

# Cork Institute of Technology (CIT)

---

## Strategic Dialogue Cycle 3: reflections on performance

### Overview

Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) has provided a clear, concise self-evaluation report providing an update on all interim 2015 targets, as requested.

The self-evaluation report is completed in full and colour-coded. The institution has achieved most of its interim targets and provided context on areas where performance is behind trajectory. Some particular strengths of the current self-evaluation were:

- CIT provided an honest and expanded self-evaluation report including updates on all interim 2015 targets and good examples of how targets were achieved.
- The institution has shown excellent performance especially in research and innovation and engagement with enterprise and the community. Some progress was made with regard to internationalisation, an area in which CIT might explore its current activity more – in particular under the Erasmus+ programme.

The self-evaluation does raise the following issues for further discussion:

- In its self-evaluation, CIT has met or surpassed several of its targets, but only wished to revise a target upwards in the area of first-year admissions. Given its notable achievements, the Institute could increase other objectives, but has set out its rationale for not doing so. This might be discussed further.
- The Institute refers in some instances to financial constraints, but it would be useful to discuss more generally how the current financial position impacts on compact objectives and institutional ambitions.
- The Institute has proposed three areas where it wishes to see revisions to its objectives.
- The project to achieve designation as a technological university through a merger with IT Tralee has been delayed. Both IT Tralee and Cork IT state that they are still committed to the programme but it would be useful to see more on what they can progress here.

### Self-evaluation report – domain level review

#### 1. Regional clusters

IT Tralee and Cork IT provided a collaborative response to the clustering objectives, and despite some delays progress has been made under the three objectives set by the cluster. Two of the three objectives are reported amber and one green. Some notable progress includes:

- Joint projects which have engagement of all cluster members are contributing to the overall aim of deepening partnerships and collaborations. The example provided is of the IT Tralee-led project for Digital Supports for Transitioning International Students into the Irish Higher Education sector.
- Difficulties are reported in achieving cluster student pathway objectives; and the approach of developing focused local progression schemes with shared learning across the cluster is stated to be a more pragmatic target.

- Shared academic planning mapping process has been progressed via the regional skills for a – this is across two regional areas for the cluster, and is a wider process.
- A research mapping exercise reporting more collaboration, with results pending. It will be very interesting to see the strategy for the cluster as proposed by this exercise. Some early indications of collaborative projects are reported.
- CIT is reporting significant joint activities in enhanced technology transfer, entrepreneurship and innovation at cluster level, as well as positive regional activity, joint bids and joint successes.

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

CIT has set six objectives in the area and for 2015 it reports that its targets have been achieved in five of these. Targets to increase the number of mature students have not been met.

CIT reports being below target for mature, full-time entrants – 16 per cent target against 10 per cent achieved. However, HEA records indicate that the achieved figure is 6 per cent. The institutional profile projected to 2017/18 indicates 10 per cent. CIT should consider further whether it wishes to retain its target for 2016 and provide explanations for any change.

CIT has achieved its target for flexible learners, but it does not propose to adjust this target upwards at this time because the growth in this cohort of learners has slowed somewhat because of the improved economic situation nationally. The percentage reached is 25 per cent which is 3 per cent higher than its 2017/18 profile target.

- Good progress has been achieved in targets for numbers of students with disabilities. The target for 2016 has already been achieved, and CIT does not propose to revise this upwards, as it believes that further growth will be difficult without appropriate funding support.
- The number of students from under-represented (non-manual, semi-skilled and non-skilled) socio-economic backgrounds surpassed targets, but there is no plan to increase the target.
- Good progress was achieved in RPL and targets have been surpassed, but there are no plans to increase the targets or set new targets.
- Excellent progress has been made in non-standard entry pathways, and CIT is commended for surpassing its targets. CIT wishes to discuss a revised target for first-year admissions. More detail on why targets for second-year entry were not achieved would be useful.

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

CIT has set three objectives in this area, one of which was revised following discussion with the HEA in previous cycles. Although one new target was identified in the report (see below), there is no evaluation or evidence that this target has been worked upon or achieved. Cycle 3 has seen targets achieved in the areas of retention and the student experience.

- Targets for non-progression rates have significantly improved from 22 per cent in 2014 to 17 per cent in 2015. Many new initiatives have been listed as contributing to this progress, and the end target of 15 per cent appears achievable.
- CIT reframed its target for staff CPD for the compact; however, in its Cycle 2 dialogue CIT had indicated that it would consider whether this target should be reframed for future compacts in terms of outcomes. The new target is that '80 per cent of staff will have engaged with CPD in the

past five years' – this is a revision of the previous target of a 5 per cent increase in staff numbers with pedagogical qualification.

