

# Performance Agreement 2024–2028 between the HEA and Munster Technological University

## Preamble

This Performance Agreement is established between the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Munster Technological University in accordance with the System Performance Framework 2023–2028. The Agreement identifies Munster Technological University's performance objectives and the associated implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting processes.

This Performance Agreement will be used by the HEA to measure and assess the strategic performance of the institution via an annual cycle of reporting against the agreement and strategy and performance dialogue. Munster Technological University should notify the HEA in writing of any proposed modifications to the Performance Agreement with a supporting rationale when submitting the annual report. Any agreed amendments to the Performance Agreement will be recorded by the HEA with the supporting rationale. This information may inform future monitoring and review processes and inform HEA reporting at a system level.

The HEA and Munster Technological University acknowledge that policy underlying some or all of this Performance Agreement is subject to review from time to time by the HEA or Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The HEA and Munster Technological University agree that if changes need to be made to the Performance Agreement because of such a review, the HEA will notify the institution in writing.

This Performance Agreement will be published on the HEA website in line with the HEA mandate to measure and assess institutions' strategic performance with a view to strengthening the performance of the higher education and research system and of Higher Education Institutions, and to ensure institutions' accountability. It is the responsibility of the institution to ensure that the information presented in the Performance Agreement (including qualitative and quantitative data) is accurate.

The term of this Performance Agreement is from September 2024 to August 2028 unless terminated earlier by agreement.

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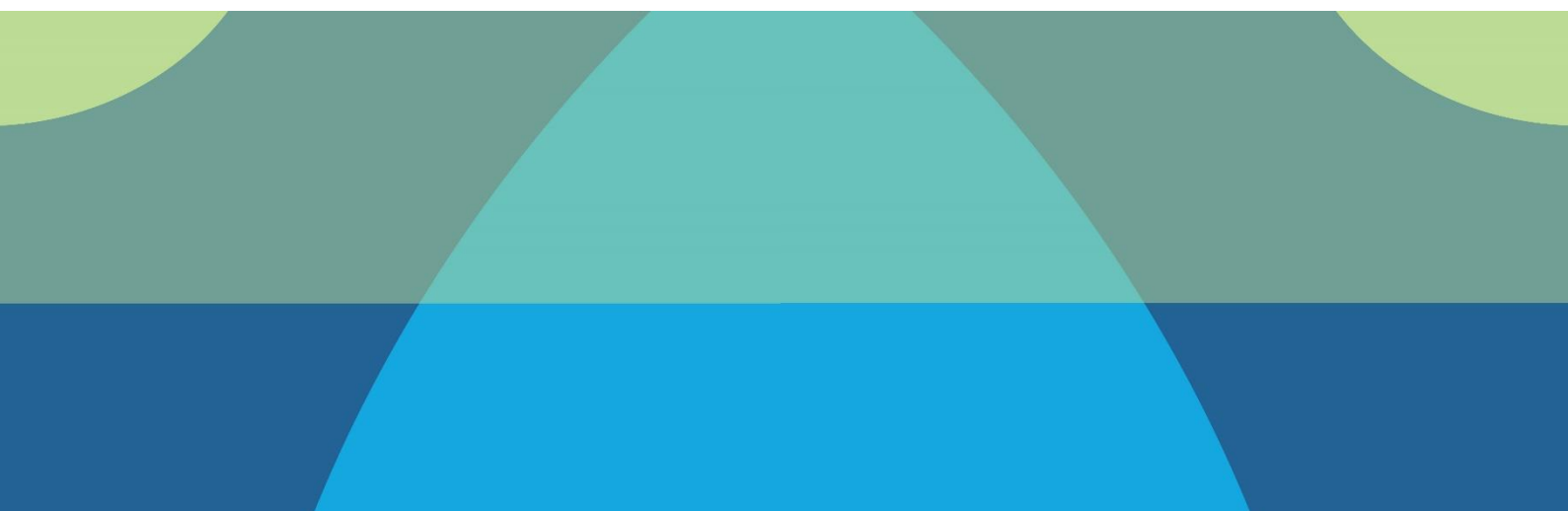
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# Performance Agreement 2024–2028

## Section 1: Context

### Overview of the institution and its context

MTU’s mission is “to lead change and, through education, empower people for a successful future in a globalised world.”

MTU was established on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 and the University Executive has subsequently directed a period of transition and transformation across the new university. MTU is now at an important stage of this programme, having developed a strategic plan — the implementation of which will progress our mission.

The development of our Strategic Plan was led by MTU’s University Executive. We adopted an approach of positive disruption, encouraging Executive members to lead in areas outside of their usual portfolio. The creation of this plan involved a collaborative effort across our internal MTU stakeholders, including our dedicated staff and students, with additional input from key external stakeholders, ensuring the development of a comprehensive strategic plan. In the summer of 2022, the Governing Body of MTU endorsed the MTU Strategic Plan, [‘Our Shared Vision 2022–2027’](#).

Within our Strategic Plan, we have committed to five strategic themes which will serve to shape and direct MTU’s activities over the course of the five-year period.



Figure 1: MTU Strategic Themes

The five strategic themes and associated strategic enablers (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; sustainability; multi-campus commitment; and digital and physical infrastructure) are future-focused, realistic, and sustainable. The implementation of the MTU Strategic Plan 2022–2027 will deliver value for our learners, our staff, our communities, the region and beyond.

In developing this Performance Agreement, MTU has given due consideration to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

MTU views the Strategic Plan 2022–2027 as a living document. This allows the university a degree of agility to ensure it can respond to opportunities as they arise, while having a clear strategic vision for the future. Our Strategic Plan has helped to inform this Performance Agreement: the targets in the Strategic Plan provide the foundations upon which the objectives and indicators of this Performance Agreement are based. MTU is committed to investing in the resources required to ensure that a data-driven decision-making approach is used to the maximum extent possible in this context.

### Institutional Profile

|                               | Total        |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Access (Undergraduate)        | 64           |
| Certificate                   | 1636         |
| Higher Certificate            | 356          |
| Higher Diploma                | 175          |
| Masters Research (Postgrad)   | 65           |
| Masters Taught (Postgraduate) | 749          |
| PhD (Postgraduate)            | 176          |
| Post Graduate Diploma         | 120          |
| Postgraduate Certificate      | 278          |
| Prof Training Qualifctn (U/G) | 97           |
| QQI Advanced Certificate      | 1787         |
| Undergraduate Diploma         | 21           |
| Undergraduate General Degree  | 3045         |
| Undergraduate Honours Degree  | 7624         |
| Undergraduate Occasional      | 86           |
| <b>Grand Total</b>            | <b>16279</b> |

Figure 2: Student Numbers (March 2024 SRS Return)

| Staff_Type                   | Total FTE     | Total Headcount |
|------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Academic                     | 1026.6        | 1153.0          |
| Technicians                  | 155.2         | 159.0           |
| Management Admin & Library   | 427.1         | 457.1           |
| Student Services incl. Exams | 38.7          | 137.0           |
| Support                      | 44.3          | 50.0            |
| Research                     | 133.4         | 138.0           |
| <b>Grand Total</b>           | <b>1825.2</b> | <b>2094</b>     |

Figure 3: Staff Numbers (March 2024 SRS Returns)

## Approach to the development of the Performance Agreement

Drawing on learnings from previous Performance Compact development processes, the Performance Agreement development process leveraged the recent development process for our Strategic Plan so that this document builds on the targets and objectives set out in ‘*Our Shared Vision 2022–2027*’. Key learnings from previous Performance Agreements and MTU strategic planning processes include:

- Ensuring broad consultation across the university in the identification of performance objectives and targets, under executive ownership.
- Requiring ‘stretch ambition’ in the setting of performance objectives and associated annual targets.
- Ensuring that performance objectives are suitably strategic, progressing from operational objectives in earlier Performance Agreements.
- Agreeing on targets which are measurable and based on available national data points, including the HEA dashboard.

MTU commenced its strategic planning cycle in February 2022. This strategic planning process was designed to ensure executive leadership and ownership of the development process, maximum opportunity for consultation, external horizon scanning, and identification of the strategic enablers and key thematic areas on which MTU will focus its efforts for the duration of the MTU Strategic Plan 2022–2027. During the strategic planning process, five key thematic areas were agreed by the University Executive. Distinct working groups were established to further develop each thematic area, identifying suitable strategic targets and activities. These working groups involved MTU staff, student representatives and external stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive, consultative process. All staff members who wished to be involved in a working group were facilitated.

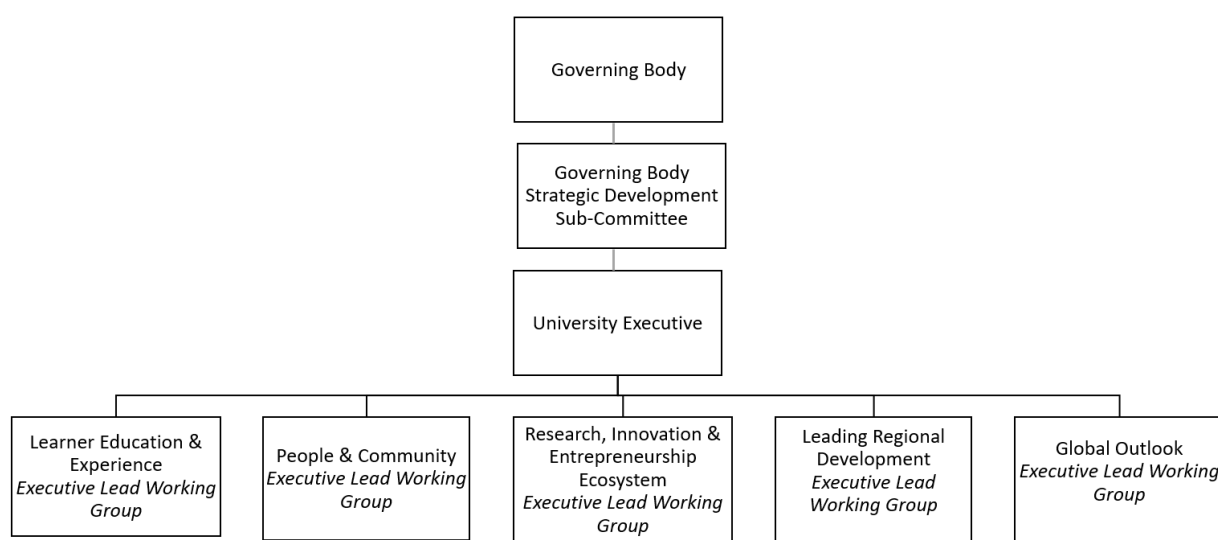


Figure 4: Governance, development, and approval structure of MTU Strategic Plan

Building upon the thematic areas of focus and targets contained within the MTU Strategic Plan 2022–2027, MTU developed an associated implementation plan. This now stands as the foundation upon which the draft Performance Agreement has been developed.

