

Institute of Technology Carlow (ITC)

Cycle 3 Outcome

Performance funding in full will be released in respect of the 2017 budget allocation.

In assessing performance, we have relied upon the self-evaluation report submitted by your institute, the reflections on performance document prepared by the HEA, and the discussion at our recent strategic dialogue meeting. Consideration was also given to any points of clarification as provided by your institute at our meeting or in related correspondence.

The self-evaluation report, and subsequent discussion at the bilateral meeting, have shown that progress can be demonstrated across all compact domains. The institute is making progress in its use of diverse sources of data and information to enhance strategic planning, such as quality assurance, internal audit and others. The institute has also made progress in international benchmarking; it should continue to develop this with a focus on developing this benchmark beyond quantitative measurement, to include more qualitative assessment of success against particular policy objectives. The institute has made less progress than anticipated in the development of the regional cluster, although its work in the local regional skills forum is noted.

The institute is engaged in a major change project with WIT with the objective of achieving designation as a technological university. The HEA notes the evident commitment of ITC to this objective, having regard to the need for careful planning, given the complexities involved. The institute also continues to respond to increasing student demand in its catchment area.

In summary therefore, IT Carlow has demonstrated very good progress against mission-coherent objectives through an analytical and probing self-evaluation report and use of other data sources. IT Carlow should have regard to the specific institutional feedback provided in this document and in the reflections on performance document in advance of, and in preparation for, the next round of compact evaluations.

Minutes of Strategic Dialogue Cycle 3 bilateral meeting, 7 September 2016

In attendance

Members of the Senior Management Team and HEA Executive, along with two external advisers (Mr George P. Pernsteiner and Mr John Randall), met with the institutional representatives as set out below. The meeting was chaired by HEA Interim Chief Executive, Dr Anne Looney. A process auditor was also present at the meeting.

ITC representatives

- Dr Patricia Mulcahy, President
- Mr David Denieffe, Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Mr Cormac O'Toole, Vice President for Corporate Affairs
- Mr Declan Doyle, Vice President for Development & Research
- Ms Maebh Maher, Head of Faculty of Business & Humanities

The HEA welcomed IT Carlow (ITC) to the meeting and gave an overview of the strategic dialogue process and the context in which it operates. ITC was commended on its strong progress and for its self-evaluation report that provides evidence of reflection on performance and identification of issues arising. The HEA is aware that all higher education institutions are operating in a challenging financial environment, while continuing to respond to increasing student demand. The system has demonstrated that it continues to provide high-quality higher education and to respond to national priorities. The HEA made the following observations on the institute's performance:

- The institute continues to make progress against the majority of the targets set out in its compact
- The institute is closely engaged with and committed to the ongoing process for merging with WIT, with the aspiration of achieving TU status for the South East; the institute recognises the need to undertake this in a carefully planned fashion, having regard to the challenges inherent in such a complex task.
- The institute uses processes such as quality assurance and external review effectively to assist in its own strategic planning and development.
- The institute has sought to benchmark its performance against that of a range of other institutions; while this is welcome, the focus at present is only on quantitative benchmarks; the institute should seek opportunities to complement these with more qualitative and issue-specific approaches.
- While there is evidence of some progress in respect of clustering, overall the progress is more limited than was expected originally.

The institute welcomed the opportunity to engage with the HEA on the compact and its broader strategic vision. It considers that it is delivering strong performance and is well-placed to develop further. It projects that the institute will continue to grow in response to student demand, to reach a level of c. 9,000 students in the coming years. The institute would welcome enhancement of its capacity to manage this growth, by, for example, the introduction of a borrowing framework. The institute also considers that there is an opportunity to significantly enhance educational and

research provision in the region through the realisation of its plans for creating a Technological University in conjunction with WIT, and is very committed to this project.

Risk management

The institute noted that the compact was underpinned by extensive layers of risk management and assessment. The institute uses processes such as quality assurance, financial reviews, and internal and external audits to inform both strategic planning and the associated necessary risk management. This helps the institute to manage its challenges, such as the work involved in the planned merger with WIT and development towards TU status.

Regional cluster

The institute noted that there has been some good progress in respect of the cluster, and cited engagement with FE providers as an example. There is a particular focus on trying to address skills needs, and the institute has been an active participant in the local skills forum.

The wider cluster has been less successful, partly because of the geographic spread of the Southern cluster region. The institute considers that there is an opportunity to build on the work of the regional skills forum to progress the issue.

Transitions

The institute has made progress to reduce its intake points from 30 to 24, and has introduced common entry for science and business, which has been well received by students. The institute is using the programmatic review process to consider further changes. It also pointed out its role as a multi-campus institution and the complication that this creates in moving to common entry – some of the other campuses provided specific denominated entry in response to particular student demands or needs.

Research and development

The institute clarified that the PhD numbers identified in the compact do not match the official HEA figures. Whereas the compact figures reflect all students who have started a research course, the figures submitted to the HEA include only students who have undertaken certain initial work as part of their research programme. The institute is seeking to continue to grow these numbers in line with the compact objectives.

In terms of the objective for graduate school delivery, the institute has made ongoing progress over 2015, and still aims to establish a school jointly with WIT by the end of 2016.

Internationalisation and benchmarking

The institute has benchmarked its performance against five IoTs and four UK institutions, to consider such issues as the relative numbers of undergraduates and postgraduates.

HEA noted that benchmarking could be extended to a range of more specific performance measures (such as access, retention, and student experience). The HEA also noted the predominance of domestic academic external examiners (90 per cent of external academics are drawn from Ireland), and suggested that the institute consider actively internationalising in this regard. There is also an opportunity to target those international institutions from whom peers might be drawn, and to use this as an alternative form of benchmarking of quality.

In terms of internationalisation, the institute noted that it is taking a measured approach around targeted markets, and while it wishes to increase numbers, these will remain a relatively small proportion of the overall student body (around 10 per cent). The institute has identified six markets as a priority, and aims to have 400–420 international students out of an overall population of 4,000. The institute provided a range of supplementary information to address issues arising in the HEA evaluation.