HEA | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

Report to the
Minister for Education and Skills
on system reconfiguration, inter-institutional
collaboration and system governance
in Irish higher education

17 April 2013

Foreword

The *National Strategy for Higher Education* set out a vision of Irish higher education to 2030. It reaffirmed the fundamental importance of excellent teaching and learning, quality in research and knowledge transfer, and effective engagement between higher education and society. In particular, it identified the challenge and opportunities of growing demand for higher education arising from Ireland's demographic growth, which is relatively unique in the European context. The need to provide for workforce up-skilling and for our system to be internationally networked and performing to international benchmarks were also identified.

The National Strategy identified a comprehensive policy and development framework for higher education, recognising the central role of Irish higher education institutions in the future development of Ireland, socially and economically, and some structural changes that need to be made in Irish higher education. It recognised that new approaches to the funding of institutions are necessary to support increased participation alongside quality outcomes and experiences. It also proposed more effective systems to drive performance and accountability.

This report to the Minister for Education and Skills sets out how the Higher Education Authority believes key elements the National Strategy can become a reality. It builds on a year-long process of research, analysis and engagement undertaken by the HEA.

This report focuses primarily on the broad system outcomes required of higher education, the system configuration principles on which these are based, and the proposed configuration and related governance arrangements. However, the HEA recognises that reform of the structures of higher education is merely an enabler of the much deeper reform envisaged in the National Strategy. Among these reforms are a shifting of the focus from inputs into the system to outcomes from the system and building upon and disseminating best practice and innovation across the system – for example, through the establishment of the Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. We also acknowledge the importance of capturing outcomes and levels of satisfaction (which is the focus of the National Student Survey and the National Employers Survey), and of the development of a national framework for PhD education. This document and our recommendations are, therefore, among a suite of actions and policies that will, over time, fundamentally reform our higher education system and lead to better outcomes for students and for Irish society

The actions recommended in this report will need the ongoing and concerted commitment of the HEA working closely with individual institutions and their staff to ensure that Irish higher education is sustainable, successful and competitive. This requires institutions to develop a strong vision that reflects their mission. Over time, these changes will ensure that the higher education system plays its full part in Ireland's social and economic development and in the enrichment of our cultural and intellectual life.

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1. Introduction

This report to the Minister for Education and Skills from the Higher Education Authority is the culmination of a series of consultations and reports aimed at addressing the challenges and recommendations outlined in the *National Strategy for Higher Education* (the National Strategy), in particular as these relate to the structure or configuration of the Irish higher education system.

This advice builds on other major changes announced since the publication of the strategy, including the agreement of the Process and Criteria for Designation as a Technological University setting out how institutions can become designated as technological universities and the significant role these new institutions can play in Irish higher education. At the same time it must be recognised that other elements of the implementation of the strategy (for example, those relating to sustainability) are still under way.

This report to the Minister is concerned with the structure and institutional disposition of the system. It makes recommendations for regional clusters, mergers of institutions and other recommendations specific to universities and to institutes of technology. The view of the HEA on proposals for technological university status is provided as well as recommendations in response to the thematic reviews of initial teacher education and of the creative arts and media in the Dublin region. The future role of a range of smaller colleges currently in receipt of public funding is also addressed.

In February 2012, the HEA issued a document, *Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape* (the Landscape Document) that set out the rationale for structural change in the way that the system is configured. The HEA then invited each higher education institution to respond to the Landscape Document and to define its institutional strategic vision within a future higher education landscape.

In January 2013, a further document (*Completing the Landscape Process for Irish Higher Education*) was published to bring together various inputs, expert analyses and submissions from the higher education institutions and to provide an outline structure and potential reconfiguration of the system. This document served as a focus for discussions in a round of consultation meetings with the higher education institutions in February 2013.

This report identifies:

■ A set of principles that will drive the configuration of a coherent and sustainable Irish higher education system (section 2);

■ The governance structures and processes that are required to underpin implementation of that system (section 3);

■ Details of the approach to be taken to the implementation of the proposals outlined in this report (section 4); and

■ Details of the recommended system configuration (section 5).

1.1 Expectations of the higher education system

The Government wishes to develop a coherent and sustainable system of higher education to meet the economic and social needs of the country, within its broad ambition to create an export-driven knowledge economy. Its aim is to underpin this ambition with a higher education system that can equip our people with the knowledge and skills necessary to live fulfilled and rewarding lives, and to meet the social and economic challenges we face as a country.

Ireland has 39 higher education institutions in receipt of public funding of over €1.5 billion annually and serving some 200,000 students. The Government, through the National Strategy, expresses the objective of creating a more coordinated and coherent system of interconnecting, complementary higher education institutions, each with a clearly defined mission.

The aim of this report

The recommendations in this report are aimed at supporting the delivery of the Government objectives by creating a *system* of collaborative, autonomous and accountable higher education institutions that are internationally benchmarked and globally competitive. A key objective is to build on the diversity that already exists within the system, as reflected for instance in the distinctive roles and missions of universities and institutes of technology, while enhancing the delivery of excellent outcomes in teaching, research and engagement for students and stakeholders envisaged in the National Strategy.

The National Strategy set high-level objectives for the higher education system that included the following:

- Increased participation, equality of access and lifelong learning in higher education;
- Excellent teaching and learning and quality of the student experience and opportunities;
- High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation;
- Enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange; and
- Enhanced internationalisation.

These objectives are set out in more detail in Appendix B**.**

The Minister's objectives for higher education reform

The Minister for Education and Skills, in his speech to higher education institutions and the HEA on 22 November 2012, brought the following high-level objectives together when he outlined four major outcomes for the higher education reform process:

1. Strengthening the university system.
2. Consolidation, strengthening and evolution of the institute of technology sector.
3. Achieving critical mass through consolidation, collaboration and the development of regional clusters.
4. Releasing the capacity and increasing the sustainability of the system.

1.2 International trends

The reform of Irish higher education, including the specific issue of the configuration of the system outlined in this report, occurs in a global context relating to the delivery of education, the creation and diffusion of knowledge and the recruitment of staff and students. Within this context, there is also an increasing emphasis on providing graduates with the skills and intellectual resources to operate internationally.

Benefits of higher education

Before discussing the growing importance of the role of higher education institutions in driving economic and social development, it is critical to stress that that role stands as a complement to the historical and equally important significance of higher education institutions as repositories of cultural and intellectual wealth, as places where the pursuit of knowledge is its own reward, and where the emphasis is on the holistic development of the individual. It is in the combination of all these complementary roles that higher education will help our societies to address challenges of contemporary living in a multi-cultural but intimately connected world.

Higher education and the knowledge economy

The role of higher education in driving economic and social development is well known. Around the world, higher education is becoming 'massified' (as more and more people enter universities and colleges), and countries are investing in research and innovation as they strive to enhance their human capital and development capacity.

Maintaining and improving the performance and international reputation of higher education systems is important not only for what it does for the institutions themselves (in attracting international students and staff, enhancing opportunities for graduates, opening up opportunities to engage in important global networks), but also, critically, in attracting mobile international investment and jobs. For these reasons, spending on higher education institutions is being seen more and more as a high return investment and not as just another expenditure item.

The need for investment

Ireland's higher education system needs substantial investment in order to ensure quality outcomes; for the country to compete with other major economies and to measure up to the Government's objectives for innovation and job creation. Many countries have invested significant additional funding to drive both research and the development of higher education institutions, and many are investing heavily to create excellent systems. Most have found it difficult to fund their institutions and research adequately from public funds. Everywhere we look there is an emphasis on getting the most from the available resources and on diversifying sources of revenue. International student income, domestic student contributions, and philanthropy are all being explored as solutions.

Innovation in programme delivery

The explosion in access to communication technologies has led to the free and instant exchange of ideas, with knowledge being available from multiple sources, including real-time or asynchronous access to lectures and seminars in a range of internationally renowned universities. This has led in turn to a reassessment of programme design and to significant innovations in programme delivery. Complex societal and economic needs require a diversified and ever-evolving programme portfolio, and interdisciplinary approaches are often required to address these challenges. This has led to an increased emphasis on open and distance learning and on blended learning, and has also encouraged greater inter-institutional collaboration.