In developing this Performance Agreement, executive leadership was identified for each pillar of activity. Each pillar was supported by a working group comprising staff with associated expertise and suitable student representation. To ensure specific focus on the transversal themes throughout the development process, a distinct “transversal theme group” was established. This group provided specific expertise and constructive challenge on the transversal areas of impact, ensuring that each transversal area of impact was identified within the draft Performance Agreement and that suitable indicators and metrics were identified across all pillars of activity. As the development of this Performance Agreement progressed, feedback from the HEA was considered. Performance objectives and indicators were adjusted in line with the feedback. Over the course of development of this Performance Agreement, the university experienced changes to the executive leadership team as the new high-level organisational structure was in the process of being implemented. It is expected that the planned high-level organisational structure will be implemented during the early stages of this Performance Agreement.

Figures 5 and 6 outline the structure of the development and authorisation of the Performance Agreement. The development and approval process for the Performance Agreement was outlined to the Governing Body on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

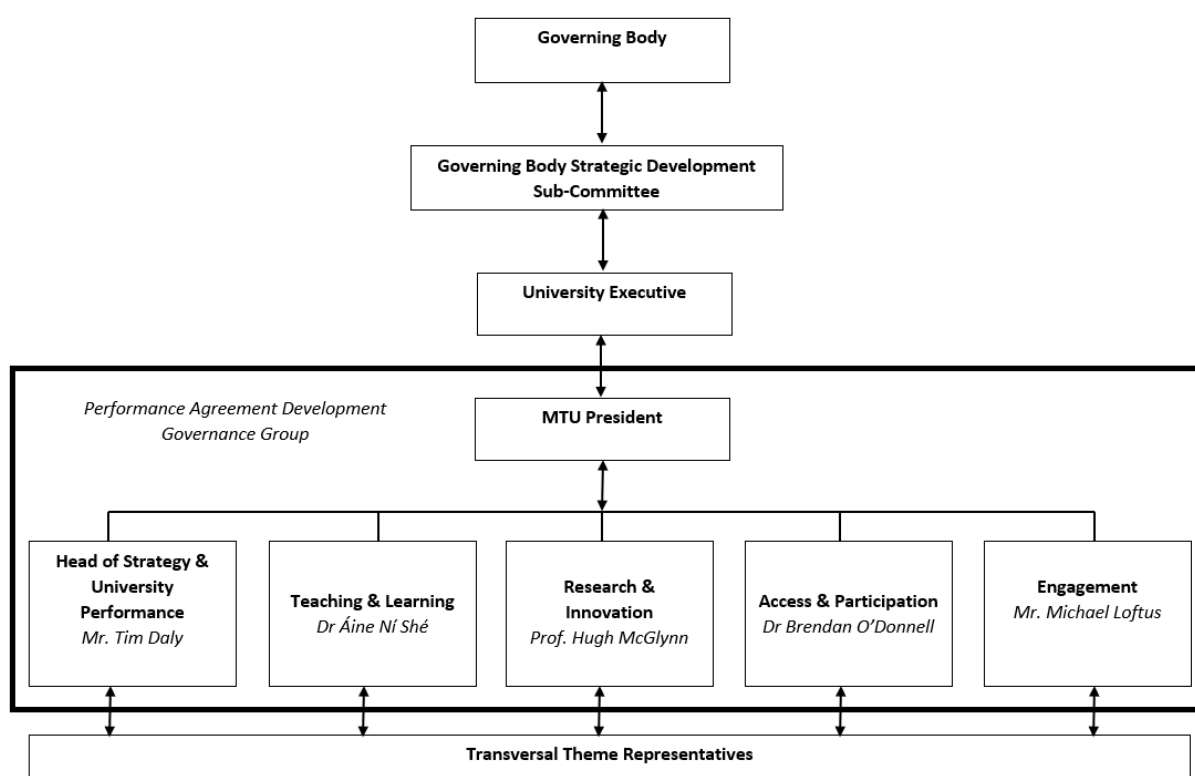


Figure 5: Institutional processes for developing and authorising the Performance Agreement and Process Stakeholder Engagement

| Teaching & Learning   | Research & Innovation  | Access & Participation  | Engagement  |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Dr Áine Ní Shé</b></p> <p>Heads of Department/<br/>Heads of School<br/>Dean of Academic Quality Enhancement<br/>Assistant Registrar<br/>Student Union Vice Presidents Education</p>   | <p><b>Prof. Hugh McGlynn</b></p> <p>Heads of Research<br/>Innovation &amp; Enterprise Manager<br/>Research Representatives<br/>Post Graduate Student Representatives</p> | <p><b>Dr Brendan O'Donnell</b></p> <p>Academic Admin &amp; Student Affairs Managers<br/>Assistant Registrar<br/>Head Student Engagement Office<br/>Heads of Department/<br/>Heads Of School<br/>Student Union Vice Presidents Welfare</p> | <p><b>Mr. Michael Loftus</b></p> <p>Head of Extended Campus Centre<br/>External Services Manager<br/>Innovation &amp; Enterprise Manager<br/>External Contributor<br/>Research/Academic i.e. International<br/>Student Representation</p> |
| TRANSVERSAL GROUP   |  |   |   |
| <p><b>Flexibility, Upskilling &amp; Lifelong Learning</b> - Head of Technology Enhanced Learning<br/> <b>Climate &amp; Sustainable Development</b> - Head of Faculty of Engineering &amp; Science<br/> <b>Student Success</b> - Shared across all Transversal team members<br/> <b>EDI &amp; Belonging</b> - Head of School of Humanities &amp; EDI Manager<br/> <b>Digital Transformation</b> - MTU N-TUTORR Lead<br/> <b>Institutional Leadership &amp; Culture</b> - Teaching &amp; Learning Unit Project Lead<br/> <b>International</b> - International Officers<br/> <b>Enterprise, Society &amp; Region</b>- Shared across all Transversal team members</p> |  |   |   |

Figure 6: Pillar Teams and Transversal Group Membership

## Structures in place for evaluation

MTU has a defined reporting structure with respect to implementation of the MTU Strategic Plan 2022–2027. Using the governance, risk and compliance system, ViClarity, managers report on the attainment of targets within the implementation plan, providing additional information with respect to the extent of attainment of targets and planned activities for the coming cycle. This report is reviewed and updated by the University Executive in advance of consideration by a sub-committee of Governing Body (Strategic Development) and, in turn, by the Governing Body of MTU, on an annual basis. Feedback from the University Executive and Governing Body is considered, and targets and activities are updated accordingly for the coming year.



Figure 7: MTU Strategic Plan 2022–2027 implementation, review, reporting and actions



In this Performance Agreement, we outline, through a series of performance objectives and associated indicators, how MTU will continuously develop and improve our data collection across the timeframe of the Performance Agreement. As MTU continues the process to ensure that all learners and staff can study and work in an environment that is both equitable and respectful, successful applications to initiatives such as Athena Swan, and the subsequent data acquisition and evaluation, will be of particular value to the organisation.

MTU has an integrated Agresso (finance system) and CoreHR (HR system) and is steadily moving towards a centralised institutional research function over the course of this Performance Agreement. Significant progress has been made in the upgrading of MyBan (student record system) across MTU. The merger of MyBan systems across MTU will allow for a central data repository, the ability for single university report generation, and increased accuracy in reporting. This will help to ensure reliable annual reporting on this Performance Agreement. Technological University Transformation Fund (TUTF) has been instrumental in the progression of MTU's MyBan/Banner capabilities. Rather than rely on external expertise, which can be expensive and in short supply, MTU has identified the acquisition and retention of technical skills internally as central to ensuring the accuracy and timeliness of data reporting from MyBan. Over the lifetime of this Performance Agreement, institutional research and the importance of centralised university data will remain a design principle as MTU progresses. The management and reporting of key data sets will migrate towards what will be a central university institutional research function that is responsible for the generation of reports relating to university performance, i.e. student numbers, student progression rates, graduate outcomes and economic indicators.

To proactively address EDI performance, MTU is trialling EudaOrg, a digital tool that will allow us to improve the collation of EDI-related data and evaluate it to produce strategic, evidence-based actions. Our Athena Swan submission also includes a commitment to procuring new survey software in advance of the next EDI Survey (2024) to support increased participation and extrapolation of data. To ensure consistency of approach, the objectives and indicators contained within the Performance Agreement will be monitored, tracked, reported, and updated based upon the above processes, using the ViClarity system. The ViClarity system will provide a score card of performance against plans on an annualised basis, in line with the HEA reporting cycle.

The regular dialogue and reporting between MTU and the HEA, combined with the internal review process (within MTU), will provide an opportunity for constructive dialogue to reinforce objectives/indicators, track progress and provide agility for MTU to respond to unexpected events throughout the course of the Performance Agreement. A designated internal communications working group has been operational for the last two years, with the purpose of improving communication across MTU. In conjunction with the office of Strategy and Performance, this working group will support the identification of the most appropriate approach to onward communication of the progress of MTU's objectives under the Strategic Plan and Performance Agreement.

The vision for higher education in Ireland laid out in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* remains a constant for MTU as we continue our contribution to the achievement of national priorities and outcomes. In articulating suitable performance objectives and in the agreement of indicators, we have leveraged quantitative data from the HEA dashboard. This will be a reliable source of performance data against which we will track our progress.

