

Draft Higher Education System Performance Framework 2023 – 2027

Background

The HEA (Act) 2022 builds on the foundations of the National Strategy for Higher Education and provides for a system performance framework and associated performance agreements with designated institutions of higher education. The Act provides that the HEA should, *inter alia*, hold designated institutions of higher education to account for their performance and for securing value for money in the use of funding provided, and for their responsibility for performance and governance.

The HEA is required to measure and assess the performance of designated institutions of higher education with a view to strengthening the performance of the higher education system and of designated institutions and to ensure their accountability. The creation of performance agreements with institutions, and the monitoring of same, will underpin this process by providing a robust evidence base to enable the HEA to provide an evidence-based view on institutional and system health and manage system-level risks. Performance agreements will also inform the development of national policy and understanding.

This System Performance Framework sets out parameters under which designated institutions of higher education can set out their contribution to the achievement of institutional and national strategy, as appropriate to each institution's scale, mission, and location.

The System Performance Framework and associated performance agreements will span four years (2023-2027), to support alignment with institutional strategies.

Governance

The performance framework and funding/governance framework, and associated reporting requirements, are parallel but complementary processes. The performance framework is built upon a foundation of good institutional governance as a prerequisite for performance monitoring and review, including access to performance related funding allocations.

Principles

The System Performance Framework and associated Performance Agreements will be established with reference to the following principles:

Flexible

The performance framework is sufficiently flexible and agile to enable institutions with a diverse set of missions to highlight their unique contribution to national system level objectives. Performance agreements are developed in accordance with an institution's scale, mission, regional location, and strategic plan.

Responsive

The framework promotes responsiveness to evolving national priorities over the timespan of performance agreements. Performance agreements reflect institutional strategy and capture institution's ongoing and emerging contributions to achieving national priorities and institutional objectives.

Thematic

The framework focuses on five high-level themes that are aligned to national objectives. In performance agreements, HEIs identify how they contribute to these high-level themes, having regard to their individual scale, missions, regional location, and strategic plans, and reference related national strategies and European strategies, as appropriate.

Strategic

The framework is strategy focused, providing a mechanism to assess performance against objectives that are relevant to the context and mission of the institution. Monitoring of performance is cognisant of reflection and learning, and recalibration of strategy and approach as needed.

Evidence-based

The framework is evidence based, with performance agreements that are outcome and impact focused. Specific, measurable targets will support institutional learning and enhance effectiveness and efficiency via a regular review process. The performance framework will be complemented by a stable and consistent system level dashboard to enable longitudinal and trend analyses. The dashboard will further ensure a comparable set of data is collated at system level.

Draft Framework

A draft System Performance Framework is provided below. This framework sets out the five key themes of the framework as vertical pillars: teaching and learning, research and innovation, international, access and participation and engagement. Further transversal themes are identified as horizontal rows. Institutions will identify priorities and targets with respect to the framework's key themes, cross referencing transversal themes as appropriate to the institution. Indicative areas for cross reference are included in the framework, such as Education for Sustainable Development, the National Access Plan, and Student Success. This is not an exclusive or exhaustive list nor are the suggested areas of response limited in application to key or transversal themes.

Higher Education System Performance Framework 2023 – 2027

		KEY THEMES				
	<i>Indicative HEI responses</i>	Teaching and Learning	Research and Innovation	International	Access and Participation	Engagement
TRANSVERSAL THEMES	Skills	<i>Ireland's National Skills Strategy 'Adult Literacy for Life' - a 10-year adult literacy strategy Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-2025</i>	<i>Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy</i>	<i>Review of international education strategy, 2016 to 2020</i>	<i>National Access Plan, 2022 to 2028 Adult Literacy for Life Apprenticeship Action Plan</i>	<i>Student Success Enterprise Skills Public Policy</i>
	Sustainability	<i>2nd National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development - ESD to 2030</i>	<i>ESD Strategy Capital DNSH principles</i>	<i>ESD Strategy</i>	<i>Capital – universal design</i>	<i>ESD Strategy</i>
	Student Success	<i>Student Success strategies Academic Integrity Wellbeing</i>	<i>Access Diversity Wellbeing</i>	<i>Student Success strategies</i>	<i>Student Success strategies</i>	<i>Student Success strategies</i>
	Enterprise & Society	<i>Skills Strategy</i>	<i>Impact 2030 Creating Our Future</i>	<i>National Access Plan</i>	<i>National Access Plan</i>	<i>Apprenticeship Action Plan</i>
	Region	<i>Skills Strategy</i>	<i>National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027</i>	<i>FDI, Ireland 2040</i>	<i>National Access Plan</i>	<i>Apprenticeship Action Plan</i>
	Digital Transformation	<i>Skills Strategy</i>	<i>National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027</i>	<i>Student Success strategies</i>	<i>National Access Plan, 2022 to 2028</i>	<i>Apprenticeship Action Plan</i>
	Institutional Culture	<i>Academic Integrity</i>	<i>Athena Swan Research Integrity Export Control EDI</i>	<i>Research Integrity Export Control EDI</i>	<i>National Access Plan EDI</i>	<i>Review of Gender Equality SVH in higher education Race Equality Report Survey of Staff Experiences of Bullying</i>

Development of Performance Agreements

As set out in the HEA Act (2022), designated institutions of higher education enter into performance agreements with the HEA. Performance agreements are aligned with the above framework and span 2024-2027.