The strength of diversity

A high level of institutional diversity has come to be recognised internationally as one of the key strengths of well functioning higher education systems. Alongside

this recognition, the need has grown for a better understanding of the variety of institutions and of the diverse range of activities they are engaged in. This has led to a greater emphasis on institutional profiling and on how this might be done in ways that are transparent, evidence-based and concisely formulated.

More sophisticated approaches to institutional funding and regulatory frameworks have also emerged. These seek to align approaches to funding and regulation with the value of diversity and to value appropriately and reward the different elements of mission within higher education systems.

The importance of institutional autonomy

Higher education forms a crucial part of national development strategies; and as knowledge creation and translation are moving rapidly, higher education must have the flexibility and agility to respond to changing conditions. For that reason, higher education institutions require greater autonomy, but must also retain appropriate levels of accountability to ensure that public investment is being used to best effect.

2. Principles of system configuration and coherence

2.1 System configuration principles

In preparing this report to the Minister for Education and Skills, the HEA set out system configuration principles, which we believe are essential to the development of a balanced national higher education structure.

The application of these principles will help create a system of higher education institutions with diverse missions to form a coherent and comprehensive group of providers.

1 *Quality* – provision is demonstrably fit for purpose; providers excel in distinct and diverse ways, whether specialised or comprehensive in focus, in meeting needs and challenges, and to continuously improve quality in teaching, research and engagement.

2 *Opportunity* – participation in higher education is accessible and suitable to the varying needs and circumstances of different types of learners and employers of graduates.

3 *Comprehensiveness* – the configuration of supply caters comprehensively for a diverse range of needs across a full spectrum of services; the sum of institutional plans for provision must not leave gaps in areas that are strategic, important or vulnerable.

4 *Coherence* – the regulatory frameworks and financing incentives set by Government act in concert; the strategies of different institutions are complementary and, taken together, are consistent with national policy goals and connect well with other parts of the education system.

5 *Autonomy and accountability* – the system is comprised of strong, effective and autonomous institutions that are transparently accountable for their performance.

6 *Critical mass* – critical mass is achieved through a process of consolidation, collaboration and the development of regional clusters.

7 *Cost-effectiveness* – intended outcomes are achieved through efficient organisation and operation of activities.

8 *Sustainability* – increased participation and improvements in quality are achieved together and within a sustainable funding and cost base.

9 *Responsiveness* – provision can respond to changes in environmental conditions and can adjust quickly to meet diverse user needs.

10 *Pragmatism* – in the development of the configuration, a value is placed on the opportunity to build on success that is offered by a number of alliances and clusters now being developed through the initiative of higher education institutions.

2.2 Development of the higher education system

These configuration principles align well with the changes envisaged in the National Strategy. The envisaged changes include:

- The system will comprise a smaller number of larger autonomous institutions with diverse but complementary missions;
- The use of public funding through a proposed strategic dialogue process which is outlined in Section 3 to enhance diversity and to underpin and drive forward the matching of performance to national objectives ;
- Institutions will participate in regional clusters that will enhance their collective strengths and their capacity to meet national objectives, as well as supporting regional development and educational provision;
- Reviews of disciplines or cross-cutting thematic areas will give rise to thematic clusters;
- Consolidation will be encouraged and supported where it leads to greater institutional quality and a broader range of complementary offerings;
- Smaller publicly-funded institutions will align with, or be incorporated into, institutions of sufficient scale to enable overall quality and efficiency objectives to be met; in general, mergers of institutions with distinctly different missions will not be supported where that would tend to dilute diversity;
- Institutes of technology seeking to enhance their performance and/or improve their sustainability will merge, with some progressing to seek designation as technological universities;
- Research-led higher education institutions will be encouraged to enhance their European and global research reputations by collaborating to develop research capacity; and
- Institutions will seek out and take advantage of the opportunities afforded by an increasingly global higher education system.

Giving effect to these changes will require system-level coordination and oversight which will be achieved through performance-based funding compacts with the HEA to ensure that institutional objectives are consistent with institutional missions.

2.3 A coherent system of higher education institutions

The strategic value of diversity

The Irish higher education system must deliver against multiple objectives, nationally, regionally, locally. It is not the role of the HEA or of central government to specify all objectives, but it is important that key overarching national objectives are clear. The National Strategy has emphasised five major domains of national objectives as outlined at 1.1 above.

No single institution can hope to deliver comprehensively against all these objectives. Instead, the National Strategy espoused a system approach, with different institutions delivering in different ways against these overarching objectives.

Any attempt to develop a more coherent system of higher education in Ireland must, as a starting point, support and develop the mission differentiation that already exists, as reflected in the two broad sectors: the universities and the institutes of technology.

Although there is considerable variation within each of these two sectors, generally institutes of technology are dominant in Levels 6 and 7, and are stronger than the universities in part-time and flexible provision. They also have a larger proportion of mature and disadvantaged entrants, are involved in less research activity in a smaller number of focused areas, and are significantly involved in industry support and regional engagement. Universities, on the other hand, generally focus on Level 8 at undergraduate level, are more active at postgraduate level and in international education, and have a higher proportion of research activity and a much higher proportion of national and international research funding.

The system as a whole will work best if the different choices made by institutions are valued equally and can serve to create a coherent whole. This is captured in adopting the idea of coherence as a system design principle – with its requirement to align the regulatory frameworks, financing incentives and the strategies of different institutions with national policy goals.

The development of institutional mission within the system

Institutional mission and profile are not immutable and should evolve in response to the environment in which the institution operates. This development needs to occur however in a coordinated way, set within the context of national needs and within the system of distinct and diverse institutions now proposed.

Scale and viability

The National Strategy recommends consolidation in the higher education system, which currently consists of many institutions that are small by comparison with international norms. Although size alone does not determine the quality and capacities of a higher education institution, there is significant international evidence that if small institutions are to flourish they need a level of investment that is not achievable in the Irish context or that of most other countries. In the United States there are several examples of small but high performing institutions, but these tend to have major endowments or charge high fees.

The more common situation, especially in predominantly government-funded higher education systems, is that increasing institution size is the main means of addressing the requirements of financial viability in small but unviable teaching-led institutions and also of addressing the need to improve competitiveness and quality of outcomes in smaller research-oriented institutions. Increasing institution size in such cases can increase the flexibility that is needed to generate and to allocate resources.

International experience indicates that forced mergers can lead to considerable loss of performance and mission. However, in cases where the viability of a higher education institution is at stake, it has to be borne in mind that merger with another institution might be the only viable option.

The proposed consolidation within the institute of technology sector is aimed at protecting and enhancing the distinctive career- and enterprise-focused mission of institutions in this sector while enhancing their strength and scale. Some institutes have sought designation as technological universities according to the process and criteria published in the HEA Landscape Document and attached to this report as Appendix A. This will further enhance the performance and capability of any institutions so designated.

Formal alliances between institutes of technology and universities should not dilute the distinctiveness and coherence of either sector. Schemes like the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) and the Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRTLI) have shown how the institutions can cooperate effectively to address

common problems and share solutions. It is not the intention to disrupt effective collaborations with the new arrangements being proposed here. The HEA will continue to support collaborative proposals from institutions who are seeking to improve performance in areas where they share common challenges.

In seeking to achieve these benefits of scale, the HEA will also place considerable emphasis on bringing the institutions together in strong regional clusters (detailed later) that will enhance the particular strengths of the constituent members, while creating the critical mass to deliver high-quality programmes.

The strategic value of maintaining and enhancing research quality

Maintaining and enhancing the quality of research is of critical importance, and collaboration in research will be crucial at a national level in order to:

- Continue to develop a strong international research brand for Ireland;
- Optimise the contribution to grand challenges in the European context;
- Maximise the system's effectiveness in attracting an increasing share of internationally mobile competitive research funding.

Collaboration in research will also be necessary to ensure the best use of scarce resources, and the HEA will be particularly focused on the level of collaborative activity (nationally and internationally) in research when it enters into strategic dialogue with institutions to agree on compacts.

Collaboration between public funders of research is as important as collaboration between research providers. The HEA itself will collaborate closely with other public funders of research and will coordinate a network of agencies that interact with higher education as recommended in the National Strategy.

Towards the proposed configuration

Taking all of these various elements together, the system as recommended will comprise:

- Existing universities;
- Institutes of technology,
- Technological Universities, subject to designation as such
- A small number of publicly funded specialist providers.