## Section 2: Performance Objectives

### Performance Objective 1

**To enhance the success of our learners by focusing on improving student progression and completion rates, leading to improved graduate outcomes.**

**Pillar:** Teaching and Learning

**Transversals:** Student Success; Region; Climate & Sustainable Development.

#### Rationale for Performance Objective 1

[Project Ireland 2040](#) states that “by creating institutions of scale and strength, multi-campus technological universities will bring greater social and economic benefits to their regions through a strengthened role in research and innovation and the delivery of a broad range of high-quality education and training in each of their campuses”. This statement is supported by the findings of the Economic and Social Impact Study of MTU, conducted by INDECOR in 2024, which placed the value of MTU’s teaching and learning activities at €574 million (based on the 2022 Graduate Cohort). The significance of this economic impact, for the region and nationally, reinforces the importance of this performance objective. In line with the [TU Act 2018](#), MTU is committed to supporting the development of its region through the increase of capacity and to catering for a growing and diverse population of learners. MTU intends to conduct another economic and social impact study at the end of this Performance Agreement cycle, to measure progress.

As outlined in the MTU Strategic Plan 2022–2027, MTU’s programme portfolio will be coherent, accessible, agile, and professionally focused, serving the needs of our learners, graduates, region and society.

MTU’s design of this performance objective has been informed by the findings of national reports such as [Embedding Student Success: A Guiding Framework](#), which promotes the enablement of institutional capabilities, institutional culture and institutional practices in the promotion of student success. MTU has also leveraged examples of good practice outlined within ‘[Next Steps for Teaching and Learning: Moving Forward Together](#)’, such as:

- Providing signposting to supports, academic and pastoral, for students and staff and initiating longer term actions to accelerate cultural change around understanding the central importance of well-being.
- Working with policy makers and within our institutions and organisations to provide more flexible modes of access to, and participation within, higher education, in order to overcome traditional and emerging barriers to learning for a more diverse student population.
- Working with student unions and other relevant partners to encourage greater diversity of student participation in student engagement and partnership efforts.

The *Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD to 2030)* recognises the global challenges of climate change and growing inequalities. The strategy promotes and supports the development of the requisite skills, knowledge and attitudes that help everyone to take action for a sustainable future and planet. MTU has identified sustainability and the UN SDGs as strategic enablers in our strategic plan. It is important for MTU to reinforce a culture of sustainability across all our activities, including teaching, learning and research. The all-of-university implementation of [An Inclusive Curriculum for a Sustainable Future](#) will embed the priority action areas of *ESD to 2030* in the MTU curriculum.

Building upon learnings and achievements from previous performance agreement cycles and datasets from the HEA dashboard, coupled with MTU's internal data, we have chosen the below indicators and measurements to best allow MTU to track and support this performance objective.

### **Progression rate (%) new entrants (L7+L8):**

In 2021/22, MTU's progression rate for Year 1 undergraduate (UG) students was 81%. This proportion of students was lower than the national average for all HEIs (85% of students). MTU has identified this average as a suitable benchmark to focus our efforts upon over the course of the Performance Agreement. As below, programmes of student support will be implemented that, by 2027/28, will assist MTU in improving the progression rate for Y1 UG students to 85%, an improvement of 4 percentage points (p.p.). This increase will allow us to match more closely the national target.

### **Completion rate (%) for students (L7+L8) at five years post entry:**

70% of new Level 7/Level 8 entrants to MTU in 2017/18 gained award by 2022. Completion rates are also presenting a challenge for similar-sized universities such as SETU and TUS, both of which currently present similar rates of completion to MTU (67% and 70%, respectively). The average completion rate across all HEIs for the same period was 77%. This variance from the national average in completion rates at MTU provides opportunity for improvement over the duration of this Performance Agreement. By 2027/28, a 5-percentage point increase will bring the completion rate to 75%, matching more closely the national average.

### **Student Survey Score for Effective Teaching Practices:**

Effective teaching practice is a contributor towards student success. Based on MTU's continued focus on improving the student experience and linked with ongoing staff Continuous Professional Development (CPD), this indicator was identified as an effective measurement of progress. In the 2023 National Student Survey, MTU's score for Effective Teaching Practices was 32.2. This compared with a national score of 33.2 and comparator TUs such as TUS (33), SETU (34.5) and ATU (34.1), a gap which MTU will address over the course of this Performance Agreement. By 2027/28, a cumulative increase of 2.8 on the baseline will push MTU's score for Effective Teaching Practices above the current national average to 35.

As a recent new member of the European Universities Alliance (EUA), MTU will also leverage findings from the EUA's European Learning and Teaching Forum to gain international insight on improving the student experience and so to advance teaching and learning approaches within the university.

Specific opportunities are also presented by MTU’s membership of INGENIUM, an alliance of ten institutions of higher education from ten European countries. As a member of the INGENIUM Alliance and the EUA, MTU has developed a collaborative curriculum development forum which will allow MTU to deliver the best outcomes in joint degrees, micro-credentials, and specialised programmes that leverage the strengths of each institution, offering students a richer and more diverse academic experience. This will allow our learners to address global challenges and will strengthen MTU’s ability to contribute to good global citizenship.

### **Proportion (%) of graduates entering the workplace or remaining in higher education within nine months of graduation:**

The 2022 Graduate Outcomes Survey outlined that 91% of MTU graduates entered the workplace or remained in higher education within 9 months of graduation, matching the national average. By 2027/28, we aim to increase the percentage of our graduates entering the workplace or remaining in higher education within 9 months of graduation to 93%, an increase of 2 percentage points. Achievement of this stretch target would see MTU surpass the national average. MTU has made significant effort to support the work readiness of our graduates by helping to prepare them to enter the workplace or continue within higher education. The EDGE (Engage Design Generate Explore) programme highlighted within this performance objective is open to registered students across all MTU campuses. The programme provides support with respect to academic integrity, volunteering, building exam strategy, managing assessments, utilising the STAR technique and reflective writing. The programme places significant emphasis on encouraging students into new activities in developing their personal attributes and skills, further enhancing graduate employability and success in life after university.

### **University curriculum aligned to Education for Sustainable Development**

Recognising the importance of the role of education in helping to address global challenges such as climate change, MTU will, over the course of this Performance Agreement, work towards curriculum alignment across all new and existing programmes with the “[Inclusive Curriculum for a Sustainable Future](#)”. This curriculum development framework was approved by Academic Council in 2023/24. Over the course of the Performance Agreement, a number of new programme approvals will provide a test environment for the framework in advance of full roll-out across the university curriculum.

### **Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 1**

Executive-level responsibility for Performance Objective 1 resides with the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar (VPAAR) in the first instance. Additionally, as teaching and learning is a cross-functional activity, the implementation of this performance objective will entail collaboration between the five Deans of Faculty, each of whom will be responsible for strategic oversight of the performance objective and implementing and tracking of the associated indicators for their faculty.

Operational functions within the remit of the VPAAR, i.e. Academic Quality and Enhancement, Student Engagement, Teaching and Learning, Technology-Enhanced Learning, Academic Administration (including Banner Student Records, Examinations, Admissions) and Student Services, will be tracked and reported on throughout the lifetime of the Performance Agreement.

A number of key capital projects (e.g. MTU Arena, High Performance Centre, Learning Resource Centre, STEM Building, DnA, Kerry Learner Centre) will ensure that appropriate learning facilities are available in MTU. These facilities will assist in the delivery of an outstanding education experience for MTU's student population over the course of this Performance Agreement and beyond.

The following strategic actions, including the development of MTU strategies and policies, will support the achievement of this performance objective and supporting targets:

- University-wide faculty enhancement review
- Development of, and support for, a university-wide approach to online and blended mode learning
- Capacity development with respect to live online delivery, hybrid delivery, and digital media creation
- Ongoing staff development and support with Continuous Professional Development (CPD) offerings provided, including a modular [MA in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education](#) and a wide range of short staff development seminars.

MTU will also utilise the following resources and initiatives to support student success and improved graduate outcomes:

- [Good Start](#), which provides new MTU students with a variety of social, sporting, study and support sessions/events to integrate and induct them into life on MTU campuses — helping them to settle in, meet people, get prepared for study and find out who's there to help.
- The [EDGE](#) initiative, as outlined above.
- [MTU Careers Service](#), which provides student-centred careers education and guidance for the benefit of the individual's personal, professional and employability skills development. This includes the provision of core career planning and preparation activities, employer engagement, employability education programmes and workplace monitoring, all of which positively impact on student employability.
- Student success initiatives, including [Just Ask!](#) and [Academic Success Coaching](#), which offer one-to-one or group coaching sessions intended to improve the ability of learners at all stages to identify academic goals and to develop strategies and skills to meet these.
- The Curriculum Framework, supported by the MTU-wide transformation programme, through the Faculty Enhancement reviews under the direction of respective Executive Faculty Deans.

The effectiveness of each of the supporting actions and initiatives will be monitored and adjusted on an annual basis, in line with the measurable outcomes. MTU will manage resources between initiatives based on outcomes.

The Technological Sector Advancement Fund (TSAF) will help ensure that MTU develops teaching and learning practices that benefit the success of our students and improve progression and completion. For example, TSAF-supported projects will enable a varied set of student-facing actions, such as the development, testing and piloting of a self-assessment toolkit for all incoming students across MTU. This toolkit will be integrated with an enhanced EDGE graduate development platform and will better prepare students for progression and success. The TSAF programme of work also supports our Universal Design (UD) Framework implementation to permit accessibility for all, across MTU systems, products, services and processes. TSAF will also support the adoption of a best practice work-readiness programme (Ready Steady Work), expanded and provided to all MTU students across six campuses who have access to MTU Disability Support Service, including support for interviews with employer partners for work experience and placements. While this programme of work is not specifically progression focused, it underpins student success by offering additional support with respect to work placement readiness, which will lead to better completion rates.

Improvements in teaching and learning will also be supported by other resources such as [N-TUTORR](#) (supported by NLRP funding), the TU Research and Innovation Supporting Enterprise (TU RISE) scheme (co-funded through the ERDF) and Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement (SATLE) funding.

### **Key challenges and risks to the success of this performance objective include:**

- Delay in implementation of high-level organisational structure and risk of subsequent prolonged delay of wider organisational changes, including the establishment of the planned five academic faculties.
- Operational challenges related to systems process alignment (Student Records Alignment and Merger, EduCampus).
- Movement of institutional expertise based on the reorganisation of MTU.
- Delay in the implementation of the recommendations relating to the current TU-sector academic contracts, as outlined within the OECD report.<sup>1</sup>
- Potential delays, due to organisational structure implementation, to the completion of Faculty Enhancement Reviews, impacting the timing of the achievement of curriculum enhancement targets.

Actions arising from the review of progress of the MTU Strategic Plan 2022–2027 will be completed to address and mitigate any risks identified and ensure progress against this performance objective.

