committed €3.5m funding which was matched by €8m SFI funding. HEA would welcome continued updates on this work via the next Compact.

Three objectives are included in this domain, two of which are complete with one partially complete.

- 170 contracts with industry are reported (target of 125)
- 79 start-up companies enabled by TCD (target of 58)
- 13 patent applications (target of 20).

### National Policy Context:

The self-evaluation would have benefitted from reference to the wider national policy context, in particular how the institute is engaging with the Action Plan for Jobs and the National Skills Strategy.

### Critical evaluation and feedback:

TCD significantly overachieved on two of the three metric targets. In light of the more general overview and progress reported in this area, TCD is requested to broaden the objectives, to include qualitative information, in the next iteration of the Compact.

It is noted that there is no reference to engagement with the Dublin Regional Skills Fora. TCD might comment on their engagement thus far with the Fora as they have been set up by the Department to specifically provide a formal link between education and enterprise.

The level of contracts with industry and the number of start-ups is very impressive, however this could be enhanced by meaningful benchmarking with national and international peers. While the figures are high it is difficult to put the outputs in context without appropriate benchmarking being included.

## 6. Enhanced internationalisation:

### Initial commentary:

By way of overview of the past four years, TCD note “significant achievements” in international student recruitment, stating that their growth in diversifying the student body is comparable to the highest risers in the UK.

Specifically TCD report:

- 26% of students being non-Irish in 2016/17 (note HEA statistics below)
- 13% from Non-EU countries in 2016/17 (note HEA statistics below)
- Increase from 260 to 613 in outward student mobility (note HEA statistics below)
- TCD ranking for International Outlook has been rising in recent years
- TCD has been shortlisted for a European Association for International Education award for innovation in internationalisation.

There are three objectives in this domain, all three complete:

- To increase the number of inward Non-EU students. Outcome of 2,286 (target was 2,219). Note that 2016/17 HEA figures show 1,806 non-EU students.
- To increase outward staff and student mobility. Outcome of 613 (target of 450)
- To maintain measure of international research collaborations by co-authorship of TCD research papers. Achieved 55% (target was 55%).

### National Policy Context:

The self-evaluation would have benefitted from reference to the wider national policy context, in particular how the institute is engaging with the Department of Education and Skills ‘An International Education Strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020.

### Critical evaluation and feedback:

TCD has significantly surpassed two targets in this domain and met the other target.

As per above TCD provide the following three updates

- 26% of students being Non-Irish in 2016/17
- 13% from Non-EU countries in 2016/17
- Increase from 260 to 436 in outward student mobility

The available HEA data (2016/17) is as follows and the HEA would welcome a reconciliation of the HEA and TCD figures.

- 19% of TCD students are international (based on domiciliary of origin).
- HEA data for 2016/17 is 12% from non-EU countries (roughly in line with TCD data).

- HEA data for 2016/17 states there are 436 outward mobile students. Are there categorisation issues here.

TCD has provided the following reconciliation:

<b>Cohort</b>	<b>Trinity Data</b>	<b>HEA Data</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Non-Irish	26%	19%	Trinity return based on nationality; HEA based on domiciliary of origin
Non-EU	13%	12%	
Outward mobility	613	436	This original return is an error and should be changed to 436 before publication