These institutions will collaborate extensively in regional and thematic clusters and in other inter-institution alliances.

It is also envisaged that there will be an increased role for private (not-for-profit and for-profit) providers but these do not fall within the remit of this report. The further education sector and the system of apprenticeships (neither of which are included in the remit of this report), are key contributors to the success of meeting Ireland's skills needs and it will be necessary to address their roles in the Irish post-secondary system at the earliest opportunity.

Section 5 of this report sets out a proposed configuration which in the view of the HEA will meet the principles outlined earlier. It will ensure that Ireland has a diverse range of mission-specific institutions of a scale capable of delivering individually and in collaboration on the objectives of the Government. In delivering on their mission, institutions should seek a balance between their regional, national and international interests.

3.   System governance

The creation of a mission-diverse, well coordinated system of higher education institutions that is capable of delivering on national outcomes will require robust governance processes and accountability. At the centre of this will be the process of strategic dialogue that will lead to a range of appropriate and complementary funding compacts between the HEA and the institutions. In addition, a key success factor will be the effectiveness of regional clusters in terms of their composition, objectives, accountability procedures, governance and inter-connectedness with institutional compacts.

This section deals with a range of matters including the strategic dialogue process, regional clusters, alliances, thematic clusters and sustainability issues which are critically important to ensuring effective governance of the overall system.

3.1   Strategic dialogue and mission-based performance compacts

A new process of strategic dialogue and performance funding will be introduced based on agreed compacts that will seek to achieve a differentiated set of challenging targets across the system, taking account of the different starting points and strengths of different institutions and enabling appropriate comparison and assessment of institutional performance.

The process will involve setting aside a small proportion of the core grant each year to be allocated based on institutional performance against agreed missions and plans. All higher education institutions in receipt of core grant or free fees funding will have a performance-based funding compact. There will be a single compact with each institution, encompassing the institution's individual performance and its performance as a member of its regional cluster.

The compacts will be formal agreements developed through a process of strategic dialogue between the HEA and the institutions. In the course of this process, each institution will set out the following:

- Its strategic objectives, which will be set within the context of the high-level objectives for the system as a whole (see Appendix B) – these will be assessed by the HEA to determine whether or not they fit the overall system plans and are appropriate to the mission of the institution, and are realistic and challenging;
- The qualitative and quantitative indicators of success by which it should be measured;
- Current and future institutional profiles; and
- The financial plan that underpins the institutional strategy.

The compacts will be agreed for three-year periods, with funding allocated each year based on an assessment of performance and progress towards agreed outcomes. The HEA will begin the process each year by outlining the Government's priorities for the system over the following three years and assumptions in relation to student places and funding.

System objectives: coherent plans

At the end of the process the HEA will ensure that institutional and system plans are in alignment and are capable of being funded. The purpose of this is to ensure

that the compacts as a whole lead to a coherent set of plans to achieve the Government's objectives.

Compact negotiations will begin in 2013 with a view to formal agreements being finalised in time for the allocation of 2014 grants. The table below sets out the process of strategic dialogue and compact negotiations and the respective responsibilities of each of the parties to the process.

Division of responsibilities in the strategic dialogue process

Minister for Education and Skills

- Sets national objectives for the higher education sector through national strategy, periodic reviews and development

Higher Education Authority (HEA)	**Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)**
- Advises on national goals	- Reflect national objectives in their institutional plans
- Allocates performance funding	- Are part of a regional cluster and reflect its objectives in their institutional plans
- Evaluates HEIs' plans and agrees compacts with HEIs	- Amend plans based on dialogue meetings with HEA
- Responsible for coherent system outputs that meet national objectives	- Implement and are accountable for institutional plans

HEA and HEIs

- Agree performance compacts

3.2   Regional clusters

Among the defining characteristics of the Irish higher education system over the last decade and a half has been the effectiveness of structured forms of inter-institutional collaboration. This has been in part a result of the explicit value placed on collaboration within competitive funding programmes such as the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions and the Strategic Innovation Fund.

The recommendation in this report in relation to regional clusters builds on progress that has already been made and supports the development of current models of collaboration into more stable and permanent arrangements between institutions.

Dynamic and innovative 'regions of knowledge'

The ultimate vision for regional clusters is that they will function to create dynamic and innovative 'regions of knowledge' capable of increasing regional capacity, capability and global competitiveness in order to contribute significantly to social, cultural and economic development. They will do this by exploiting the strengths of individual institutions within the cluster and by maximising their collective capacity which will be greater than the sum of their individual strengths.

These clusters will bring together higher education institutions to engage actively with enterprises, community organisations and regional authorities to provide education and research programmes and to engage in knowledge exchange.

Clusters will offer a high quality and better-integrated set of services to students, businesses and communities. They will play a key leadership role in a region's economic, social and cultural vibrancy and will help underpin its economic development. Developing areas of research and teaching excellence in fields that are directly related to a region's sustainability will further enhance the integration of universities and institutes into local communities.

Priority objectives for regional clusters

Regional clusters will be invited to prepare plans over the same three-year period as institutions. These regional plans will be the subject of separate negotiations between the HEA and all members of the cluster meeting together. Accountability for the achievement of the cluster objectives, however, will remain with the participating institutions. Performance compacts encompassing the objectives agreed for clusters will be agreed between the HEA and the individual institutions, and not between the HEA and the regional cluster.

Regional clusters will address the following priority objectives:

Objective 1: Shared, coordinated academic planning

Addressing development of joint programmes, shared access to common modules, removal of unnecessary duplication of provision, coordinated approach to research and research programmes, regional collaboration on structured PhDs.

Progress indicators:

- Consideration of academic provision in the region, having regard to the following:
  - Quality
  - Critical mass
  - Student choice
  - Identification of duplication
  - Fields of specialisation
  - Mapping of existing provision
- Bilateral and multilateral formal agreements providing for the establishment of centres of academic excellence at undergraduate and postgraduate levels

Objective 2: Regionally co-ordinated approach to transfer and progression pathways

Progress indicators:

- Bilateral and multilateral and formalised arrangements for progression and credit transfer between institutions within the cluster and, over the medium term, between clusters
- Bilateral and multilateral formal arrangements between higher education and second level and further education institutions in the region covering learner access arrangements and including specified transition to higher education programmes

Further objectives for regional clusters

As regional clusters build capacity and lay a foundation of success from which to develop they should address the following three further objectives, each with its own set of progress indicators.

Objective 3: Coordinated regional approach to enterprise and the community and to regional development

Progress indicators:

■ Shared and networked responsibility for the provision of high-level skills
■ Labour market support and development arrangements

Objective 4: Shared services and facilities, including harmonisation of systems and processes where this could add value or enable further collaboration at a later stage

Progress indicators:

■ Agreements to standardise particular MIS systems
■ Shared learner support services
■ Shared administrative support services
■ Shared critical infrastructure, including research and business incubation space, specialist libraries and sports facilities
■ Formalised arrangements between higher education and second level and further education institutions to promote access to laboratories and specialist teaching facilities
■ Shared use of virtual learning environments and other specialist learner support services

Objective 5: Shared and coordinated approach to the presentation and promotion of the region internationally.

Progress indicators:

■ Cooperation with other stakeholders (e.g. local authorities, enterprise agencies, and others) in identifying and undertaking opportunities for shared marketing and promotion of the region
■ Collaboration on strategies for foreign student recruitment to identify potential benefits to be derived from cooperation

Clusters: a simple and clear structure

The structure of clusters should be simple and clear and should be based on the commitment of the participants to work together.

Effective clusters are more likely to emerge when the independent constituent institutions have governance and management structures that facilitate them working together to achieve agreed common objectives. The HEA recommends that no additional rigid or statutory governance layer should be created for regional clusters as that could interfere with the autonomy and clear accountability of member institutions.

Instead, the institutions within each cluster will put in place governance agreements that provide for effective operation, with clear accountability to the governing bodies of the member institutions in a manner that minimises any additional burden on institutions. Such agreements could cover arbitration to resolve any disagreements that might arise (for example, on matters such as unnecessary programme duplication) and prior agreement to be bound by the arbitration's findings. The objectives of clusters should be an integral part of those

of the participating institutions and they will form part of the formal compacts between the HEA and the institution.