MTU will evaluate progress on this performance objective through:

- Consistent tracking utilising the ViClarity system

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<sup>1</sup> [A review of technological university academic career paths, contracts and organisation in Ireland](#) [OECD, accessed on 26/10/23]

- Review of progress and (re)validation of programmes by the Academic Council
- Executive review of progress and Governing Body oversight of same
- Continual monitoring and mitigation of associated risk
- Programme monitoring and external examiner reporting.

Progress reports on this performance objective will be provided to Governing Body on an annual basis. In addition, Academic Council, University Executive, and suitable sub-committees, as appropriate, will receive annual reports for consideration and action if required.

## Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 1

| No. | Indicator   | Data source  | Data type    | Baseline   | Benchmark  | 2024/25  | 2025/26  | 2026/27  | 2027/28  | Cumulative target                       |
|-----|---|--|--------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| 1.1 | <b>Progression rate (%) new entrants (L7+L8)</b>  | HEA SRS and Non-Progression and Completion Dashboard | Quantitative | 2021/22: 81%   | All HEIs (85% in 2021/22), achieve and maintain average.             | <b>82%</b>   | <b>83%</b>   | <b>84%</b>   | <b>85%</b>   | <b>4 p.p. increase on baseline.</b>     |
| 1.2 | <b>Completion rate (%) for students (L7+L8) at five years post entry</b>  | HEA SRS and Non-Progression and Completion Dashboard | Quantitative | 70% of new L7/L8 entrants to MTU in 2017/18 gained award by 2022 | All HEIs (77% of new L7/L8 entrants in 2017/18 gained award by 2022) | <b>71% of 2018/19 entrants to gain award by 2023</b> | <b>72% of 2019/20e ntrants to gain award by 2024</b> | <b>73.5% of 2020/21 entrants to gain award by 2025</b> | <b>75% of 2021/22 entrants to gain award by 2026</b> | <b>5 p.p. increase on baseline</b>      |
| 1.3 | <b>Score for Effective Teaching Practices</b>   | StudentSurvey.ie                                     | Quantitative | 2023: MTU Effective Teaching Practices 32.2                      | Average, all HEIs (33.2 in 2023)                                     | <b>N/A</b>   | <b>33.5</b>  | <b>34.0</b>  | <b>35.0</b>  | <b>+2.8 on baseline score</b>           |
| 1.4 | <b>Proportion (%) of graduates entering the workplace or remaining in higher education (within the NUTS 2 region) within 9 months of graduation</b> | Graduate Outcomes Survey                             | Quantitative | 2022: 91%  | Achieve and maintain national average (91% in 2022)                  | <b>92%</b>   | <b>92%</b>   | <b>92.5%</b>   | <b>93%</b>   | <b>2 p.p. increase on 2022 baseline</b> |



| No. | Indicator  | Data source                  | Data type    | Baseline   | Benchmark   | 2024/25    | 2025/26    | 2026/27    | 2027/28     | Cumulative target   |
|-----|--|------------------------------|--------------|--|---|------------|------------|------------|-------------|---|
| 1.5 | <b>Proportion (%) of all new and existing taught programmes that have curricula aligned with the ‘Inclusive Curriculum for a Sustainable Future’</b> | MTU Data, Registrar’s office | Quantitative | N/a. The Inclusive Curriculum for a Sustainable Future was approved in 2023/24 | Similar curriculum alignment with ESD/SDGs in UCC and DCU | <b>15%</b> | <b>40%</b> | <b>70%</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>All new and existing taught programmes for full- and part-time learners at undergraduate and postgraduate level will be aligned to the Inclusive Curriculum for a Sustainable Future</b> |

## Performance Objective 2

**To deliver improved research impact through targeted training and supports across the MTU research community.**

**Pillar:** Research & Innovation

**Transversals:** Society; Student Success; Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning.

### Rationale for Performance Objective 2

Having reflected on available performance data with respect to research enrolments (HEA dashboard) and MTU’s own internal data with respect to PhD completions, we have identified both these metrics as key areas for focus within this performance objective. With the advent of TU RISE, considerable additional supports will be available over the course of this Performance Agreement. These supports will enable improvement of PhD completion rates through specific training and education.

This performance objective aligns with [MTU’s strategic plan 2022–2027](#), specifically with the aim to “embed, grow and lead R&I; attract and retain excellent researchers (nationally and internationally); celebrate and disseminate R&I outcomes; and deliver impactful inter-disciplinary research for regional and global benefit”.

This performance objective has been informed by two particular pillars from [Impact 2030](#):

- Research and innovation structures on excellence and outcomes
- Talent at the centre of the research and innovation ecosystem.

At the core of MTU’s approach to research is the attraction, retention, and development of research talent over the course of this Performance Agreement. Our rationale has been influenced by past successes linked to investment in human resource, and the multiplier effect which the development of people leads to with respect to research success. Leveraging the investment through TU RISE, we have focused on research and innovation structures that will empower the research community within MTU. Specific training, supervisor development and mentoring will ensure that the second pillar listed above, ‘talent at the centre of the research and innovation ecosystem’, will be promoted within MTU’s Research and Innovation community. Under this performance objective, we will consolidate our integrated approach to research and innovation, to deliver measurable impacts.

Research is a well matured and quantifiable activity in areas of MTU, and the selected indicators and targets have been derived from national repositories, including the HEA System Performance Dashboard.

## **MTU research expenditure**

In 2023, MTU’s Annual Research Expenditure amounted to €26 million. This total has been quantified from HERD survey, Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI) Annual Knowledge Transfer Survey, internal live data records and MTU’s internal finance reporting framework. This research expenditure is the highest in the TU sector. Within the constraints of the current academic contract and current IReL provision, by 2027/28, we aim to increase our research expenditure to €32 million per annum. This will represent an increase of 23% on the baseline year. This increase will ensure that MTU continues to surpass the benchmark across the TU sector. Research expenditure, rather than income, has been chosen as an indicator as it demonstrates research activity year on year. MTU will strive to maximise the opportunity afforded under TU RISE by targeting growth in industry-funded research expenditure.

## **Focus on increased number of publications**

MTU is focused on increasing our research capacity, most notably through high-impact research publications (as measured by internationally recognised bibliometric analysis databases/tools (e.g. those recognised for most international university rankings): Institutional Repository, cRIS, ORCID, DMPs, AltMetrics). By 2027/28, we aim to increase our research output from 280 to 330 publications per annum. This will represent an increase of 18% on the baseline year. This increase will ensure that MTU continues to demonstrate impact through its research activities.

## **Commitment to an Open Science agenda**

MTU is committed to an open science agenda ([EU Open Science agenda](#)), which will ensure integrity, accessibility and transparency in our research activities. Utilising IReL Open Science Repository to measure the number of publications from MTU which are Open Access, we will progress from a baseline of 61% (2023) of open access publications to 75% in the academic year 2027/28. MTU is committed to implementing the principles of reforming research assessment and CoARA (Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment) and is amending HR policies to reflect an open science agenda in its Research Career Framework.

## **Growing the proportion of research enrolments**

Leveraging the data available on the HEA dashboard relating to research enrolments in academic year 2022/23, we have identified an opportunity for MTU to grow its number of research enrolments (as a percentage of total enrolments) over the course of this Performance Agreement.

With the national average standing at 5.7% for the academic year 2022/23, MTU has recorded 2.9%. Over the course of this Performance Agreement, we will strive to increase our proportion of research enrolments to 5%. This will ensure that we move closer to the national average and align better with comparator universities.

Under the TU Act 2018, eligibility criteria for application to become a TU include a requirement to demonstrate capacity to increase the proportion of research students from 4% to 7% within ten years of establishment. Growing our proportion of research enrolments is therefore an important indicator of research success.

Over the last decade, doctoral schools in European universities ([EUA](#)) have arisen to ensure that appropriate training, resources and environment are in place to realise improved completion rates among PhD candidates. MTU has formally established its Graduate School and has put in place policies and procedures for supervisory and pastoral support for research students. TU RISE is supporting the roll-out of researcher and supervisor training and the establishment of research supports to enable the tracking, monitoring and reporting of progress. Historically, MTU has not collated data on full-time PhD student completion rates. This activity will be completed in 2024/25, and a benchmark will then be determined. Our ambition is to exceed the European average (66% over a six-year period) and reach a target of 90% over the period of this Performance Agreement.

### **Enhancing research student satisfaction (quality of experience)**

MTU places great importance on supporting its staff and students to ensure their skills training and personal outlook are developed. MTU seeks to maximise postgraduate student enrolment over the period of this Performance Agreement and beyond and, concurrently, to ensure that the student experience is such that optimal performance (completion rate) is achieved, in line with best practice. MTU will put in place mandatory generic and transferable skills modules for students to undertake, which will be administered, delivered and maintained by the newly established Graduate School. Performance will be assessed via the [studentsurvey.ie](#) tool (measuring from the sectoral average baseline data for 2023). Our ambition is to exceed a target of 75% of research students reporting a positive experience at MTU by the end of this Performance Agreement.

### **Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 2**

As indicated above, this performance objective is focused on the recruitment, development and retention of a talent pipeline that will ensure impactful and sustainable research activity. TU RISE and recent MTU University Executive appointments — most notably, Vice President for Research and Innovation, and Graduate School training co-ordinators (see list of appointments below) — will ensure that this performance objective will be implemented, monitored, assessed and reported. The newly established MTU Research Graduate School will oversee the admission, progression, training and support of PhD candidates throughout their research lifecycle. The development within the Research Graduate School of an upskilling and training platform in research and transferable skills for staff and students will maximise completion rates and provide career progression awareness and pastoral care for research students.

The following resources have been/will be deployed to support the achievement of the performance objective:

- Appointment of a Vice President for Research and Innovation — in place.
- Appointment of Associate Deans for Research and Innovation in each Faculty — underway.
- TU RISE appointments:
  - National Funding Specialists x3 — underway, in place Q4 2024.
    - Targeting funding / grant preparation.

