

18<sup>th</sup> October, 2019 - The Minister for Education and Skills Joe McHugh T.D. and Minister of State with responsibility for Higher Education, Mary Mitchell O'Connor T.D. today (18 October 2019) announced funding of €14.25 million to higher education institutions.

The €14.25m fund was allocated under the Higher Education Authority 2019 call for submissions for higher education landscape restructuring, consolidation and collaborative projects.

The majority of the government investment, €11.8m, is geared to progress the creation and expansion of technological universities. The remaining funding of €2.45m is aimed at other collaborative projects in line with the objectives of Project Ireland 2040 and initial teacher education policy.

Minister Mitchell O'Connor said: "Once more in accordance with established government policy in relation to the higher education landscape, the bulk of funding this year is going towards technological university development. In this context I am allocating a total of €11.8 million to TU Dublin, the 3 existing TU development consortia and also for the first time to a newly proposed TU consortium formed by Athlone IT and Limerick IT, which is an exciting new development."

Minister Mitchell O'Connor said: "I am delighted that Athlone Institute of Technology and Limerick Institute of Technology have decided to come together as a technological university consortium. This merging of their respective strengths and attributes will be transformative for the Midlands and Midwest regions, for their communities, regional economies and will provide new and exciting pathways to higher education for students."

Minister McHugh said: "We all want to see institutes of technology and further education colleges deepen linkages and expand options for students to provide the skills they need for a changing world. In particular, as a proud Donegal man, I am pleased to see the deepening of the connections within the Connacht Ulster Alliance between Letterkenny IT, GMIT and IT Sligo as they work towards their goal of establishing a technological university, as well as the strengthening of cross border links in the North-West. This funding package will be significant for these third level institutions to develop and align courses, push on in the field of research and ultimately progress to technological university status."

Minister McHugh added: "I will be bringing the leadership of LYIT, GMIT and IT Sligo together to see how we can further support their ambitions as the Connacht Ulster Alliance moves towards creating a technological university. I am also pleased to see the ongoing efforts to strengthen cross-border higher and further education and training links in the North West."

Minister Mitchell O'Connor explained, "The emergence of the technological university sector is the single most important development in the higher education landscape of recent years and a very significant element of the national research agenda. The technological universities are pivotal in assisting in the delivery of national strategic priorities as outlined in Project Ireland 2040. These priorities relate to wider higher education access, the provision of research-informed teaching and learning, to increasing regional development and socio-economic progress. Technological Universities are anchors in their communities, acting as a catalyst for local and regional economies as employers, and also as incubators for industry and technology.

Minister Mitchell O'Connor stated: "With these landscape allocations government will to date have provided some €38 million in Exchequer co-funding to those institutes of technology seeking to develop proposals leading to designation as technological universities and to other important higher education landscape projects in furtherance of national strategic priorities.

“Earlier this week as part of Budget 2020, I also announced an effective trebling of funding dedicated to TU development and progression of €90 million over the period 2020 – 2022. In total this will provide funding for TUs of over €120 million. This is a testament to the significant contribution which we know TUs can make to advancing regional development and socio-economic progress.”

She went on to say: “These are all very important and worthwhile projects fully in accordance with the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 and which reflect the changing national and supranational landscape of today. TU development and cross-border strategic alliance building, will help us respond to diverse regional and sectoral issues and impacts, including the challenge Brexit presents to us.”

The funding allocations will be disbursed by the Higher Education Authority subject to requisite conditionality on a case by case project basis and will be subject to ongoing monitoring, reporting and evaluation by the Authority in line with stipulated timelines and milestones.

### **Notes for Editors**

The majority of funding in 2019 is directed at TU development and progression. However, landscape funding has also been allocated to a number of non-TU related proposals including two North-South cross border strategic alliance building projects, one by Letterkenny IT in the North-West and another by Dundalk IT in the North-East and both of which are in keeping with the objectives of Project Ireland 2040 and the National Development Plan.

Funding has also gone to the ongoing process which will see completion of St. Angela’s College Sligo incorporation into NUI Galway in the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) area as well as another ITE and regional clustering project involving the Shannon Consortium of University Limerick, Limerick IT and Mary Immaculate College and, finally, to a collaborative consolidation project between IT Carlow and St. Patrick’s College Carlow.

The full 2019 Higher Education landscape restructuring funding allocations are as follows:

### **2019 Funding allocations (€ million)**

<b><u>Project</u></b>	<b><u>Allocation</u></b>
<b>TU Dublin</b>	<b>3.8</b>
<b>MTU (Cork IT / IT Tralee)</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<b>TUSEI (IT Carlow / WIT)</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<b>CUA (GMIT/ IT Sligo/ Letterkenny IT)</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<b>Athlone IT / Limerick IT</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<b>Letterkenny IT</b>	<b>0.5</b>
<b>Dundalk IT</b>	<b>0.55</b>
<b>Shannon Consortium (UL /LIT /MIC)</b>	<b>0.2</b>
<b>IT Carlow/St. Patrick’s College Carlow</b>	<b>0.06</b>
<b>NUIG/St. Angela’s College Sligo</b>	<b>1.14</b>

<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b>14.25</b>
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TU Dublin was established on 1 January 2019 and is the largest Higher Education Institution in the State with over 28,000 students. TU development consortia currently include

- The **MTU** consortium comprising Cork IT and IT Tralee. Their application for TU designation was submitted in February 2019. The Minister for Education and Skills postponed the granting of the application until no later than the end of Q1 2020 subject to compliance by the consortium with specified conditions to achieve the required eligibility criteria under the Technological Universities Act 2018.
- The **TUSEI** consortium, comprising IT Carlow and Waterford IT, is developing an application which it is expected will be submitted in the coming months.
- The **Connaught Ulster Alliance** consortium, comprising Galway-Mayo IT, Letterkenny IT and IT Sligo, is in the earlier stages of developing its proposals with a view to submitting an application in the course of the 2020/21 academic year.
- **Athlone IT and Limerick IT** are to receive funding for proposals which will see the two institutions jointly forming a consortium with a view to making an application for TU designation.