An important aspect of ensuring the success of clusters is that members agree (as part of the strategic dialogue process) with the HEA on what they will do as a cluster and what they will deliver independently of the cluster. Institutional funding will be based on this combination of deliverables and institutions will be held accountable for delivering on both.

3.3   Other inter-institutional alliances

There will continue to be the range of alliances that have always been an important part of the higher education landscape and will be increasingly so in future.

International alliances have transformed the scale and reach of some higher education institutions, particularly over the last decade and more recently still, and their achievements are critically important to the success of the entire system. The HEA will work to remove any constraints to the further development of these alliances, particularly with regard to any necessary legal and regulatory frameworks, while also providing for transparency and accountability.

It is also expected that alliances will continue to form across regions where there is a potential to achieve positive outcomes. Participation in one cluster of institutions does not mean that an institution cannot also enter into agreement, or form an alliance with any other institution that supports its objectives.

3.4   Thematic clusters and thematic reviews

The principle of close collaboration to maximise individual and collective capability that applies to regional clusters applies to *thematic* clusters. This report addresses two such clusters: in initial teacher education and in the creative arts in the Dublin region – see page 27. The HEA considers that there is an important role for further thematic clustering of institutions within the coherent and coordinated system now being put in place.

To that end the HEA will conduct thematic reviews on an ongoing basis to identify and address potential areas for collaboration or more effective delivery. Such reviews could focus on disciplines, on emerging national and international responses to the challenges facing society in areas such as aging, energy and so on; or they could focus on coordinated responses to emerging skills needs or longer-term human capital needs. Trends in the organisation or delivery of services such as online, distance and blended learning, challenges in improving quality, the provision of high-cost or low-demand disciplines or the governance of institutions would all be examples of the types of issue that could feature in thematic reviews.

In the short term it is proposed to conduct a review of existing provision in engineering and to move to the next stage of the ongoing review of nursing. The responses of the institutions to the findings of thematic reviews will be assessed as part of the process of strategic dialogue.

3.5   Achieving sustainability in the higher education system

The higher education system must be sustainable:

■   At the local level – with institutions that are sufficiently well resourced to meet their agreed strategic needs and are efficient and effective in the use of their resources and;

■ At a system level – through adequate funding per student to support quality higher education and through efficient and effective models for funding allocation.

It is clear that the transformation of Ireland's higher education system envisaged in the National Strategy and in the follow-up analyses and reports will not be possible without an increased level of funding, combined with transformation in the way funding is generated and used and the ways in which individual institutions operate.

The scale of the quantitative and qualitative demands requires that all policy options be considered. Traditionally, discussion of funding for the Irish higher education system has focused mainly on the public expenditure component. Given the state of Ireland's public finances, other elements of funding must become part of the sustainability debate. But crucially, adequate funding, whether from public sources or elsewhere, remains essential. Nevertheless, there are opportunities to improve the efficiency with which existing resources are used – for example, through increased shared services, by addressing any issues of under-performance, by more innovative use of institutional buildings and resources, and also by the use of communication technologies for teaching and learning.

The HEA is currently developing advice for the Minister on a strategy for ensuring sustainability of the system.

3.6 Changes in system governance

The planning and operation of the system of higher education will be improved by

■ The introduction of regional clusters of institutions

■ The development and introduction of new mechanisms to improve the effectiveness of existing funding allocation. This will include the introduction of strategic dialogue and performance management embedded within an overarching framework of national objectives; and

■ The use of ongoing thematic reviews to identify opportunities, anticipate change and improve system performance in Irish higher education.

However, these changes are not ends in themselves rather, they are key enablers to ensure that the Irish higher education system can continue its long record of contribution to Irish society and ensure that that record can continue even more powerfully into the future.

4. Implementation

To ensure that the ultimate policy objectives are achieved, it will be necessary to develop a phased implementation plan for the various elements of the proposals outlined in this report, and establishing this will be part of the compact negotiations between the HEA and the institutions.

4.1 Development of regional clusters

The HEA will adopt a staged approach to the development of regional clusters, facilitating those that are already in place or close to being established, while allowing the less well-developed to negotiate a start date over a defined period of time. This would also enable them to benefit from the experience of those that are established first.

In the short term, while full clusters are being established, there may be alliances between institutions who will eventually be members of the same cluster. Such alliances will be recognised and coordinated to promote the creation of coherent system outcomes.

4.2 Managing mergers

The coming years will probably see a significant level of merger activity in the higher education system. Mergers are envisaged within the institute of technology sector and some incorporations of smaller colleges and colleges of education into universities are expected. Mergers in higher education are notoriously difficult and can only be driven by a mutual recognition that the ultimate outcome will justify the effort and inevitable short-term disruptions. Central authorities must also set the policy parameters and funding mechanisms appropriate to spur collaboration, rationalisation and eventual merger where this is a viable and necessary outcome.

Successful mergers need strong leadership and good communications to ensure that they are well managed and that the negotiation and implementation processes stay on course. It is proposed that in any case where a decision is made to proceed with a merger that requires legislative change, the relevant legislation should be enacted immediately to create the new institution, which should be governed by the reformed governance arrangements for the boards of higher education institutions proposed in the National Strategy. The governing board for each new merged institution should be appointed as soon as the legislation is in place, and its first task should be to appoint a new President who will take responsibility for the implementation of the merger. This will ensure that those implementing the merger will be responsible for its ultimate success, including the creation of missions and the negotiations of compacts for which they will be accountable.

The strategic objectives of institutions involved in consolidation and merger will obviously include milestones on the path towards the merged entity and will include a strategy for managing risk. The strategic dialogue process between the HEA and these institutions will also formally review the institutions' performance in relation to the achievement of agreed objectives and the implementation of the related risk management strategy.

4.3 Key enabling steps

The implementation of the revised system configuration described in this report requires the following key enabling steps to be taken. Taken together, these steps

will help minimise risk and help ensure that resources are appropriately aligned with policy objectives.

■ The Government should act without delay to put in place the relevant legal instruments. These relate, among others, to the strategic dialogue process, measures to support mergers, allocation of funding by reference to performance, provision for the establishment of technological universities, and the governance arrangements, composition and powers of the HEA.

■ The Government should put in place the arrangements required to ensure the funding necessary to underpin the sustainability of a high-quality higher education system.

■ The HEA should use public funding through the strategic dialogue process to enhance institutional differentiation and to underpin the matching of performance to national objectives.

■ Current mechanisms for human resource management, such as performance management and workload allocation models must be implemented fully and effectively in all institutions, while any barriers to further flexibility in human resource management should be identified and addressed as a matter of urgency.

■ The HEA and Solas, together with the Department of Education and Skills, should without delay begin the process of putting in place the arrangements for integrated strategic planning between the Further Education and Higher Education sectors.

■ The HEA needs to have the capability, both in terms of the number of staff and knowledge/competencies, to take on its much altered and expanded role in relation to the delivery of a more coordinated high-quality system of higher education.

■ The HEA and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) must within a short timeframe develop an effective, well coordinated and mutually supportive working relationship.

Risks attach to the implementation of this revised configuration. In particular, achieving the outcomes now proposed (and implementing the strategy for higher education reform as a whole), is crucially dependent on the successful alignment of resources and objectives.

5. Proposed higher education system configuration

Given the number of institutions involved and the diversity of existing and proposed relationships between them, any statement of the overall configuration of the system will be complex. This section includes configuration recommendations relating to the following:

■ Regional clusters;

■ Universities – in particular relating to significant proposed collaboration and alliances;

■ Proposals for the establishment of technological universities;

■ Strategic alliances among institutes of technology

■ Changes relating to teacher education;

■ Changes relating to the creative arts and media in Dublin; and

■ Changes relating to institutions funded by the Department of Education and Skills.

5.1 Regional clusters

The primary objective of establishing a regional cluster is to bring together higher education institutions in a region in such a way that the contribution of higher education to the region can be identified and provided for in a coordinated way, in partnership with other education providers, and with business interests and with the wider community.

In arriving at the proposal of regional clusters, the HEA has considered principles that we believe are essential to the development of a balanced national higher education system. We have also looked at, among other things, analyses of student destinations and HEI catchment areas.