- Impact Co-ordinator — underway, in place Q4 2024.
  - Advising on impact generation and recording; coordinating scale-up of multi-disciplinary activities.
- EU funding specialist — underway, in place Q4 2024.
  - Grant preparation / networking.
- Researcher Career Framework coordinator — in place.
  - Coordinate researcher training and the implementation of MTU’s Researcher Career Framework.
- Research Data management systems specialist — underway, in place Q4 2024.
  - Data management within Advisory Offices and with new cRIS system.
- Regional Enterprise R&I Ecosystem Coordinator — in place.
  - Liaising with MTU staff and enterprise to meet ERDF targets.
- R&I Legal — in place.
  - Contracts and legal with enterprise and other collaborators.
- Graduate Research Officer — in place.
- Research postgraduate support (including placements) — in place.
- Communications coordinator — underway, in place Q4 2024.
  - Disseminating success stories and engaging researchers with the public.

### **Opportunities, Challenges and Risks**

The proposed structures to support research and innovation highlighted in our TU RISE project plan, coupled with the redesign of research and innovation across MTU, will allow for growth in research capacity and addressing of regional demands and global challenges, and will enable MTU to meet the TU Act 2018 obligations.

Challenges and risks related to the attainment of this performance objective include:

- Delay in implementation of high-level organisational structure
- Delay in filling the planned R&I support roles, with recruitment taking place in a competitive external environment
- Inadequate physical infrastructure support and dedicated space to enable the delivery of the planned enhanced research capacity

- Current TU sector employment contract and the extent to which the recommendations of the OECD report may impact contracts across the sector during the lifetime of the framework.

A dedicated risk register will be maintained for this R&I performance objective, with regular updates to R&I Board and MTU Executive. From the review of progress of the MTU Strategic Plan 2022–2027, actions will be taken to address and mitigate any risks identified and ensure progress. Analysis of trends, needs and skill acquisition in staff involved in research activities will be used to focus training and awareness raising, and internal self-evaluation processes will reveal areas for additional focus and development.

## Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 2

| No. | Indicator  | Data source   | Data type    | Baseline  | Benchmark   | 2024/25             | 2025/26             | 2026/27             | 2027/28             | Cumulative target   |
|-----|--|---|--------------|---|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---|
| 2.1 | <b>Annual research expenditure (€)</b>                                     | MTU Financial Records   | Quantitative | 2023/24: €26 million                                    | Exact comparators are unavailable as MTU is reporting research expenditure as opposed to research income (outlined above) | <b>€26m in 2024</b> | <b>€28m in 2025</b> | <b>€30m in 2026</b> | <b>€32m in 2027</b> | <b>Increase to average of €29m per annum over the 4-year period</b><br><b>€116m in total over 4 years</b> |
| 2.2 | <b>Number of publications</b>  | Institutional Repository, cRIS, ORCID, DMPs, AltMetrics, other internationally recognised bibliometric analysis databases/tools | Quantitative | 2021: 280 peer-reviewed publications                    | Match performance of other similarly sized and resourced Research Performing Organisations (RPOs).                        | <b>300</b>          | <b>310</b>          | <b>320</b>          | <b>330</b>          | <b>Average 315 publications per annum over the period.</b><br><b>Increase of 50 on baseline</b>           |
| 2.3 | <b>Proportion (%) of publications that are Open Access</b>                 | IREL Open Science Repository  | Quantitative | 2023: 61% are available in various types of Open Access | Match performance of other similarly sized and resourced RPOs.  | <b>65%</b>          | <b>70%</b>          | <b>72%</b>          | <b>75%</b>          | <b>Average 71% per annum over the 4-year period</b>   |
| 2.4 | <b>Research student enrolments as a proportion (%) of total enrolments</b> | HEA Dashboard   | Quantitative | 2022/23: 2.9%   | National average (5.7% in 2022/23) and comparators ATU (4.1%), TUS (3.8%) and TU Dublin (3.7%)                            | <b>3.5%</b>         | <b>4%</b>           | <b>4.5%</b>         | <b>5%</b>           | <b>2.1 p.p. increase</b>  |

| No. | Indicator  | Data source   | Data type    | Baseline  | Benchmark                                     | 2024/25    | 2025/26    | 2026/27    | 2027/28                | Cumulative target  |
|-----|--|---|--------------|---|---|------------|------------|------------|------------------------|--|
| 2.5 | <b>PhD completion rate (%)</b>   | MTU Internal Records — PhD completions (full-time). | Quantitative | TBD: % full-time students enrolled who successfully complete their PhD within 6 years of commencement | European average is 66%, EUA CDE              | <b>TBD</b> | <b>TBD</b> | <b>TBD</b> | <b>TBD<sup>2</sup></b> | <b>Our ambition is to exceed the European average (66% over a 6-year period) and reach a target of 90% by 2028</b> |
| 2.6 | <b>Proportion (%) of research students reporting positive experience</b> | Student Survey.ie                                   | Quantitative | 2022/23: 55.7% respondents reporting 'good' or 'excellent', combined                                  | University sector PGR average (55.7% in 2023) | <b>55%</b> | <b>60%</b> | <b>65%</b> | <b>75%</b>             | <b>19 p.p. increase on baseline</b>  |

<sup>2</sup> To be agreed in dialogue with the HEA once a baseline and benchmark have been established.



## Performance Objective 3

**To increase the number of new entrants from underrepresented groups, advancing inclusion, equity, and diversity across the university, in addition to supporting improved progression for underrepresented groups.**

**Pillar:** Access and Participation

**Transversals:** Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging; Society; Sectoral & Tertiary Cohesion.

### Rationale for Performance Objective 3

In the identification and development of this performance objective, MTU has considered available performance data with reference to new entrants with a disability, from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and from Irish Traveller and Roma communities. With respect to this pillar, Access and Participation, MTU will focus on increasing the numbers of entrants from these National Access Plan ([NAP](#)) priority groups.

This performance objective is aligned with MTU’s commitment to being ‘*an inclusive, relevant and accessible university of choice, providing equity of access and participation in life-long education regardless of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race (which includes nationality or ethnicity), membership of the Traveller community, or socio-economic background, and to enabling access to students who experience socio-economic disadvantage, students who have a disability and students from sections of society significantly underrepresented in the student body to date*’ (MTU Strategic Plan, *Our Shared Vision 2022–2027*, p. 13).

The *Equity of Access and Participation Policy* (2022) and *Admission Policy* (2023) commit the university to embedding universal design and inclusive practice in all its functions across the MTU community, to enable the creation of an inclusive environment that can be accessed by all. MTU has commenced the process of developing a 10-year Sustainability Plan for the university. This will include a commitment to SDG 4, ‘Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education to Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All’.

This performance objective aligns directly with national policy and strategy:

- **The Technological Universities (TU) Act 2018** requires that the distinctive quality of technological universities will be being deeply student-centred and inclusive, providing lifelong education opportunities without barriers, supporting learners to reach their full potential and flourish, and enabling their progression to work, further studies and engagement with wider society.
- The **NAP** articulates the ambitions for equity in the higher education system, including ‘*that the higher education student body entering, participating in, and completing higher education, at all levels and across all programmes, reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland’s*

*population, and that our education institutions are inclusive, universally designed environments which support and foster student success and outcomes, equity, and diversity and are responsive to the needs of students and wider communities*'. The **Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH)** is a strategic HEA funding programme for the delivery of the equity-of-access objectives of the National Access Plan to improve the participation and retention of specific priority groups in higher education.

- An inclusive higher education system is a priority for Ireland's economic, social and equality government policy objectives, as well as being an EU and UN priority.

[AHEAD](#) has identified Universal Design as a key vehicle to reduce and remove cultural and physical barriers which, in the past, have resulted in the marginalisation of the priority groups identified in the NAP. The development of Universal Design principles is a key step to providing an inclusive learning environment for all students. Universal Design principles create the opportunity for full engagement and will lead ultimately to increased progression and completion rates for priority groups, with the implementation of UD mitigating against their lower access, progression and completion rates and leading to their success in higher education. PATH 4 is a key driver in delivering the objectives of embedding a whole-of-institution approach to student success and universal design and improving opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to engage in higher education.

Reflection on MTU's performance to date with respect to access and participation, in addition to analysis of available national and MTU baseline and benchmarking data, has informed the following specific targets for improvement by the end of this Performance Agreement:

- **Increase the proportion of MTU new entrants from socio-economically disadvantaged areas**

In 2020/21, 10% of new entrants came from a socio-economically disadvantaged background. This proportion of students was only one percentage point (p.p.) below the national average of 11%. However, when compared to similarly sized HEIs, SETU (19%), TUS (15%) and MU (12%), we see an opportunity to improve MTU's performance in this indicator. By 2027/28, we aim to increase the proportion of entrants from a disadvantaged background to 13%, an increase of 3 percentage points. This increase will allow us to match more closely with the selected benchmark institutions.

- **Increase the proportion of new mature entrants from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds**

MTU will focus on the NAP group defined as disadvantaged mature new entrants as a percentage of total SED new entrants. In 2020/21, 9% of new mature entrants to MTU were from disadvantaged backgrounds, the system average for the same year was 10%. The national target, as set out in the National Access Plan, by 2028 is set at 20%. While achieving this national target will be a challenge for MTU, we have set a goal of reaching 15% by the end of this Performance Agreement. We recognise that directly targeting this particular NAP grouping to encourage greater participation will be a challenge, we intend to increase this proportion by 5 p.p. over the course of the Performance Agreement. This will ensure greater progress towards meeting the national average for this specific group.

- **Increase the number of new entrants who are members of Irish Traveller and Roma communities**

In 2022/23, 0.1% of MTU new entrants were members of the Irish Traveller communities. In the period of this Performance Agreement, we aim to increase this percentage by 0.1 p.p. Maintaining our pre and post-entry supports for members of this community, and supporting entry at its current percentage with a view to modest growth, will allow us to remain in line with the national average.

- **Increase the proportion of new entrants with a disability**

In 2022/23, 14.6% of MTU new entrants reported a disability. This proportion of students was higher than the average percentage across all HEIs (13.9%). While this is an area in which MTU has had success to date, it is important that we maintain our focus on attracting and supporting students with a disability across our university. By 2027/28, we aim to increase the proportion of MTU entrants with a reported disability to 16%, an increase of 1.4 percentage points. This increase will allow us to attain the average proportion/national target as outlined in the National Access Plan. Over the course of this Performance Agreement, should it be possible to stretch this target further, we will strive to do so.

