

Progress Report 2

Governance and Operational Arrangements

The governance and operational arrangements are fully in place and are set out below. The project is now well placed to focus on delivery of the prioritised outcomes set out in the project plans.

1. All workstreams and working groups are in place, resourced and operating -
 - 8 workstreams with 18 leads;
 - 33 working groups (3 students union) with 58 co-chairs;
 - 2 project directors and 8 workstream coordinators;
 - 294 “ordinary” members of working groups;
2. The inaugural meeting of the joint executives of the institutes will take place on 4 December - their terms of reference is at Appendix A. This group will continue to meet on a regular basis.
3. Project plans have been developed for all working groups, prioritised and are now the focus of action by the groups.
4. The governing bodies of both institutes have agreed the re-structuring of the Joint Governing Bodies Steering Group.

Funding

Payment of €4,410,000 from the Technological Universities Transformation Fund has been received with a further allocation to follow in Q1 of 2021. A revised budget and work packages were submitted to the HEA in October. The Project Office is currently working with the finance offices in both institutes to allocate the resources across the workstreams. It is expected that the HEA will hold quarterly meetings with the Project Office to discuss progress achieved.

Data

The Technological Universities Act, section 28, sets out the TU eligibility criteria. The institutes have worked together since 2018 to understand respective information collection systems and to design and agree templates, definitions and time points in order to jointly capture TUSEI data to support an application for TU designation. Following the implementation of a data sharing agreement between the

institutes this October, a secure channel was established with all data from both organisations presented in the agreed formats.

Based on the HEA validated 2018/2019 student data and the December 2019 HEA staff returns and the research, KTI and teaching activity shared, the partner institutes, both individually and jointly as TUSEI, meet all of the criteria outlined in the TU Act.

Preparatory actions

Action is being taken on two fronts to prepare the consortium for the two major reviews following the making of an application for the establishment of the TU – audit and advisory panel.

Audit

In preparation for formal audit, which is part of the review of a TU application by the advisory panel, the institutes plan to update the criteria data to 2019/2020 student data and September 2020 staff information before undertaking a full preparatory audit in January next. The objectives set for this audit are to verify the basis of the definitions agreed, the robustness of the TUSEI interpretation of the criteria, the legitimacy of processes undertaken to generate the evidence to support eligibility claims and the ease and appropriateness of access to and presentation of support data for the various criteria. A tendering process to engage the necessary expertise will be completed this month.

Advisory panel

A preparatory advisory panel has now been established to conduct a preparatory review in the week of 8 March 2021 to -

- Review the application document;
- Assess the level of progress at that point necessary to establish the TU, including plans for further developmental work, and
- Provide feedback to the consortium on their level of readiness and generally on their “capacity to effectively perform the functions of a technological university”.

The following is the composition of the panel –

- **Professor Jim Browne** (chair). He is President at Irish Academy of Engineering, and Chairman at Children's Health Ireland (CHI). He is former President of the National University of Galway.
- **Professor John Goddard**, Emeritus Professor of Regional Development Studies at Newcastle University and Professor of Universities and Cities at City-Region Economic Development Institute (City-REDI) and the West Midlands Regional Economic Development Institute (WM REDI) at the University of Birmingham.
- **Professor Alyson Tobin**, Vice Principal of Learning and Teaching, Edinburgh Napier University, Scotland.

- **Dr Barbara Brittingham**, former President of the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) (USA); member of the QQI Board and the Quality Board for Higher Education in Iceland.
- **Dr. Eva Egron-Polak**. Former Secretary General and now Senior Fellow, International Association of Universities (Paris).

Communications

Communications has a wide relevance to the success of the TU project both within and outside the partner institutes. The following actions have been progressed or are in process-