Performance agreements should set out an institution's contribution under each of the five key themes of the framework – teaching and learning, research and innovation, international, access and participation and engagement – referencing, as appropriate, transversal themes, and institutional and national strategies (see appendix 1).

It is for each institution to set out its proposed response to the framework, in the form of a draft performance agreement, with due regard to mission, scale, regional location, and strategic plan. Responses should include the performance objectives for the institution that are connected to the provision of funding by the HEA and a process for internal implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on these objectives. Draft performance agreements are expected to be outcome and impact focused, making use of baseline and benchmarking data to support the identification of specific and measurable targets that will support reflection and learning and enhance effectiveness.

The HEA will provide a template to support the development of performance agreements. Draft agreements will be reviewed by the HEA and, subject to consultation and dialogue, these will be agreed and finalised with each institution.

Reporting and Monitoring of Performance Agreements

Designated institutions will be required to report annually to the HEA on their performance, against their performance agreements, in the form of a structured self-evaluation report. These reports will be reviewed by the HEA as part of a process of strategy and performance dialogue. This process may include external advisors and the HEA will provide feedback on the process to each institution.

As part of this reporting process the HEA will also consider institutional performance with regard to its system performance dashboard. These data in respect of priorities and outcomes at a national level will include:

System Performance Dashboard	
Teaching and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student to Teacher Ratio Honours Degree Graduate Outcomes: 9 months after graduation Honours Degree Graduate Outcomes: 3 years after graduation Non-Progression Rate Apprenticeship Enrolments
Research and Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Graduates Active Spin-Outs Licenses, Options & Assignments Research Income
International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Students Research Income
Access and Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socio-Economic Profiles Disability Enrolments Mature Entrants Flexible Enrolments
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Springboard Enrolments Active Spin-Outs Licenses, Options & Assignments Governance, Leadership & Operational Excellence Gender Balance Athena Swan Awards

The outcomes from the strategy and performance dialogue process along with system performance dashboard data will inform an annual system performance report to the Minister for Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science on the progress of the higher education system.

Appendix 1: System Performance Framework - Draft list of national and European policies and strategies to inform the Higher Education Performance Framework 2023-2027

National Development Plans:

- [National Development Plan 2021-2030](#) (DPER, 2021)
- [Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021](#) (DPER, 2021)

Higher Education general:

- [National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030](#) (DoE, 2019)
- [Statement of Strategy 2021 - 2023](#) (DFHERIS, 2021)

Student Engagement:

- [NStEP Strategy 2022-2025](#) (National Student Engagement Programme, 2022)

Funding:

- [Funding the Future Investing in knowledge and skills: Ireland's competitive advantage](#) (DFHERIS, 2022)

Skills:

- [The National Skills Strategy 2025](#) (DFHERIS, 2021)
- [Technology Skills 2022](#) (DoE, 2019)

Apprenticeships:

- [Action Plan for Apprenticeships 2021 – 2025](#) (DFHERIS, 2021)

International:

- [International Education, Research and Innovation Strategy](#) (DFHERIS, in development)
- [European Strategy for Universities](#) (European Commission, 2022)

Languages:

- [Languages Connect Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017 – 2026](#) (DFHERIS, 2017)

Access:

- [National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2022-2028](#) (DFHERIS, 2022)

Wellbeing:

- [Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018 – 2023](#) (DoE, 2019)
- [National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework](#) (HEA, 2020)
- [Higher Education Healthy Campus Charter and Framework](#) (DoH, 2020)

Research and Innovation:

- [Impact 2030 – Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy](#) (DFHERIS, 2022)
- [National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland](#) – (HEA, 2014 - revision forthcoming)
- [HEA Principles of Good Practice in Research within Irish Higher Education Institutions](#) (HEA, 2020 - revision forthcoming)

- [National Framework for Doctoral Education](#) (HEA/QQI, 2015 - revision forthcoming)
- [National Framework on the Transition to an Open Research Environment](#) (National Open Research Forum, 2019 - Action plan forthcoming)
- [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) (2017, ALLEA - All European Academies)
- [Ireland's National IP Protocol 2019](#) (2019)
- [Framework to enhance Research Integrity in Collaborations in Ireland](#)
- [Export Control Compliance and Dual Use](#) (DETE, 2022)

Sustainable Development:

- [Sustainable Development Goals Second National Implementation Plan](#) (in development, DECC, 2022)
- [National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development \(ESD\) to 2030](#) (DoE and DFHERIS, 2022)
- [Climate Action Plan 2021](#) (DECC, 2021)

EDI:

- *Second National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions* - (HEA, forthcoming)
- [Implementation of Recommendations in the Reports on the National Survey of Student and Staff Experiences of Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions](#) (HEA, 2022)
- [Framework for Consent in Higher Education Institutions: Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive – Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions](#) (DoE, 2020)
- [Higher Education Race Equality Implementation Plan 2022-2024](#) (HEA, 2022)

Teaching and Learning:

- [Next Steps for Teaching and Learning: Moving Forward Together](#) (National Forum, 2021)