- **Increase the progression rate for students with disabilities**

In 2021/22, MTU recorded an 81% progression rate for students with disabilities. While the national average in that baseline year was 82% and MTU was very close to this baseline, there was a certain amount of variability in this dataset over the previous years. Through the supports provided across MTU (outlined below), we will focus on improving this baseline progression rate to 84% over the course of this Performance Agreement. This rate will not only match but exceed the current national average. This target will be reviewed annually due its variable nature and may be revisited should the need arise.

### Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 3

Universal Design is a framework which will allow us to future-proof our educational landscape, taking into account the needs of various target groups emerging over time, in line with the National Access Plan. To progress a whole-system, whole-of-university approach to universal design, the MTU Executive approved the establishment of the MTU Universal Design Framework Implementation Steering Committee in June 2023. Over the course of this Performance Agreement, MTU will sign, adopt and promote the ALTITUDE National Charter for Universal Design in Tertiary Education and the Embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Curriculum of the New Technological University Sector Charter (EDIT). The practical support of the '[Unlocking Inclusion Toolkit for UD in Higher Education](#)', which accompanies the implementation of the ALTITUDE Charter, provides key guidance, self-assessment tools and case study examples.

Universal Design underpins collaborations and wider recruitment and strategic actions, as outlined below:

- UNESCO Chair Universal Transformation Management Framework

- Crawford Supported Studio (existing provision in collaboration with COPE Foundation, Cork City Council, Crawford Art Gallery)
- Inclusive Music Ensemble (IME)
- Advocacy Workshops (existing MTU provision in collaboration with COPE Foundation)
- Down Syndrome Ireland (existing MTU provision in collaboration with DSI Kerry Branch)
- St. John of God’s Skills for Life Programme (existing provision)
- Higher Education and Employment Pathway (existing MTU pilot course provision in collaboration with external community partners)

MTU also intends to appoint a Vice President with responsibility for People and Culture, who will have executive responsibility for EDI. MTU will also work to adopt and embed the [Anti-Racism Principles for Irish HEIs](#) within our existing EDI policies and related university policies.

The attainment of targets under this performance objective will also be supported by the following activities and programmes.

**MTU-Supported Programmes:**

**Star Pupil programme:** The Star Pupil programme is an access to education and work experience programme for students from the Traveller community who are in mainstream primary and post-primary schools. The MTU Traveller Liaison Officers engage with local primary and post-primary school pupils from the Traveller community, their parents, and school staff and community partners to support the pupils to complete their primary and second-level education. They provide information and guidance on third-level progression and funding opportunities, supports, and summer work opportunities. Star Pupils who choose to continue to third-level education are well prepared and continue to be supported by our team should they continue their journey at MTU. By providing such support, we help students from the Traveller community to complete and continue their third-level education.

**Linked Schools Programme:** The Access Service Linked Schools Programme works in partnership with school staff, local communities, MTU staff, and students from primary and second-level schools to support greater participation by students from our linked schools. It works with 27 selected schools in the Cork/Kerry region. Academic, personal or social supports are provided for eligible candidates who transfer from Access Linked Schools into MTU.

**Disability Support Services:** The University cultivates an environment where students are comfortable to disclose their disability/learning difference and/or significant health condition. Students are offered the opportunity to have their needs assessed by the Disability Support Service to identify any reasonable accommodation and/or other supports that they may require.

**HEA-Supported Access and Participation Initiatives:**

**SOAR Project:** The SOAR Project is an inter-institutional collaboration on Access. It involves the South Cluster of higher education institutions — Munster Technological University (MTU), South East Technological University (SETU), University College Cork (UCC) and a variety of community partners. Together, we develop strategies to increase access to higher education for groups that are currently under-represented. The Project commenced in 2018 and is funded by the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Strand 3.

**PATH 2: 1916 Bursary:** The 1916 Bursary aims to encourage participation and success by students who are most socio-economically disadvantaged and from groups most under-represented in higher education. It is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union through the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS). To be eligible for a 1916 Bursary, all applicants must meet Financial, Priority Group and College Entry eligibility criteria. Bursaries are awarded through regional clusters of higher education institutions. Each cluster has a limited number of bursaries, which are awarded to the eligible applicants that present the greatest need. The SOAR Project administers the 1916 Bursary on behalf of MTU, SETU and UCC.

There are three different types of bursaries — Tier 1, 2 and 3. Tier 1: Awardees will receive €5,000 per year for the normal duration of a full-time undergraduate programme and up to a maximum of six years for a part-time programme. Tier 2: Awardees will receive €2,000 per year for the normal duration of a full-time undergraduate programme and up to a maximum of six years for a part-time programme. Tier 1 and 2 bursaries will also be paid if the awardees progress to postgraduate study. Tier 3: Awardees will receive a once-off bursary of €1,500 for the 2024/25 academic year only.

The PATH 2 stream is ending in May 2025; however, 1916 Bursaries are being aligned with Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) going forward. This will be a collaborative approach, with the universities remaining the operational owners and coordinators of the fund.

**PATH 3:** MTU has three streams under PATH 3:

- 1. Travellers in Education — Mentoring in Education Certificate:** MTU developed a part-time, Level 6, 15-credit Certificate in Mentoring in Education. The Certificate equips members of the Traveller community with the knowledge and skills required to provide mentoring support to Traveller students and to support Traveller parents to enhance their understanding of the education system and support their engagement with schools. The funding for this stream of PATH is also ending in May 2025.
- 2. Enabling Transitions:** This programme provides training in school- and community-based assistive technology (AT) for second-level students, teachers and guidance counsellors, to enable students to succeed at second level and to educate on what AT supports are available at third level. AT support is offered across MTU for students with learning differences. Specific training, such as introductory IT education, is also offered, according to the needs of student groups. By easing the initial transition to third-level education through initiatives such as this,

we aim to reduce non-progression, as the majority of first years who choose to leave will do so in the first semester. The funding for this stream of PATH is also ending in May 2025.

- 3. Connecting Communities, Connecting Curriculum:** This work stream focuses on mentoring. Community-Based and School Mentoring Programmes are devised to allow second-level students to have access to mentors that they may not normally have access to. These mentors are local community members who have completed the Certificate in Mentoring in Education and are MTU students. They work with students in DEIS schools to mentor them on education opportunities and third-level progression options. The funding for this stream of PATH is also ending in May 2025.

**PATH 5:** PATH 5 was announced as a key component of the new National Access Plan (2022–2028), which was launched in August 2022. The key objective of this funding stream is to enable HEIs to put in place an infrastructure to increase the participation of Traveller and Roma students in higher education. PATH 5 will also allow the targets identified as part of the new NAP (2022–2028) to be achieved and, crucially, will enable the setting of higher targets consistent with the plan’s vision. This has replaced the dormant account funding; however, we are at present unsure if this will continue beyond the life of the PATH programme.

### Resources and Opportunities

National programmes, such as [HEAR](#) and [DARE](#), encourage progression into higher education; the Student Assistance Fund ([SAF](#)) further encourages and supports entrants and existing NAP priority students. MTU further supports students struggling financially with a ringfenced Hardship Fund. While mainstream access and disability supports exist across MTU, this performance objective is largely delivered by specific funding programmes (as outlined above (PATH)) offering support across all MTU’s campuses. MTU will continue to explore opportunities to collaborate with other HEIs through PATH Clusters, and to grow our numbers of new entrants from identified disadvantaged cohorts.

### Challenges and Risks

Programmes supporting access and participation into higher education have a significant impact on new entrant numbers and student retention; the continuation of financial support offered through initiatives like PATH is a critical support to the continued success of these programmes. The nature of short-term funding programmes creates challenges to forming long-term relationships with minority communities. The current PATH programme funding provides limited scope for the growth of more tailored programmes of support for students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, mature students, and Irish Traveller and Roma communities. Targets relating to increasing the number of students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, mature students and Travellers are dependent on sustainable funding. MTU will ensure continual monitoring and mitigation of associated risk.

From the review of progress of the MTU Strategic Plan 2022–2027, actions will be taken to address and mitigate any risks identified and ensure progress. Analysis of trends, needs and skill acquisition in staff involved in access and participation activities will be used to focus training and awareness raising.

### **Management and Reporting**

Executive responsibility for this performance objective sits within the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar. Access Offices reporting to the Academic Administration and Student Services Managers have day-to-day operational oversight of the implementation of the indicators, with reports to be provided to University Executive, Academic Council, committees thereof as appropriate, and Governing Body to review progress. MTU will ensure consistent indicator tracking utilising the ViClarity system. Evaluation of success will also be supported by programme monitoring and external examiner reporting.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 3

| No. | Indicator  | Data source                              | Data type    | Baseline       | Benchmark   | 2024/25      | 2025/26      | 2026/27      | 2027/28    | Cumulative target   |
|-----|--|--|--------------|----------------|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|---|
| 3.1 | <b>Proportion (%) of new entrants from socio-economically disadvantaged areas</b>          | HEA SRS and System Performance Dashboard | Quantitative | 2020/21: 10%   | Average, all HEIs (11% in 2020/21), and selected comparator HEIs (SETU: 19%, TUS: 15%, MU: 12%)         | <b>10.5%</b> | <b>11%</b>   | <b>12%</b>   | <b>13%</b> | <b>3 p.p. increase on baseline</b>                                    |
| 3.2 | <b>Proportion (%) of new entrants from disadvantaged backgrounds who are mature</b>        | HEA SRS and System Performance Dashboard | Quantitative | 2020/21: 9%    | Average, all HEIs (10% in 2020/21)  | <b>11%</b>   | <b>12%</b>   | <b>13%</b>   | <b>14%</b> | <b>5 p.p. increase on baseline</b>                                    |
| 3.3 | <b>Number of new entrants who are members of the Irish Traveller community<sup>3</sup></b> | HEA SRS and System Performance Dashboard | Quantitative | 2022/23: ■     | Average, all HEIs (0.1% in 2022/23), and selected comparator HEIs – SETU (0.2%), TUS (0.2%), MU (0.0%). | <b>+1</b>    | <b>+1</b>    | <b>+1</b>    | <b>+1</b>  | <b>+4 on baseline</b><br><b>0.1 p.p. increase on baseline</b>         |
| 3.4 | <b>Proportion (%) of new entrants with disabilities</b>                                    | HEA SRS and System Performance Dashboard | Quantitative | 2022/23: 14.6% | 16% (National Access Plan Target)   | <b>15%</b>   | <b>15.2%</b> | <b>15.6%</b> | <b>16%</b> | <b>1.4 p.p. increase on baseline to achieve the NAP target of 16%</b> |

<sup>3</sup> The level of disaggregation of data disseminated publicly is subject to data protection considerations. Data disaggregated to a level which may allow individuals to be identified (even indirectly) is not disseminated publicly. See the HEA Statistics: [Privacy, Data Protection and Disclosure Control](#).



| No. | Indicator  | Data source     | Data type    | Baseline     | Benchmark                          | 2024/25      | 2025/26    | 2026/27    | 2027/28    | Cumulative target                  |
|-----|--|-----------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------------------------------|
| 3.5 | <b>Progression rate (%) for students with disabilities</b> | MTU and HEA SRS | Quantitative | 2021/22: 81% | Average, all HEIs (82% in 2021/22) | <b>81.5%</b> | <b>82%</b> | <b>83%</b> | <b>84%</b> | <b>3 p.p. increase on baseline</b> |

## Performance Objective 4

**To consolidate our leadership in engagement with enterprise through the pursuit of an integrated cross-university model, to maximise impact at regional and national levels.**

**Pillar:** Engagement

**Transversals:** Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning; Enterprise; Region; Sectoral & Tertiary Cohesion; Institutional Leadership & Culture.

