



BH ASSOCIATES

Review of Level 10 Equivalence with Regard to Technological University Eligibility Criteria

Background

Chapter 9 of the Technological Universities Act 2018 sets out the application process for applicant institutes to become a technological university. Section 28 sets out the eligibility criteria. In particular in the context of this review and report the section provides that up to 10 per cent of staff hold a terminal degree, as well as sufficient practical experience gained in the practice of a profession to which the programme relates, such that the degree and experience together can reasonably be viewed by the advisory panel as equivalent to a doctoral degree.

Deloitte undertook a review to ascertain if the CUA meet the eligibility criteria having cognisance of the legislation and the Guidance Note For Applicants prepared by the HEA. While Deloitte deemed the methodology employed by the CUA to establish equivalence as satisfactory, it said that evaluation of the staff CVs deemed to hold doctoral equivalent degrees should be made by the Advisory Panel as it is not their area of expertise. A TU Advisory Panel previously recommended that each consortium engage an external expert with knowledge of the Irish HE system to advise on the level 10 equivalency issue. The HEA has also requested that this review be conducted alongside the audit of the eligibility criteria.

Accordingly, I was asked to:

- Undertake a review of the equivalency framework approach devised by the CUA to ascertain whether it is satisfactory and appropriate to evaluate doctoral equivalent degrees, and
- Assess the application of the methodology applied by CUA to identify staff holding a doctoral equivalent degree.

Approach Taken

1. Documents Reviewed

In undertaking this review, I reviewed the following documents:

- *Technological Universities Act 2018*

- HEA *Guidance Note For Applicants. Proposed process in respect of an application to become a Technological University, 2020-2021*
- Deloitte report on Eligibility Criteria Sample Process Review, February 2021
- CUA doctoral equivalency framework
- CUA template application for level 10 equivalency
- CUA data base of Level 10 equivalency applications
- Application of the methodology to identify staff

2. Assessment of Criteria

In reviewing the criteria and approach taken by CUA, I was cognisant that international practice with respect to assessing academic achievement can vary according to institutional mission and phase of development, and national policies and context. In this regard, I am cognisant also of experiences in Australia and the UK which introduced a process to transform colleges of advanced education (CAE) in Australia (1989) and polytechnic institutions in the UK (1992), respectively, into universities (Hazelkorn, 2005, p. 92-109). I referred also to the growing literature and practice with respect to valuing and recognising the breadth of academic achievement sparked, inter alia, by Ernest Boyer's intervention when he was President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Writing in *Scholarship Reconsidered. Priorities of the Professoriate* (1990, p. xii), Boyer wrote:

...the most important obligation now confronting the nation's colleges and universities is to break out of the tired old teaching versus research debate and define, in more creative ways, what it means to be a scholar. It's time to recognise the full range of faculty talent and the great diversity of functions higher education must perform.

Over recent years, the discourse around academic achievement has become more pronounced taking account of, inter alia, teaching and pedagogical practice, responsible research and innovation as well as the breadth of engagement and university civic mission (Boyer, 1996; Goddard, Hazelkorn, Kempton, & Vallance, 2016; Strand et al., 2015; Wilsdon et al., 2017). A recent initiative in the Netherlands is indicative of this trend, setting out the objective to introduce a "new balance in the recognition and rewards of academics" (VSNU, NFU, KNAW, 2019). Finally I am mindful of the history and experience in Ireland with respect to the institutes of technology (Duff, Hegarty, & Hussey, 2000; Thorn, 2018), and the technological university designation process as outlined in legislation and in practice.

3. Review of the Equivalency Framework Approach

The CUA consortium has identified the following criteria by which it has evaluated individual academics as Level 10 Equivalent for the purposes of meeting the TU Criteria under section S28.1(c)(ii)(II)

- A Level 8/9 degree
- At least 10 years' experience gained in industry or academia

- Evidence of continuous professional development, possibly including an academic degree in addition to the current highest qualification
- Current (paid) membership of a recognised Professional Body
- Lecturing in a related area/discipline or research active in a related area/discipline
- And/or a Fellowship awarded by a Professional Body

The above is to be supported by an up-to-date CV including all of the above, with specific details relating to academic qualifications (year of award, awarding institution, title and level of award, etc.)

For this exercise, I applied the evaluation criteria as follows.

- Achieved Fellowship status in the relevant professional/discipline. Fellowship status by a professional organisation/society is granted in recognition of a person's professional and peer standing and achievement in the discipline and in the field.

In many professional areas, inter alia engineering, human resources, surveying, accountancy, psychology and architecture,¹ Fellowship recognition carries international and peer significance. It corresponds with the HEA *Guidance Note for Applicants* (p. 8) with respect to

individuals distinguished by high achievement in the world of industry, business, science, the profession, the arts, or public service who have been recognised by peers as outstanding in their field or those clearly of recognised and verifiable eminence and leadership in their chosen field of expertise.

- Where Fellowship status is not achieved or available, the candidate should have a track record of professional and/or academic experience.

This should be equivalent to gaining a depth and breadth of knowledge in their field/discipline such that “the degree and experience together can reasonably be viewed by the advisory panel as equivalent to a doctoral degree.”² I applied the criteria as follows (See Table 1 below):

- Peer recognition by way of active professional participation or membership in discipline, national or international organisations, assessment and/or review panels, provision of expert advice, etc.
- High achievement by way of publications, performances, innovations, artefacts and/or contribution to the field/discipline.

¹ <https://www.engineersireland.ie/Professionals/Membership/Registered-professional-titles/Fellow>; <https://www.cipd.ie/membership/grades/chartered-fellow#gref>; <https://scsi.ie/members-area/my-professional-journey/fellowship/>; <https://www.accountingtechniciansireland.ie/members/become-a-member/fellowship>; <https://www.psychologicalsociety.ie/join-us>; <https://www.accaglobal.com/ie/en/member/membership/fellowship.html>

² <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/3/enacted/en/print.html>, S28.1(c)(ii)(II)

Table 1. Assessment of CUA Equivalency Criteria

CUA CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT
At least 10 years' experience gained in industry or academia Evidence of continuous professional development, possibly including an academic degree in addition to the current highest qualification Current (paid) membership of a recognised Professional Body	Peer recognition by way of active professional participation or membership in discipline, national or international organisations, assessment and/or review panels, provision of expert advice, etc.
Lecturing in a related area/discipline or research active in a related area/discipline	High achievement by way of publications, performances, innovations, artefacts and/or contribution to the field/discipline.

Conclusion

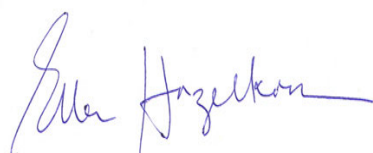
I have conducted a review of the Level 10 Equivalency Framework and criteria developed by CUA, and application of that framework.

CUA has put forward 50 candidates within the doctoral equivalency category. Of the 50 people selected, 33 hold Fellowships from their respective professional Institute. Based on the discussion above, I consider these candidates meet the Level 10 equivalency criteria.

With respect to the outstanding 17 candidates who have not achieved Fellowship status in their relevant profession or discipline, I have reviewed each of the CVs and the application by CUA of the Level 10 Equivalency Framework. I examined the candidates with regard to the assessment framework outlined in Table 1 above. I consider that these 17 candidates meet the equivalency criteria through a combination of peer recognition and high achievement across their different fields.

In conclusion, I confirm that the CUA consortium has developed an appropriate Level 10 Equivalency Framework, and that they have applied the methodology appropriately to identify staff holding a doctoral equivalent degree.

Submitted,



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