

Mr Simon Harris, T.D.,
Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science,
Leeson Lane,
Dublin,
D02 TR60.

13th September 2021

RE: TUSEI Consortium Technological University Application, April 2021

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the Board of An tÚdarás, I wish to report that the Advisory Panel completed its work and submitted its report for consideration by An tÚdarás at its meeting of 7th of September 2021, as specified under Section 29 of the Technological Universities Act, 2018.

The Advisory Panel's report and recommendations are attached and the views of An tÚdarás, regarding the report and any other information that An tÚdarás considers relevant, are set out below.

The Panel has recommended that the TUSEI consortium should address and progress certain key matters in advance of designation as a Technological University under the *Technological Universities Act, 2018*. An tÚdarás supports the Advisory Panel's report and would like to make the following recommendations.

The views of An tÚdarás regarding the report:

- An tÚdarás notes and echoes the Advisory Panel's findings in respect of the application, in particular:
 - The long-term future-orientated nature of the application and the intended approach of the consortium to managing the academic, financial and administrative matters of a unitary TU, in the near term.
 - The lack of specificity in relation to the operationalisation of the application's high-level strategic and aspirational plans.
 - Due to the timing of the application, the intention to undertake the significant amount of work required to create unified and appropriate structures after the designation day.

An tÚdarás supports the recommendations of the Advisory Panel in respect of this application. Following discussion with the Chair of the Advisory Panel at the meeting of An

tÚdarás on 7th of September and in order to further progress a university for the South-East, we make the following suggestions:

- The Consortium put in place an appropriate governance and management oversight structure to address the recommendations of the Advisory Panel, to the satisfaction of tÚdarás in advance of any designation.
 - A detailed plan should now be developed to ensure sufficient governance structures in the areas of administration and services will be in place to enable the two institutes to become a unitary legal entity successfully and safely.
 - The plan should include realistic timelines and defined deliverables, and it should be explicit which services would hamper crucial operations if not ready on designation day.
- Specifically, the Consortium must:
 - Establish a proto-governing body to develop and monitor a programme of work towards TU designation and to report to An tÚdarás on progress.
 - Set out a programme of work to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place in respect of IT, HR, and Student Services at the point of designation.
 - Provide convincing evidence of an ability to function as a TU in the short to mid-term after designation.
 - Identify risks and plan for their management, in particular the protection of learners during any transition towards or to TU status.
 - Demonstrate clear transition plans where timelines for deliverables extend beyond designation day to include fall-back options to ensure critical operations can continue uninterrupted.
 - Provide for appropriate independent external expertise to assist existing staff, examine the potential for developing additional leadership capacity that can help foster greater partnership and collaboration and to prepare for a new administration and governing body, post designation.
 - Report regularly to An tÚdarás on progress.

Following careful consideration, An tÚdarás proposes that the consortium is given a period of 12 months to fully address the recommendations in terms of operational planning as specified in the Panel Report and outlined above. It is intended that An tÚdarás could support a designation date of September 2022, providing the above assurances are provided over the course of the 12 months and subject to review by An tÚdarás at that time.

An tÚdarás notes this Panel's comments on national issues impacting on the delivery of the TU agenda as well as earlier Panel reports which advised of the need to address systemic/structural issues in support of TU development.

- The necessity to resolve the issues surrounding the existing staff contract so that a balance of teaching, research, and engagement appropriate to a TU can be enabled. The ongoing Review of Technological University Academic Contracts, Career Paths and Organisation Design being conducted by the OECD is acknowledged by the Panel as a support in this regard.

- As An tÚdarás has indicated previously, the successful development of technological universities will require a longer-term commitment in terms of supporting infrastructure, short to medium term funding (5-10 years), and support for research capacity building, in line with the ambitions of the 2018 Act.

We trust the attached Report of the Advisory Panel and the comments above will assist you in making your decision on this application for designation as a Technological University under the 2018 Act. We look forward to engaging with you further on this process if required and remain happy to assist in any way.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Horgan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael Horgan
Chairman