### Rationale for Performance Objective 4

This performance objective aligns with MTU’s strategic ambition to “continue to be the most industry-, enterprise-, arts-, culture-, and community-engaged university in the region and to position MTU as a partner of choice for regional development, providing clear enterprise engagement pathways”. MTU’s Strategic Plan 2022–2027 includes objectives that focus on leading initiatives, collaborating with external organisations, leading regional growth, and adopting a global outlook. These ambitions are predicated on an orientation and culture that recognise, record and support mutually beneficial interactions with external organisations for the benefit of the student, the university, the region, and the country.

This performance objective is cognisant of and consistent with DFHERIS’s statement that ‘the new technological universities will be positioned as key anchors for sustainable regions, deepening collaboration with industry and enterprise, developing clusters of technology and expertise, and opening up business opportunities regionally and nationally’.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* recommends that higher education institutions should set out their international vision in an institutional strategy that is related to their institutional mission and to wider national policy goals, and which considers internationalisation and global engagement in the widest perspective. Through indicator 4.4, MTU will support the delivery of the key objectives of [Springboard+](#). This performance objective and associated indicators will support the delivery of the strategic objectives outlined in the [South-West Regional Enterprise Plan](#), particularly Objective 6 – ‘Ensure a strong pipeline of talent in the region, focusing on sustainable high-quality jobs’. The [National Development Plan](#) emphasises the role that universities can play as ‘strategic national assets’ and commits to intensify efforts to ‘leverage the role of further and higher education institutions as anchors for enterprise and for regional growth’.<sup>5</sup> These plans were considered in the development of the MTU Strategic Plan 2022–2027 and, additionally, have influenced the identification of indicators for this objective. The selected indicators demonstrate the influential role MTU will play in the region

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<sup>4</sup> Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Statement of Strategy 2021–2023, p10. Available at: <https://assets.gov.ie/125743/0d1fe077-ba66-4ba9-977d-4f0a2f3b0ef1.pdf> [Accessed on 25/10/23].

<sup>5</sup> Government of Ireland National Development Plan 2021–2030, p92. Available at [a36dd274-736c-4d04-8879-b158e8b95029.pdf](https://assets.gov.ie/a36dd274-736c-4d04-8879-b158e8b95029.pdf) ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie)) Accessed on 25/10/23.

to ensure that enterprise and community are suitably engaged and supported, and that relationships are anchored on a mutually beneficial basis.

MTU commissioned INDECOR to complete an independent Economic and Social Impact Study to evaluate economic activity, including employment created through its expenditure, the expenditure of students, improved labour market outcomes for graduates, and wider research and development impacts. Also considered as part of this evaluation was the University’s considerable social impacts, through its various facilities and services, including career guidance, medical services, sports, music and cultural facilities and numerous other impacts. High-level impact findings are outlined in Figure 8, below.

The total economic impact on the Irish economy associated with Munster Technological University’s activities in 2022/23 was estimated to be approximately €979 million.<sup>6</sup>

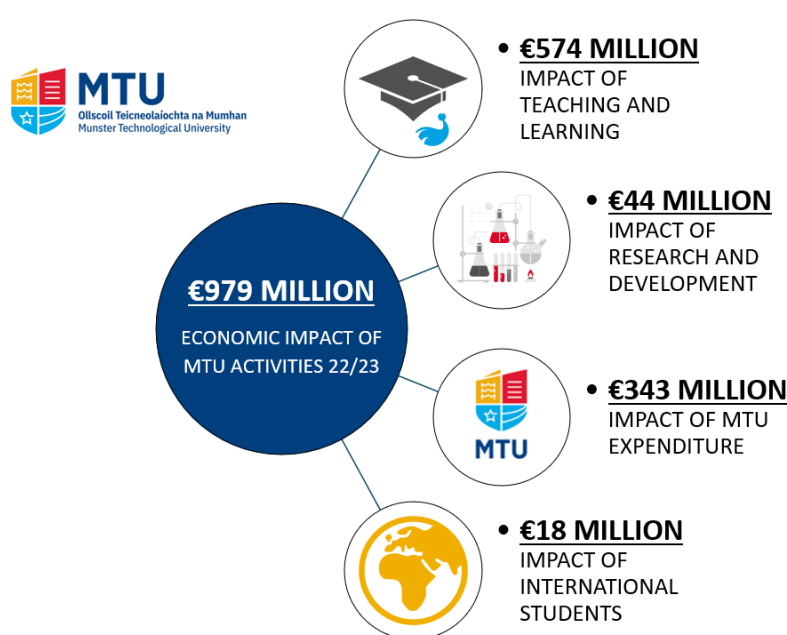


Figure 4: MTU Total Economic Impact on Irish Economy 2022/23

The above infographic highlights the significant impact of MTU on the South West region. MTU engages with regional enterprise actors and offers a broad continuum of opportunity ranging from student placement or projects to longer-term arrangements involving the development of flexible upskilling solutions and collaborative research agreements. MTU's relationships with professional, regulatory and/or statutory bodies (PRSBs) also further the employability of our graduates.

Building upon MTU’s reputation as a strong performer in enterprise and engagement, the opportunity exists to develop this work further in the context of international best practice, as detailed in the outline of Extended Campus, below. As the transformation of MTU continues, operational activities such as engagement will be redesigned to deliver an optimal, cross-university, regionally aware approach.

<sup>6</sup> INDECOR report on MTU Total Economic Impact on Irish Economy 2022–2023, completed in 2024.

MTU has benefited from participation in EU-funded initiatives focusing on enterprise engagement and experiential learning, including INGENIUM and TU RISE, and has formed partnerships and other formal cooperation agreements with international organisations including universities, as follows:

- Europe: 202
- Other parts of the world: 77
- INGENIUM partners: 9

These partnerships provide an insight into international best practice, to enhance our teaching and learning. For example, MTU's membership of the European Universities alliance, INGENIUM, with nine partner HEIs around Europe, offers significant opportunities for collaborative curriculum development that will allow MTU to deliver the best outcomes in joint degrees, micro-credentials, and specialised programmes that leverage the strengths of each institution, offering students a richer and more diverse academic experience. This collaboration not only strengthens the University's global outreach and reputation but also positions MTU well to avail of future EU funding opportunities in teaching and learning initiatives through having trusted and meaningful partners.

MTU acknowledges the importance of institutional leadership and an organisational culture that is reinforced by good leadership. An internally designed and delivered Leadership Development Framework, supported by the [LEAD@MTU](#) and [ELEVATE](#) programmes, has been underway across MTU since 2022. The LEAD@MTU programme is focused on a number of key objectives, initially geared towards supporting the university's senior management team. The programme provides a masterclass series focused on the development of leadership skills and capability, which is informed by emergent thinking and best practice across a range of industries. Seven Peer Action and Learning Groups (PAL) have been formed within the senior management team. These groups are multi-disciplinary in nature and are composed of leaders from across MTU's six campuses. The focus of each group is peer-supported leadership development, centred on personal development actions of common interest. Additionally, a mentoring programme for senior managers, psychometric evaluation and one-to-one coaching have recently been offered to senior management. MTU has thus invested in developing high-level coaching skills amongst a pilot group of senior management, reflecting the trend towards a coaching style of leadership that is gaining increasing prevalence.

The ELEVATE leadership development programme is provided through the Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU) and funded through TU Transformation Fund (TUTF) and HEA Systems Performance Funding. ELEVATE offers leadership skills training on a cohort basis — with particular emphasis on transformation, communication, planning and change. The project enables distributed leadership, emphasising collaboration, with a view to supporting the implementation of MTU Strategy and personal/team professional objectives that align with MTU Strategy. The continued emphasis on leadership development reflects current resourced efforts by organisations such as the European University Association (the European umbrella body representing various EU and UK universities). The ELEVATE programme has been availed of by 320 staff at MTU since the start of 2023. The programme also entails psychometric evaluation using the Insights Discovery® system. More recently, further work has commenced on a centralised approach to staff development within the University.

Analysis of other baseline and benchmarking data has informed specific targets for improvement that will allow us to monitor progress and evaluate the success of this PO, as follows:

- **Internships and placements**

For the class of 2022 across all HEIs, 42% undertook an internship or a placement as part of their programme of study. For MTU, this figure was 55%, significantly greater than the national average. By 2027/28, we aim to increase the percentage of MTU students who undertake an internship or a placement as part of their programme of study. This increase will ensure that we continue to exceed the national average and strive towards an ambitious target of 58%.

- **Projects with industry**

In 2023, MTU collaborated with industry on 100 projects. Across the period of this Performance Agreement, we aim to increase the number of industry collaborations by 10% to 110 projects per annum, further enhancing MTU's contribution to industry across the region.

- **Licenses, Options and Assignments (LOAs)**

In 2022, MTU secured 10 LOAs. We aim to secure 12 in the final year of the Performance Agreement (2027/28), an increase of 20%. This stretch target will ensure that we maintain focus in this area over the course of this Performance Agreement.