1. Tendering for consultants to advise on branding the TU has been successfully completed and consultants appointed. Related to this, a post of brand manager is to be advertised and filled by mid-January. This person will manage the relationship with the consultants, consultations within the institutes with staff, students and governing body members as to the name and branding of the TU; managing the practical aspects of branding such as signage etc.,.
2. Given the central importance of internal communications, a staff member is to be seconded to the Project Office as engagement manager. This person will focus on effective engagement with staff and students so that there is wide circulation of and access to high quality information about the TU project and that the staff and students can genuinely contribute to the development of the TU. In the meantime, two townhall meetings are being organised before the Christmas break – one for staff and one for students to bring them up to date on the current status of the project and future plans. These will be led by the two Presidents.
3. A defining feature of a TU is its close and effective engagement with its region. A number of external stakeholders have indicated a strong interest in contributing to the development of the TU. To facilitate that, a Regional Engagement Forum is being established with its first meeting scheduled for early January. The institute Presidents will chair. While the membership is not yet fully decided, it is likely to include nominees of the following; IBEC, the Regional Skills Forum, the Chambers of Commerce, the ETBs, the South East Regional Executive and Ireland South East Development Office. It is foreseen that this group will meet regularly, and will form the embryo of on-going structured engagement between the TU and the region.
4. A series of workshops on key issues underpinning a successful TU for the SE has been established. The launch event was on regional engagement, followed by a workshop on Lifelong Learning. A workshop was also conducted by the project directors from MTU, attended by approximately 60 of the workstream leads and co-chairs of the working groups.

Collaborative activities

A register of significant actions/projects engaged in by the institutes individually or together with external stakeholders is being developed. From this register

opportunities for both institutes to further engage collaboratively with these stakeholders will be identified.

In addition, a number of cross institutional initiatives have been developed or are in planning as follows –

- A joint Masterclass for WIT/ITC supervisors was held on the 25th September with Dr Hugh Kearns, from Flinders University with 40 participants;
- A joint open research event was organised between WIT/ITC on 13th November called *Open Science, Academic Freedom & Paywalls with Alexandra Elbakyan (founder of Sci-hub)* and was well attended;
- A joint PhD Scholarship scheme was launched on the 17th November with Joint supervision between ITC/WIT as its main focus;
https://www.wit.ie/research/our_research/south-east-regional-development-scholarship-fund-pilot#tab=panel-1
- WIT/ITC researchers are going to join forces and merge their previously separate Enterprise Ireland CR and DTIF submissions testing ‘Drone technology’ into ‘joint proposals’;
- ITC researchers in aerospace engineering have begun collaborating with the SEE-Space Network, a recently formed WIT/CIT entity <http://spacenetwork.ie/>.
- In the Human Capital Initiative Call Pillar 3, WIT AMASE: Additive Manufacturing Advancing the South East, IT Carlow and regional Industry Partners received funding of € 2,152,349

Other long term collaborations include –

- The Enterprise Ireland Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative (TTSI - also includes Athlone IT and Maynooth University). This consortium has scored A+ consistently in independent reviews.
- The Enterprise Ireland New Frontiers Programme has been a single joint application and endeavour since 2011/2012

Next report

Given that the Christmas break will interrupt the work of the working groups, I propose to submit the next progress report in the week of 11 January 2021.

Tom Boland
1 December 2020

APPENDIX A

The Joint Executive of the Institute of Technology, Carlow and Waterford Institute of Technology

Outline of role

1. The joint executive (JE) of the institutes is an embryonic executive team for the TUSEI, once established.
2. As such, it is a complementary entity within the TUSEI consortium to the Joint Governing Body Steering Committee (Joint GB), mirroring the governance structures of the TU.
3. It is a separate entity from the TUSEI Leadership Group. The latter is focussed on delivering the multiple outcomes to create the TU while the JE is focussed on operational decisions up to establishment day. There will be some crossover as many issues arising in the Leadership Group will require decision by the JE.
4. The JE must progressively act as a single entity, exercising executive functions in respect of both institutes under the joint leadership of the institute presidents.
5. The development of TUSEI will require decisions to be taken, in advance of establishment, on various strategic and operational issues to ensure that the TU can operate effectively immediately on its establishment. While some of these decisions will be matters for the Joint GB, the respective institute governing bodies or their academic councils some will be a matter for the JE. Even where they are not, the JE will have a role in preparing the ground for decisions.
6. Some of the issues likely to arise for decision by the JE include graduate attributes, the approach to teaching and learning, the composition of the academic council and academic planning.
7. The JE will meet regularly, and not less than monthly.
8. Up to the establishment of the TU, a key and on-going role of the JE will be to oversee the development of the TU with the institute presidents, for whom the JE will provide a direct opportunity to monitor progress and provide leadership to the project. This will complement the oversight and reporting relationship between the project office and the presidents.
9. Minutes will be kept of all meetings of the JE. A supplementary objective of this is the evidence they will provide to the Advisory Panel of the constructive working relationship between the institutes and the shared development of the TU.