The HEA recognises that the best prospect for long-term success of any cross institutional relationships arises where institutions themselves wish to collaborate. For that reason we have also taken into account the proposals of, and current relationships among, the HEIs themselves, including the proposals received from groups of institutions with regard to consolidation and ultimate designation as technological universities. The HEA also recognises that while much progress has been made at institutional level in developing alliances among institutions with complementary missions, more can and must be done. The HEA proposes that the starting point for cluster activity will be shared academic planning and provision with activity then increasing to encompass regional engagement.

Summary of proposed regional clusters

The following regional clusters are proposed.

Region	Member institutions
South	University College Cork, Cork IT, IT Tralee, Waterford IT and IT Carlow
Mid-West	University of Limerick, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick IT
West	Galway-Mayo IT, IT Sligo, Letterkenny IT and NUI Galway (St Angela's / Shannon College incorporated into NUI Galway)

Dublin / Leinster *Pillar I*	University College Dublin / Trinity College Dublin / National College of Art and Design / Marino Institute of Education / Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
Dublin / Leinster *Pillar II*	Dublin Institute of Technology / IT Tallaght / IT Blanchardstown / Dublin City University (and incorporating linked colleges) National College of Ireland / Dundalk IT / NUI Maynooth / Athlone IT / Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

The clusters in the West and Mid-West also share a common linkage through the existing NUI Galway and University of Limerick Alliance, and offer the potential that both clusters could operate as one to maximise benefits to institutions and external stakeholders. This will be further explored by the HEA in the strategic dialogue process.

The Dublin / Leinster regional clusters

The Dublin / Leinster region, by virtue of the number of institutions involved, poses a greater challenge than the other regions in terms of coordination and coherence. It has, therefore, been decided to subdivide the Dublin / Leinster cluster into two distinct *pillars*, each of which will operate separately within the parameters of a regional cluster. But the creation of a fully-functioning regional cluster for Dublin, closely connected to and contributing to the development of the city and the region remains a strategic objective for the HEA. Such a cluster will ultimately have about 95,000 students, representing about 55% of the entire sector cohort at levels 8 and higher.

A combined Dublin regional cluster, the Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance (DRHEA) was set up in 2009 under the Strategic Innovation Fund and it met with some success, particularly in graduate education and in widening participation. It also led to the development of deeper collaborations among subsets of members. But the experience of the DRHEA illustrated the danger of being too ambitious, of overloading clusters with objectives, and of trying to do too much too quickly. Therefore, while maintaining the original vision of DRHEA, but learning from its experience to date, a more staged and focused approach to the Dublin region is recommended here – the creation of two pillar clusters now with a view to increasing collaboration between them in the future. In the short term both pillars will be required to collaborate in respect of graduate education. In addition, within three years, it is expected that a fully-functioning system of credit transfer will be developed across all the HEIs in the combined two pillars.

The HEA will give further consideration as to how the Dublin Institute of Technology / IT Tallaght / IT Blanchardstown group can engage most effectively within the proposed regional cluster given that in the short to medium term they are also involved in major restructuring and relocation.

5.2 Universities

To create the overall coherent system of higher education now proposed, significant structural change is envisaged across the universities and colleges. This will be achieved through greatly enhanced collaboration within regional and thematic clusters as well as through systematic rationalisation of provision on a thematic basis. Some of the proposed changes will represent considerable change in large institutions; others relate to smaller institutions collaborating with or being incorporated into larger institutions.

Some critical alliances are emerging and rationalisation of some existing relationships between universities and allied colleges is also under way. Of more immediate impact will be the implementation of the recommendations of the *Review of the Structure of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland* (Initial Teacher Education Review) and, in Dublin, the *Review of the Provision of Creative Arts Programmes in Dublin*

The universities have a strong international as well as a national focus and they will contribute to the overall system by continuing to build and strengthen strategic national and international partnerships.

A number of significant alliances between individual universities and institutes of technology have developed (or are proposed), which have the potential to bring significant benefits to the system. In general these alliances are supported where they have the potential to bring clear benefits to students and to higher education more generally. They will be underpinned by memoranda of understanding that provide a clear basis for the relationships, their objectives and expected outcomes. Such memoranda should also address issues relating to governance and the procedures to be put in place to ensure diversity of mission, while protecting the distinctive mission of the institutions involved. Except in the case of certain postgraduate awards, universities will not become awarding bodies for institutes of technology.

Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin

The Innovation Alliance between Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin offers considerable potential for a closer and more dynamic relationship between these two universities. The Alliance has particular relevance to research and postgraduate education, but its impact could also be felt at undergraduate level. While the Alliance has been slow to develop to its potential, the universities have ambitious plans for its development. The HEA will, in consultation with Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin, commission a review of the Alliance in 2013 with a view to broadening and deepening its impact.

Dublin City University, NUI Maynooth and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland – 3U Partnership

Dublin City University, NUI Maynooth and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland have established a major strategic partnership that aims to deliver comprehensive collaboration across a range of academic, research, education and internationalisation activities. This is also an important building block towards the wider Dublin / Leinster regional cluster (*Pillar II*) described above.

NUI Galway and University of Limerick

The strategic alliance between NUI Galway and University of Limerick across the spectrum of the activities of both universities should continue to be developed. The HEA will seek evidence of such development as part of its future strategic dialogue with both institutions.

NUI Galway and Shannon College of Hotel Management

Shannon College of Hotel Management has for long had been integrated into the academic structures of NUI Galway. This relationship has been managed so as to protect and support the mission of Shannon College as a distinctive type of college of management. It is proposed that Shannon College should become incorporated as a college of NUI Galway – recognising and copper-fastening the existing relationship and recognising the considerable benefits to the development of the

college from closer collaboration with the NUI Galway Business School. Provision for the transfer of staff and pension rights from the semi-state airport company to the university needs to be agreed.

NUI Maynooth and St Patrick's College, Maynooth

The relationship between these two institutions has a long history and is reflected in the high level of cooperation between them. St Patrick's College brings a valuable contribution to the publicly-funded higher education system, especially through its programmes in theology. The arrangements for the allocation of public funding to St. Patrick's College will be reviewed in the context of the transfer of responsibility for funding allocation from the Department of Education and Skills to the HEA. In principle, funding for St Patrick's College should be allocated to NUI Maynooth which in turn would make appropriate arrangements in respect of the services and provision that St Patrick's College is in a position to provide.

While it is primarily a matter for the college itself as a private institution, the HEA considers that St Patrick's College, Maynooth has potential to attract significantly more international students because of its history and international networks.

5.3   Technological university proposals

Three formal expressions of interest have been received by the HEA under the process to seek designation as a technological university[1]:

Dublin Institute of Technology *IT Tallaght* *IT Blanchardstown*	■ 23,738 students ■ 2,433 staff ■ Income of €250 million ■ Research income of €20 million
Cork Institute of Technology *IT Tralee*	■ 11,900 students ■ 1,283 staff ■ Income of €135 million ■ Research income of €16 million
Waterford Institute of Technology *IT Carlow*	■ 12,943 students ■ 1,249 staff ■ Income of €122 million ■ Research income of €19 million

These three expressions of interest have been considered only to the extent set down in the published *Process and Criteria for Designation as a Technological University* – that is, in the context of a system-wide analysis of Ireland's higher education needs and the strategic implications arising from the establishment of a new university. It would not be appropriate at this stage to consider an expression of interest as if it were already at the stage of an application for technological university status.

In terms of system needs, the proposals offer potentially important benefits to Irish higher education, including:

■   Further enhancing the performance of those institutes of technology applying for technological university status;

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[1] The figures quoted here show the aggregate size of the proposed technological universities drawing on HEA data for 2010.

- Consolidation within the sector;
- Geographical coherence and improved capacity of institutions to meet regional needs; and
- Improved institutional scale.

The improvement of scale will be particularly important in relation to the challenge that applicants for technological university status must address in improving their competitive position nationally and internationally, particularly in order to secure the new sources of research funding that will probably be necessary to achieve the research criteria for ultimate designation as a technological university.

The HEA also considered the strategic issue of potential loss of provision at levels 6 and 7 arising from the establishment of technological universities. The proposals received have reaffirmed the necessary commitment on the part of the institutes to retain appropriate provision at those levels.

Finally, each group that has submitted an expression of interest is within a reasonable distance of the criteria set for the time of application.