- **Upskilling, flexible, and lifelong learning courses including Springboard+/ICT skills/HCI courses**

On reviewing the HEA dashboard for the baseline year 2022, there is notable variance in performance on this metric among HEIs (e.g. SETU 708; TUS 1,889; UL 285; ATU 1,479; MU 22; MTU 995). Arriving at a suitable external benchmark is challenging, considering the different factors each university faces in meeting market demands. MTU considers the development and provision of upskilling, flexible and lifelong courses, including Springboard+, ICT skills and HCI courses, to be an important area for continued focus. We will measure our performance by the increased number of learners registered on part-time, flexible, customised, blended/online learning courses — including the number on Springboard+/ICT skills/HCI courses — relative to the baseline performance in 2022. Our objective is to increase the number of these enrolments by 12% by 2028.

- **Leadership Development**

MTU has forged a notable path with respect to leadership development. Work carried out by the Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU), funded by the HEA Systems Performance Framework, has provided the requisite support to this programme of work. Recognition of our efforts in this area was highlighted by the cross-sectoral attendance at the inaugural Leadership in Higher Education Summit that took place in MTU in May 2024. To build upon this programme, MTU is developing a series of Management Skills Development initiatives that will support managerial capacity building for both academic and PMSS management across the university. Benchmark data as a comparator to other organisations is limited, though we currently compare favourably to data captured in the EUA's NEWLEAD project. Imbibing the spirit of that programme, we will develop an offering that will be taken by over 50% of

management staff. This will be mirrored by other staff development offerings. This target will be supported by maintaining the existing high levels of engagement with our various leadership development programmes and by increasing the levels of psychometric evaluation amongst staff in leadership roles (50% increase on existing levels).

#### **Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 4**

MTU has experienced considerable success in the areas of upskilling, lifelong learning, Springboard+, ICT skills and HCI courses. With continued horizon scanning of industry requirements, we will refine and develop new programmes of study which will target marketplace demands and meet national skills gaps. Promotion, marketing and testimonials will assist growth in this area. MTU's current Extended Campus model, as outlined in published articles and conference presentations, allows the collation of business intelligence and supports strategic alignment of engagement efforts to ensure evidenced and measurable outcomes for the students, the university and the region.

The model is based on an integrated approach to engagement interactions with external partners:

- Dedicated facilitators from each faculty act as boundary-spanning agents, instigating and nurturing partnerships. Having representatives from each faculty with knowledge of available capacity and capability ensures prompt follow-up on leads and informed communication to external partners.
- Opportunities for engagement with the university are regularly communicated through networking activities, case studies, social media, learning clinics and email newsletters.
- A single point of contact is offered for external parties seeking to engage, and a Customer Relationship Management process supports relationship development, reporting and evidencing of impact. At its core, this process is about stimulating, stewarding and supporting a long-term, mutually beneficial, curated relationship with each external organisation.

As the high-level organisational structure has been determined, and as the executive posts are filled, MTU will implement a re-designed approach to an inclusive, integrated cross-university model for engagement over the first two years of this Performance Agreement, to maximise MTU's impact at regional and national levels. While the Extended Campus model is in place in the Cork campus, its benefits, and the benefits of other approaches to external engagement, will be assessed in the context of the new university structure. A suitable model of external engagement, for the entirety of MTU, will be designed and implemented over the course of this Performance Agreement.

MTU will appoint a Vice President for Engagement and International who will hold specific responsibility for ensuring that we achieve our engagement objectives. In addition, a review of professional service functions aims to ensure that MTU has the capacity and capability to achieve its targets in the engagement domain. MTU will identify specialist professionals within faculties who have the breadth and depth of knowledge required to lead the engagement agenda between MTU, its academic faculties, enterprise, community and external stakeholders. These specialist professionals will engender a growth in distributed leadership across MTU. This will ensure a mutually beneficial link between external demands and academic areas of endeavour.

Analysis of trends in staff involvement in engagement activities will be used to focus training and awareness raising. The self-evaluation process associated with the application for ACEEU (Accreditation Council for Engaged and Entrepreneurial Universities) accreditation will reveal areas for additional focus and development.

The attainment of targets under this performance objective will also be supported by the following strategic actions and activities:

- Development of a communication strategy outlining the benefits of engagement to all existing and potential external partners of MTU.
- Development of a toolkit to stimulate, support and share evidence of engagement.
- Development of micro-credentials in engagement for MTU staff; these will also be offered to HR and FE staff beyond the University as part of an implementation toolkit.
- Development of a system to ensure that staff contributions to engagement are recognised; this will also be offered to HR and FE staff beyond the University as part of an implementation toolkit.
- Application for accreditation by ACEEU (Accreditation Council for Engaged and Entrepreneurial Universities).
- Focus on development of mutually beneficial relationships with international universities for the benefit of all MTU stakeholders.
- Investigation and evaluation of the case for identifying the “specialist professionals within faculties” representatives for all faculties.
- Involvement of the MTU internal communications working group, to ensure awareness of and to promote engagement activities within MTU.
- Identification of suitable supports for data collection and analysis, to ensure that MTU’s decision-making in relation to engagement is data-driven, responsive and anticipates emerging opportunities at regional, national and international levels.

MTU will evaluate progress by:

- Selection and implementation of a cross-university system for tracking and recording engagement activity, including integrated tracking and case management of interactions with external stakeholders
- Development of metrics based on international best practice and consistent tracking utilising the ViClarity system
- Executive and Governing Body review of progress
- Engaged university accreditation.

## **Risks and mitigations**

Any delay in the implementation of the high-level organisational structure and subsequent redesign of external engagement and international functions would impact upon the delivery of this PO. In addition, there is a challenge in capturing accurate data with respect to external engagements, based on differences with respect to size of operation, geographic location, ability/time to commit to the relationship.

Uncertainties in the economic environment impact on enterprises' capacity and readiness to engage. Additionally, global geopolitical developments may have a significant impact on the South West, given the region's dependence on foreign direct investment and exports.

The recommendations of the OECD report may impact employment contracts across the TU sector during the lifetime of the framework.

Delivery of this PO relies on continued available funding to support the MTU leadership development programme.

The continual review of progress of the MTU Strategic Plan 2022–2027 will mean that actions will be taken to address and mitigate any risks identified and ensure progress.



## Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 4

| No. | Indicator  | Data source                                   | Data type    | Baseline     | Benchmark   | 2024/25      | 2025/26      | 2026/27      | 2027/28      | Cumulative target                  |
|-----|--|---|--------------|--------------|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------------------|
| 4.1 | <b>Proportion (%) of graduates who undertook internship or placement</b> | HEA System Performance Dashboard              | Quantitative | 2022: 55%    | Continue to exceed the average for all HEIs (42% in 2022) and maintain or improve performance relative to similarly sized universities, SETU (52%), TUS (35%), MU (54%), and UL (74%) | <b>55.5%</b> | <b>56%</b>   | <b>57%</b>   | <b>58%</b>   | <b>3 p.p. increase on baseline</b> |
| 4.2 | <b>Number of projects with industry</b>                                  | KTI Annual Knowledge Transfer Survey (AKTS)   | Quantitative | 2023/24: 100 | Performance of other similarly sized and resourced RPOs   | <b>102</b>   | <b>104</b>   | <b>107</b>   | <b>110</b>   | <b>10% increase on baseline</b>    |
| 4.3 | <b>Number of Licences, Options and Assignments (LOAs)</b>                | KTI AKTS and HEA System Performance Dashboard | Quantitative | 2022: 10     | Performance of other similarly sized and resourced RPOs<br><br>Similar sized universities considered for comparison: SETU, TUS, MU, UL  | <b>10</b>    | <b>11</b>    | <b>11</b>    | <b>12</b>    | <b>20% increase on baseline</b>    |
| 4.4 | <b>Number of enrolments on Springboard+/<br/>HCI courses</b>             | HEA Dashboard                                 | Quantitative | 2022: 995    | Maintain current share of national enrolments (12% in 2022, 8,251 total enrolments)   | <b>1,045</b> | <b>1,075</b> | <b>1,095</b> | <b>1,114</b> | <b>12% increase on baseline</b>    |

| No. | Indicator  | Data source  | Data type    | Baseline                 | Benchmark                                 | 2024/25   | 2025/26   | 2026/27   | 2027/28   | Cumulative target  |
|-----|--|--------------|--------------|--------------------------|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--|
| 4.5 | <b>Number of managers (academic and PMSS) undertaking Managerial Skills Development Programmes each year</b> | MTU CPD Data | Quantitative | 2023: 0<br>New programme | Suitable national comparators unavailable | <b>30</b> | <b>30</b> | <b>30</b> | <b>30</b> | <b>120 managers completed Managerial Skills Development Programme over 4 years</b> |

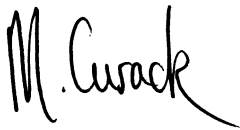
## Section 3: Matrix and Signatures

### Framework Matrix

|                             |   | Pillars             |                       |                        |            |
|-----------------------------|---|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------|
|                             |   | Teaching & Learning | Research & Innovation | Access & Participation | Engagement |
| Transversal areas of impact | Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning |                     | PO 2                  |                        | PO 4       |
|                             | Climate & Sustainable Development           | PO 1                |                       |                        |            |
|                             | Student Success                             | PO 1                | PO 2                  |                        |            |
|                             | Enterprise                                  |                     |                       |                        | PO 4       |
|                             | Society                                     |                     | PO 2                  | PO 3                   |            |
|                             | Region                                      | PO 1                |                       |                        | PO 4       |
|                             | International                               |                     |                       |                        |            |
|                             | Digital Transformation                      |                     |                       |                        |            |
|                             | Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging  |                     |                       | PO 3                   |            |
|                             | Institutional Leadership & Culture          |                     |                       |                        | PO 4       |
|                             | Sectoral & Tertiary Cohesion                |                     |                       | PO 3                   | PO 4       |

## Signatures

### On behalf of Munster Technological University



**Professor Maggie Cusack**  
**President**

Tuesday, 10 December 2024



**Mr Jimmy Deenihan**  
**Chair of the Governing Body**

Wednesday, 4 December 2024

### On behalf of the Higher Education Authority



**Dr Alan Wall**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

Tuesday, 10 December 2024



**Higher Education Authority**

3 Shelbourne Buildings, Crampton Avenue  
Shelbourne Road, Ballsbridge, D04 C2Y6

**Contact**

Phone: +353 1 2317100

Lo-Call Number: 1890 200 637

Email: [info@hea.ie](mailto:info@hea.ie) / [systemperformance@hea.ie](mailto:systemperformance@hea.ie)