- Targets to increase the number of programmes delivered to off-campus students have not been achieved and are not expected to be achieved by end-2016. Industrial action is named as a reason. Despite the poor progress on the target, CIT believes the growth trajectory is in line and does not propose to revise targets.

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

There are five objectives set in the research and innovation area, all of which were reported as achieved by the Institute. CIT has made some notable achievements on technology transfer and its research links with industry.

- CIT reported progress against targets relating to research and innovation. More detail would be welcome, however, on how the strategy is being implemented and on the likelihood the target being achieved.
- Researcher enrolment for 2015 (4.5 per cent) appears to be lower than reported in 2014 (5 per cent), which by then was indicated as not in line with the achieving targets. CIT still reports steady progress and does not wish to modify its targets. CIT should provide further detail on why they consider the target to be achievable. CIT also reported that the alignment of researcher and postgraduate student metrics to TU criteria on the percentage of staff with level 10 qualifications is unlikely to be achieved because of the time required to graduate new staff PhDs.
- With regards the targets for enhancing the researcher environment, CIT seems to divert slightly from the compact target to establish a 60-credit programme – which will now be provided as a maximum of 30 credits and will not lead to a special purpose award. However, participation in a structured PhD will be required for all new entrants from September 2015 – with a minimum of 15 credits and a maximum of 30, which is in line with Cycle 2 objectives.
- CIT has made good progress in establishing that all new PhD entrants are on structured PhD courses with a minimum requirement of taking (i) the Research Methodology module and (ii) 10 other credits from two 5-credit elective modules. The most popular elective module has been Statistics for Researchers.
- Even though CIT has made excellent progress and surpassed its target on the number of research projects delivered with industry, it does not wish to revise the target as they believe this is a competitive environment and there might be some variances that could affect the achievement of the final target in 2016.
- There is good progress in technology transfer and exchange activity. It was noted by the team that CIT did not succeed in achieving the targeted number of patents and there was small fall-back in LOA. Nonetheless, CIT has notably achieved its targets in collaborative research agreements with companies and does not wish to revise its targets.

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

CIT succeeded in the four objectives initially set. Good examples of activities being developed in the different areas illustrated their good performance.

- Activities on the engagement with external organisations seem in line with CIT's targets for 2015. The institution is engaging positively with the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and Cork County Council, as well as the new regional skills forum.
- In relation to engagement with enterprise and community groups in graduate formation, CIT acknowledges the importance of the Extended Campus and also of REAP. CIT has achieved its goals of creating opportunities for alumni to support programmes and initiatives in graduate formation (e.g. CIT Gradfest).
- CIT has made progress on technology transfer – such as in the preparation of the Regional Action Plan for Jobs in areas relating to student entrepreneurship and start-up support. CIT's Hinks Centre for Entrepreneurship Excellence in conjunction with Start UP Ireland has recently launched the Innovation & Entrepreneurial Skills Passport.

## 6. Enhanced internationalisation

There are three objectives set in the area of internationalisation, of which one was coded red, one amber and one green. CIT proposed to revise the first target after review of the activity and reports that the lack of adequate funding affects the participation of staff and students in the international professional environment and global society.

- CIT's targets on partnerships with overseas HEIs appears to have lagged behind expectation for the second time. And despite the significant progress from last year, the Institute has reviewed the activity and wishes to revise the target.
- Staff, students and graduate targets were achieved despite the challenges that CIT highlighted. CIT is one of the leading HEIs in sending graduate students on traineeships abroad under the Erasmus+ programme. CIT's efforts in this area are notable.
- CIT seems to have included provision for students from Brazil in its targets, even though they were in CIT for only one academic year. The programme for Brazilian students is frozen at the moment, so although the numbers of Brazilian students increased for 2015/2016 they will not appear at all in CIT's figures for 2016/2017. This scenario is the same across the sector. It would be interesting to know if there any partnerships with Brazilian HEIs as a result of the Brazilian students having been on campus.
- CIT didn't comment on possible recruitment of students from other non-EU countries. In that context, it is not clear how the targets for 2016 can be met.

## 7. Institutional consolidation:

The one objective in this area has not been achieved, because of circumstances beyond the CIT's control – this is coded red.

- The project to achieve designation as a technological university through a merger with Cork IT has been significantly delayed because the required legislation has not yet been enacted. IT Tralee and Cork IT both state that they are still committed to the programme but it would be useful to see more on what they can progress here.

## Additional notes

CIT reported a deficit position of €2,393,000 for 2014/15 draft accounts and the Institute is projecting a deficit budget of €786,000 for 2016.