It is the conclusion of the HEA that the three expressions of interest have, at this stage of the process, established to a reasonable degree that they are in line with overarching system aims, and have the potential to reach the required criteria set out in the published process and criteria for designation as a technological university. They should therefore proceed to Stage 2 of the process

Cork IT / IT Tralee and Waterford IT / IT Carlow

In considering the cases of the Cork IT / IT Tralee and Waterford IT / IT Carlow expressions of interest, the HEA had regard to whether the strategic interest of the regions and the country would be better served by the creation of a single technological university from these two separate proposals. Combining all four institutes, there would be clear potential for a multi-campus technological university of scale. With approximately 23,000 students, current income of over €220 million, 2,500 academic, support and research staff, and research income of €37m, such an institution would certainly offer enhanced benefits to students, enterprise and communities in the South, and it would have greater potential to compete internationally.

However, based on institutional submissions and on HEA engagement with the institutions, it is clear that at present there is no appetite for such a proposal. Notwithstanding this, as the institutions engage with the process of meeting the technological university criteria, the option of a more co-ordinated approach up to and including a single institution should be kept live and reconsidered if it offers a realistic prospect of delivering a stronger institution.

Subject to this proviso, it is recommended that each of these two separate expressions of interest should now proceed to the next stage of the process for designation as a technological university as set out in the Landscape Document.

5.4   Institutes of technology: strategic alliances

The Connacht Ulster Alliance: Galway–Mayo Institute of Technology, IT Sligo and Letterkenny IT

The Connacht Ulster Alliance, signed in July 2012 commits the three partner institutes to develop significant and meaningful collaboration on a comprehensive range of activities. There are clear benefits from effective collaboration between these three institutes of technology, including improved financial sustainability,

complementarity of activities and appropriate specialisations, coordinated use of resources, as well as a stimulus for enterprise development in the region.

The HEA will require the alliance to achieve jointly agreed objectives and have governance structures that are clearly set out. The objectives should be clearly articulated in the performance funding compacts between the HEA and each of the participant institutes.

It is noted that the alliance has indicated that its longer-term ambition is to apply for designation as a technological university. As set out in the published process and criteria for designation as a technological university a legal merger must have been achieved before application for designation as a technological university can proceed to Stage 4 of the process.

Limerick IT, Athlone IT and Dundalk IT

Limerick IT, Athlone IT and Dundalk IT have declared their intention to continue to develop as institutes of technology, with close links within their regional clusters. In addition to regional cluster relationships, each of these institutes has developed, or is in the course of developing, an alliance with a university as described next, with University of Limerick, NUI Maynooth and Dublin City University respectively. The agreements underpinning these alliances should address issues relating to the procedures to be put in place to protect the distinctive mission of the institutions involved. Universities should not become the awarding bodies for institutes of technology as part of such alliances, although there may be some limited exceptions to this general principle in the case of certain postgraduate research awards.

Dundalk IT and DCU, Athlone IT and NUI Maynooth, Limerick IT and UL, Cork IT and UCC, Galway–Mayo IT and NUI Galway

These five alliances have the potential to enhance the capacity of both the institutes and the universities to deliver a quality higher education experience to their students and to maximise the effective use of resources. They make provision for collaboration in teaching and learning, research and engagement. Particular consideration is being given to universities providing extensive support for research programmes in institutes in the case of some of these alliances.

These alliances will be most effective if each partner institution contributes to the objectives of the alliance according to its distinctive mission. The HEA will keep the operation of these alliances under review as part of the strategic dialogue process.

5.5   Teacher education

Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, Marino Institute of Education and National College of Art and Design

Following the recommendations of the *Initial Teacher Education Review*, Trinity College Dublin, Marino Institute of Education, University College Dublin and the National College of Art and Design will participate in the formation of a proposed new Institute of Education. The HEA will require a detailed implementation plan by October 2013.

While the relationship between Marino Institute and Trinity College Dublin is currently based on a joint trusteeship, it is the view of the HEA that the full incorporation of Marino Institute into Trinity College offers the optimal structural arrangement and this should be advanced by the institutions.

University College Cork and Cork IT

Good progress has already occurred in implementing the integration of art teacher education (currently provided by Cork IT) into University College Cork with the objective of a joint programme leading to joint awards by 2014.

NUI Galway, St Angela's College of Education, Galway–Mayo IT

It is proposed that St Angela's College, Sligo be fully incorporated into NUI Galway. A joint implementation plan should be submitted to the HEA by October 2013 addressing governance, structures, provision and sustainability. This merger will have particular implications for the organisation (academic and administrative) of St Angela's College that will require early joint resolution.

Detailed plans should be developed by the end of 2013 relating to the linkages between NUI Galway and the Centre of Excellence in teacher education to be established at University of Limerick/Mary Immaculate College and the revised arrangements between Galway–Mayo IT (Letterfrack) and NUI Galway.

University of Limerick, Limerick IT and Mary Immaculate College

As already agreed following the *Initial Teacher Education Review*, the University of Limerick in association with Mary Immaculate College will lead the core of a Centre of Excellence for teacher education, with links to NUI Galway and University College Cork. The Centre will require close integration of the two institutions with the objective of locating teacher education within the university setting, in a research-based context and to ensure maximum coordination in the provision of programmes. The merger of Mary Immaculate College into Limerick University offers the best configuration and should remain the objective of both institutions.

The HEA will require a detailed joint plan from the institutions by October 2013. This must address the governance structures of the Centre and the rationalisation of education programmes, as well as the rationalisation of humanities provision through the joint provision of a single University of Limerick Bachelor of Arts offering.

The proposed incorporation of teacher education provided in Limerick IT into University of Limerick is proceeding.

Dublin City University, St Patrick's College Drumcondra, Mater Dei Institute of Education, and Church of Ireland College of Education

The integration of St Patrick's College Drumcondra and Mater Dei Institute of Education with Dublin City University to form a new Institute of Education as a fifth faculty of Dublin City University is proceeding and will conclude with the colleges being fully incorporated into the university. The rationalisation of programmes not related to teacher education will occur through the development of an enhanced Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Dublin City University.

The Governors of the Church of Ireland College of Education have agreed to pursue formal discussions relating to structure and governance with Dublin City University in the context of the development of the new Institute of Education, and these are advancing. It is recommended that this development proceed. The governance structure of the Church of Ireland College of Education is complex and it is recognised that changes to it will necessarily take more time to achieve, although these are progressing.

NUI Maynooth and Froebel College of Education

The integration of Froebel College into NUI Maynooth to create a Centre of Excellence in teacher education is proceeding and is well advanced and should conclude with full incorporation of the college into the university.

St Patrick's College, Thurles

The provision of initial teacher education in St Patrick's College Thurles should be discontinued. This will require careful planning over a transition period to protect the interests of students currently pursuing programmes. The HEA will work with the College to agree the detailed arrangements.

While the continuance of initial teacher education in the College is not appropriate having regard to the quality demands of such programmes, the College has good facilities and a cadre of staff that can be employed in other aspects of teacher professional development. The contribution the College can make as a linked private provider to the Limerick Centre of Excellence, should be explored by the parties as the Centre is developed and plans agreed with the HEA.

5.6 Creative and performing arts and media in the Dublin region

The review by international experts of the creative and performing arts in the Dublin region has been completed. While the HEI structural changes proposed below offer the prospect of addressing the issues identified in the review with regard to quality, scale and protection of heterogeneity, many other significant concerns remain, particularly with regard to weak connections between institutions, and the need for closer working relations.

It is therefore proposed to establish as early as possible a thematic cluster comprising the major creative and performing arts provision of the Dublin Institute of Technology, the Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology, the National College of Art and Design, University College Dublin, Trinity College Dublin and the Royal Irish Academy of Music in the higher education sector, together with relevant institutions in the further education sector.

In addition, specific recommended changes in different institutions are listed below.

National College of Art and Design, University College Dublin

It is proposed that University College Dublin and the National College of Art and Design should develop their inter-institutional alliance – up to and including merger. A risk identified in this approach is that as a small, specialist institution the National College of Art and Design might over time lose its identity within the larger institution. Implementation proposals, outlining governance and management structures together with timelines and the processes to be put in place to safeguard against dilution of the mission and identity of the National College of Art and Design should be submitted to the HEA by the end of October 2013.

Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art Design and Technology

It is recommended that Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art Design and Technology continue to develop its role as an institute of technology with a specialist mission in the field of creative arts and media. It should engage in discussion with University College Dublin and National College of Art and Design with a view to developing an alliance that could actively exploit opportunities for cooperation. Proposals should be made to the HEA by the end of October 2013.

5.7 Colleges and institutions in receipt of funding from the Department of Education and Skills

The National College of Ireland, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, St Patrick's College, Carlow and All Hallows College, Dublin[2]

The Department of Education and Skills currently funds a small number of higher education institutions directly. As part of the structural reform of higher education, responsibility for public funding will transfer to the HEA, thus consolidating all funding allocations. The National Strategy proposes that future public funding of institutions currently in receipt of core grant and free fees funding would be on the basis of either standalone niche provision or as institutions incorporated into a larger institution. It is the view of the HEA that there should be no further extension of core grant funding for such institutions. The treatment of such institutions that continue on a stand-alone basis and those institutions that currently receive only free fees funding should be dictated by the extent to which they meet needs not already met by public providers or that they do so in a more cost-effective way, in terms of either recurrent or capital costs, or both. It will also be a prerequisite that provision meets national standards of quality in terms of the student experience and outcomes. Finally, public funding should be provided on a time-limited and outcomes-related basis.

Dublin Dental University Hospital[3]

In the case of the Dublin Dental University Hospital, it is proposed that its activities be reviewed with the objective of ensuring that its provision remains properly aligned with national needs, is cost effective and appropriately exploits opportunities for significantly up-scaling the internationalisation element of its mission. The funding arrangements between Trinity College Dublin and the Dublin Dental University Hospital should also be reviewed. At present some free fees funding is provided through TCD and core grant education funding provided directly to the hospital.

Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies[4]

In the case of the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, it is proposed that no structural change be made to this statutory, independent research institute carrying out fundamental research in three schools – Celtic Studies, Cosmic Physics and Theoretical Physics. However, responsibility for allocation of funding to the Institute will be transferred from the Department of Education and Skills to the HEA. An agreed outcomes-based accountability framework needs to be developed for the Institute and its connectedness and contribution to the Irish research system needs to be urgently reviewed with a view to ensuring that the Institute is achieving maximum impact, and the research system maximum benefit, from its activities.

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[2] The National College of Ireland and St Patrick's College, Maynooth are in receipt of core grant and free fees funding directly from the Department of Education and Skills;
St Patrick's College, Carlow and All Hallows College, Dublin are in receipt of free fees funding directly from the Department of Education and Skills.

[3] The Dublin Dental University Hospital is in receipt of core grant directly from the Department of Education and Skills and some free fees funding through TCD.

[4] The Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies is in receipt of core grant directly from the Department of Education and Skills

Royal Irish Academy of Music[5]

The higher education provision of the Royal Irish Academy of Music should be aligned with that of Trinity College Dublin as the Royal Irish Academy of Music becomes an associated college of TCD. Core funding provided to the Academy should be outcomes-based. Through its relationship with TCD, the Academy should participate, as appropriate, in the thematic cluster in the creative arts in the Dublin region and in the Dublin regional cluster.

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[5] The Royal Irish Academy of Music is in receipt of core grant directly from the Department of Education and Skills and some free fees funding through DCU.

Appendices

A: Process and criteria for designation as a technological university (from the Landscape document)

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<u>APPENDIX 1</u>

Process and Criteria for Designation as a Technological University

Introduction

The National Strategy for Higher Education provides for the establishment of a new type of university – a technological university. A technological university will have a systematic focus on the preparation of graduates for complex professional roles in a changing technological world. It will advance knowledge through research and scholarship and disseminate this knowledge to meet the needs of society and enterprise. It shall have particular regard to the needs of the region in which the university is located.

For the purposes of determining whether an application for designation as a technological university should be approved, the HEA shall appoint international panels of experts (referred to as "Expert Panels") to advise the Authority in respect of Stages 3 and 4 of the designation process outlined in this memorandum. In conducting their evaluation, the Expert Panels will carry out such site visits and reviews and be given access to information from the applicant institution as they consider appropriate.

The designation process will consist of four stages as follows –
- an expression of interest,
- the preparation of a plan to meet the criteria,
- an evaluation of the plan, and
- an application for designation.

Stage 1 - Expression of Interest

Higher education institutions in Ireland wishing to apply for designation as a technological university must submit an expression of interest to the Higher Education Authority. The expression of interest must state, *inter alia*, how the transition from the institutions' current status to final designation will be financed. The expression of interest will be considered by the HEA in the context of a system wide analysis of Ireland's higher education needs and the strategic implications arising from the establishment of a new university. The HEA will, having considered the system level implications of the proposal, advise, within a reasonable period (no longer than six months), as to whether or not the proposal may proceed to the next stage.

Stage 2 - Preparation of Plan to Meet Criteria

At this stage a plan will be prepared by the applicant, addressing how it is proposed to meet the criteria for a technological university and the process requirements and related timelines.

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The establishment of a technological university requires the consolidation of two or more institutions. Accordingly, the plan must be based on a legally binding memorandum of understanding between a consortium of existing institutions describing their consolidation into a new single institution, which has been approved by the Governing Body of each institution.

The plan must demonstrate that legally binding academic and administrative arrangements are in place to ensure that national and regional needs for graduates at higher education Levels 6 and 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications are met.

Stage 3 - Evaluation of Plan
The plan will be assessed by an Expert Panel which will have regard to -
- the capacity of the proposed consortium to achieve the objectives of consolidation in terms of academic rationale, scale, the degree of integration through alliances and membership of clusters and the extent to which workplace practices have been developed to bring them into line with those of a modern university, and
- the existing position of the proposed consortium in relation to each of the technological university designation criteria (Appendix 1) and its capacity, based on its developmental trajectory, to meet these criteria within a reasonable timeframe.

A decision will be provided by the HEA to the applicant within six months of receipt of the plan. If, in the opinion of this Expert Panel, the proposal is not likely to meet the criteria for designation as a technological university within the proposed timeframe the application will not proceed further. In that case, a further application will not be accepted for a period of five years. If the Panel is of the view that the plan presented represents a credible and realisable proposal, the Panel may provide advice to the applicant or the HEA on any matter relating to its implementation.

Stage 4 - Application for Designation as a Technological University
Where a legal consolidation has been achieved and the applicant considers that all other requirements for designation have been met, the applicant may apply for designation as a technological university. The application for designation will be evaluated by an Expert Panel. In carrying out that evaluation, this Panel will have regard to the criteria set out in Appendix A, the legal and administrative requirements applying to universities in Ireland, the configuration of institutions within the Irish higher education system, the characteristics of technological universities internationally, detailed statistical profile data on Irish higher education institutions and the overall merits of the application.

This Expert Panel will report its recommendation to the HEA which will consider the report and advise the Minister for Education and Skills.

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Appendix A
Criteria for a Technological University

1   Mission

1.1   A technological university will have a systematic focus on the preparation of graduates for complex professional roles in a changing technological world. It will advance knowledge through research and scholarship and disseminate this knowledge to meet the needs of society and enterprise. It will have particular regard to the needs of the region in which the university is located.

1.2   Having regard to the mission of a technological university, these criteria set out the requirements that are to be met by an applicant before designation can be made.

2   Institutional Profile

2.1   The university will –
- be characterised by the breadth of its programme provision across higher education Levels 6 to 10 of the National Framework of Qualifications.
- have programmes of study that are vocationally/professionally oriented, with a strong focus on science and technology.
- have programmes of study that incorporate structured work placement.
- have programmes that address the social and economic needs of the region in which the university is located.
- have sufficient resources and critical mass to ensure appropriate pedagogical and research quality and depth of faculty expertise to meet the mission of the institution.
- have sufficient critical mass to support effective and efficient governance and administration and to provide an appropriate level of student services.
- maintain an active research policy primarily focused on applied, problem oriented research and discovery, with effective knowledge transfer alongside the provision of consulting/problem solving services that are particularly relevant to the region.
- support intensive and broad-based links with regional business, enterprise, professions and related stakeholders that inform curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment and research.

3   Student Profile

3.1   The student profile of the university will match its stated mission. Specifically, the university will provide programmes at higher education Levels 6 to 10 to meet local, regional and national demand and to meet the university's responsibilities in respect of educational opportunities at these levels.

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will be demonstrable evidence of a developmental trajectory that shows the capacity, including staff with equivalence in professional experience as referred to, to increase and reach levels consistent with other Irish universities but not less than 65% within ten years of designation. These staff will not only hold Level 10 qualifications or equivalent in professional experience, but also be able to demonstrate sustained activity in relevant areas of research and development.

- in the fields of knowledge/study in which doctoral level training and research is on-going, the proportion of staff holding Level 10 qualifications will be in excess of 80%. As a general principle, only those with Level 10 qualifications will be engaged in the delivery and supervision of Level 9 programmes. Only those with Level 10 qualifications and with a sustained record of research publications and mission-appropriate research outputs will be engaged in the delivery and supervision of Level 10 programmes.

5   Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Development

5.1   A technological university will have the curriculum and the teaching, learning and assessment processes to support its core mission to develop graduates who have a focus on the world of work.   The full opportunities provided by the National Framework of Qualifications for enhanced teaching, learning and curriculum development will be incorporated, with a particular focus on-

- Curriculum development focused on knowledge, skills and competencies developed in conjunction with business, professional organisations and, workforce, student and occupational organisations;
- Curricula that embed the full range of generic attributes linked to employability and citizenship;
- Curricula that embed engagement in the workplace as part of its programmes;
- Research-informed and practice-led teaching, learning and assessment that uses problem-oriented, practice-based and is community engaged.

6   Research

6.1   The research dimension of a technological university will-

- Focus on applied, problem-oriented research and social and technological development and innovation, with direct social and economic impacts and public and private benefits in the region in which the university is located;
- Support and sustain research activity among its staff that can be compared to appropriate international benchmarks. Such benchmarks will include *inter alia* evidence of cooperative research groups of a viable scale, success in winning competitive research funding nationally and internationally and inter-institutional research collaboration;

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- In linking research to teaching, demonstrate methodological approaches to the formation of level 10 knowledge, skills and competencies that are appropriate to the institution's research mission and meet national PhD level standards. This will be through the integration of practice-led, professional, and industrial doctorate structures alongside more traditional PI-led approaches, all within the context of national policy for structured PhD provision.

6.2 An applicant institution will, at the time of application, –
- have existing research capacity to support on-going programmes, projects and doctoral training in at least three fields of knowledge/study as defined by ISCED fields of study at the 2-digit level (ISCED2 – "Narrow fields"); [5] and
- demonstrate a developmental trajectory showing that the institution can extend research and doctoral activity to sufficient capacity to support two further fields, as defined by ISCED2 within five years of designation as a technological university.

7   International Profile

7.1 The international engagement of a technological university will specifically reflect its mission and orientation.

7.2 At the time of application, an applicant will demonstrate a developmental trajectory for the enhancement of internationalisation related to teaching and learning, research and staff development and a sustainable range of international collaborations such as joint projects, student and staff exchanges including the collaborative provision of academic and training programmes.

8   Leadership, Management and Governance

8.1 The leadership management and governance arrangements in place will be fully reflective of and in line with the stated mission of the institution. In practice this will mean -
- governance structures that reflect the external orientation of the institution and the engagement focus of its programmes of study;
- an integrated academic governance structure that gives coherence to multiple units, with consolidation of previously autonomous institutions where these existed, within the framework of the institution's mission.
- a leadership team that combines strong academic credentials and experience with experience in enterprise and professions relevant to the institution's mission.
- effective institutional-level academic governance with the authority, processes and competence to ensure the quality of programmes of study and the quality and integrity of other academic matters;

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[5] ISCED codes are outlined on the HEA website at
http://www.hea.ie/files/files/file/statistics/SRS%20User%20Files/EurostatISCED.pdf

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- workplace practices and employment contracts are reflective of a modern university including, *inter alia*, such matters as the flexible delivery of programmes for diverse learner groups, the length and structure of the academic year, the efficient utilisation of the institution's physical resources and other infrastructure.

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B.   The National Strategy's high-level objectives

Setting the context for strategic dialogue

All of the higher education institutions in the system are addressing the national objectives set out below in different ways. The National Strategy proposed a more structured approach that would both improve institutional and system accountability and support improved institutional and system performance. These national objectives provide a framework within which different institutions will respond in different ways depending on their individual missions.

Increased participation, equality of access, and lifelong learning

This objective recognises both the continuing demand for higher education from students, and the essential role that higher education skills play in building a strong economy and an inclusive society. This objective will be informed by:

■ Economic forecasts (including both volume and levels of skills required); and

■ Specific policy objectives and targets as set in the HEA's *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education*.

As well as quantitative targets, goals will also be set for:

■ Continued development of clear routes of access;

■ Progression pathways that are flexible and coherent within regions and nationally; and

■ Recognition of prior learning.

Excellent teaching and learning and quality of the student experience

All institutions will be required to set out the vision that underpins their portfolio of undergraduate programmes, to demonstrate how they are using particular tools to improve their overall performance, and how their planned provision is aligned with their particular mission within the system. Institutions might do this in a number of ways:

■ By benchmarking themselves against relevant peers in other countries;

■ By clearly linking programmes to defined learning outcomes;

■ By appropriate assessment of teaching and learning;

■ By training staff professionally;

■ By using student feedback to inform programme content and delivery; and

■ By engaging with industry and other stakeholders.

Groups of institutions within regional clusters will be required to demonstrate how they coordinate the regional planning and delivery of programmes to ensure that there is no unnecessary duplication and offerings are not fragmented.

Institutions will also be required to demonstrate how they are addressing areas where particular progression difficulties are evident.

High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation

Institutions engaged in research will be required to demonstrate that the research is:

- Appropriate to their mission;
- Underpinned by a coherent and robust research strategy built on existing institutional areas of strength with identified areas of focus;
- Demonstrably of international standard; and
- Well integrated with the institutions' teaching mission.

Institutions must demonstrate that PhD provision meets national quality requirements, and that it actively exploits collaboration as a means to meet those standards – it is expected that an increasing proportion of PhD students will be engaged in structured programmes.

Enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange

All higher education institutions should have open engagement with their communities and this engagement should broadly infuse their mission. Ways in which institutions might demonstrate such engagement include:

- Being responsive to labour market and skills needs – for example, by systematically seeking feedback from employers on the value and relevance of graduates' skills; and by acting appropriately on such feedback; and
- Developing strategies for knowledge transfer to enterprise and the community – the HEA will take account of any findings in relation to performance against knowledge exchange indicators agreed as part of the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation.

Groups of institutions within regional clusters will be required to demonstrate how they coordinate regional planning and engagement with enterprise within the region.

Institutions should recognise civic engagement by their staff and students and put in place structures that welcome and encourage involvement by the wider community in a range of activities.

Enhanced internationalisation

The Irish higher education system is expected to increase its international orientation, attracting a significantly increased number of non-EU international students, while continuing also to increase its participation in EU programmes. Institutions might address this objective by demonstrating how curricula are being appropriately internationalised. Research-active institutions should demonstrate how they are attractive to overseas faculty and how international research links are being improved.

C. Inputs that have informed this report

Published documents

Department of Education and Skills (Jan. 2011). *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030.*

Department of Education and Skills (Jul. 2012). *The Review of Structure of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland.*

Economic and Social Research Institute (Dec. 2012). *A Study of Future Demand for Higher Education in Ireland.*

Higher Education Authority (Jul. 2008). *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education.*

Higher Education Authority (Nov. 2011). *Sustainability Study: Aligning Participation, Quality and Funding in Irish Higher Education.*

Higher Education Authority (Feb. 2012). *Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape* (the Landscape Document and Process and Criteria for Designation as a Technological University); and higher education institutions' responses to this document, and an analysis of their alignment with the objectives of the National Strategy.

Higher Education Authority (Aug. 2012). *A Proposed Reconfiguration of the Irish System of Higher Education: Report Prepared by an International Expert Panel.*

Higher Education Authority (Feb. 2013). *Review of the Provision of Creative Arts Programmes in Dublin.*

Other inputs

The HEA Consultation document on review of the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model to align it with strategic directions.

The HEA Review of the Strategic Innovation Fund.

The development of a single body for quality assurance and standards (the Quality and Qualifications Authority of Ireland) covering further and higher education.

The development and implementation of regular national student and employer surveys.