



TUI Policy and Strategy for the Technological University Sector

Teachers' Union of Ireland

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI) is a Trade Union organising teachers and lecturers in Ireland engaged in post-primary, higher and further education. TUI's more than 20,500 members work across various sectors of education. TUI represents over 4,500 lecturers and researchers in Institutes of Technology (IoTs), Technological Universities (TUs) and St. Angela's College and forms the largest single body of third level lecturers in Ireland. Besides protection of members' terms and conditions, TUI is an important stakeholder in the formulation of education policy and has played, and continues to play, a key role in the development of Technological Universities.

TUI is the only trade union representing academic staff in the IoT/TU sector and is the definitive voice for academic staff regarding the development of Technological Universities.

Objectives

This Policy and Strategy for Technological Universities represents the views of TUI third level members and outlines key issues, concerns and objectives for this emergent sector. We provide an historical, educational and political overview of the Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs) and IoTs and the current sectoral move to Technological Universities. It also details the distinct functions of Technological Universities as outlined in the Technological Universities Act 2018 and proposes a more comprehensive and coherent overview of how this sector could be developed and positioned within the Irish Higher Education landscape.

TUI firmly advocates for enhanced access and participation in higher education, including apprenticeship provision, for multiple and diverse learners across demographics. Central to access and participation is the protection of regional provision on local campuses of TUs. The organisational design of multi-campus TUs will be essential to the sustainability of the sector and in ensuring that the functions of the Technological University Act 2018 can be realised. An appropriate academic career framework and workload model must be negotiated and agreed with TUI. Significant investment and funding will also be required to achieve the ambitions of this new Technological University sector.

Overview

Firstly, this Policy and Strategy document will outline TUI's key principles and recommendations for TUs, followed by an overview of key industrial relations issues/matters to be negotiated and agreed. The paper then provides an introduction and overview of the educational and political context for the development of the TU sector through engagement, dialogue, and negotiation, the most significant event of which was the enactment of the Technological Universities Act 2018. We then consider the challenges and opportunities of multi-campus TUs balancing regional, national and international remits, followed by sections outlining the necessity of an appropriate academic career framework and workload review/model, and the importance of a digital

strategy and infrastructure. This is underpinned by a section on the need for significant funding and investment in the sector. This Policy and Strategy document also provides an overview of European and national higher education policy and strategy. Finally, policy commitments made to the Higher Education sector by all political parties in the General Election 2020 are listed alongside the current Government's (Fine Gael/Fianna Fáil/Green Party) policies as outlined in their programme for Government.

TUI VISION FOR THE TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY SECTOR

In ten to fifteen years from now, TUI wants there to be a TU sector (consisting probably of five TUs encompassing all of the former IoTs and St Angela's College) which:

- Has a distinct, cohesive, recognisable identity, clearly differentiated from the legacy universities, and is faithful to the values and history of the RTCs and IoTs from which TUs have developed.
- Is sustainably and adequately funded, including a major programme of capital investment, from public monies.
- Successfully fulfils its regional mission, providing students with a full range of education services from levels 6 to 10, as well as civic, community and industry engagement, in each of the regions in which the campus of a TU is situated.
- Builds on the legacy of IoTs/RTCs in enjoying unrivalled success in providing educational opportunities to students from cohorts of the population otherwise under-represented in third level, with access mainstreamed (as opposed to being a well-publicised but relatively insignificant adjunct).
- Is known and valued regionally, nationally and internationally for its inclusive, supportive, practice-based educational model.
- Maximizes staff engagement and commitment through collegiate work practices, an inclusive, democratic academic leadership structure, an agreed workload allocation model which recognises and supports the totality of service of lecturing staff, and a career framework offering promotional opportunities and progression.
- Has a high proportion of academic staff engaged in applied and basic research across a range of disciplines, supporting and integrated into the education of undergraduate and post-graduate students.
- Offers parity of esteem to researchers vis-a-vis lecturing staff with regard to contracts, career development and remuneration and allows and encourages significant mobility between research and lecturing as part of the academic career framework.
- Is comprised of model employers offering decent, nationally agreed terms and conditions to highly qualified, well-motivated, appropriately remunerated staff.
- Does not rely on exploitative contracts or on casualised labour.
- Leads in community, civic and industry engagement.

- Avoids unnecessary competition between TUs and acts cooperatively, on the basis of promotion of third level education and of the sector as a whole.

It is essential that Ireland's TU sector be grounded in and build on the strengths of the IoT sector and, previous to that, the Regional Technical Colleges. These were set up across the whole of the country in order "*...to provide vocational and technical education and training for the economic, technological, scientific, commercial, industrial, social and cultural development of the State with particular reference to the region served by the college...*" (Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992, s 5).

Since their establishment, RTCs and then IoTs across Ireland have very successfully provided access to education in their regions and given citizens the opportunity to upskill throughout their lifetime. Their strength has been to allow students from socially and economically deprived areas to progress from Level 6 up to Level 10 qualifications, developing strong relationships between academic staff and students, utilising small groups and face-to-face teaching, all of which is essential for retention and progression.

The success of the RTCs and IoTs, and the establishment of the first TUs, rested on collaborative engagement and negotiation, in robust national forums as well as locally, between TUI and management/Department representatives as appropriate.

TUs must also honour their commitments made to the TUI, and agreements entered into by the Department on their behalf. We must agree an academic career framework with enhanced promotional pathways and opportunities for academic career progression for all academic staff, including researchers, that recognises achievement in research, teaching and learning, and civic and social engagement. The current fixation on research as an activity that occurs in separate research centres outside the academic departments is detrimental to growth in research activities generally. All academic staff should be given the opportunity to pursue their research interests, both basic and applied. Where research centres are established, their staff and activities must be integrated with the academic structures of the Technological University.

TUs must equally value the lecturers who are committed to teaching as a profession, the lecturers who are engaged with industry and the community and the lecturers who would like to further their research opportunities, and indeed those who may pursue different priorities at different stages in their careers.

TUI: Key Principles and Recommendations for Technological Universities

1. A Collaborative Model for Technological Universities

One of the most fundamental challenges of the transformation from IoTs to TUs arises from the more advanced positions of some consortiums in the early years of the project combined with the different rates of progress made since, leading to a disjointed and fragmented sequence of advances as opposed to the new sector developing in concert.

While the establishment of the TURN group provided an opportunity to create greater cohesion and cooperation, it is now we reach the point of five TUs actually being established that the sector must forge its future and claim its distinct place in the Higher

Education Landscape. The creation and maintenance of clear identity and mission for the Irish TUs and the continuation of the highly successful binary model for Irish Higher Education require urgent measures to enable cohesive, consistent policy.

- Build on the remit and successes of RTCs and IoTs, learning from the structures and policies which allowed those institutions to develop into TUs in the first place.
- Remain loyal to the decades long centre-piece of Irish Higher Education policy in maintaining clear division between the legacy universities and the institutions which are now becoming TUs, allowing each sector to operate successfully in parallel and in cooperation as appropriate, but without sacrificing the clear delineation between the two.
- Develop a consistent, collaborative TU model with broad campus and regional provision across disciplines.
- Develop an equitable/co-operative model to avoid competition between TUs and/or between campuses of individual TUs and to avoid the marketisation of Higher Education and the TU sector.

How to achieve such a model:

- Funding – a commitment to significant, long term, sustainable investment in the TU sector, and higher education generally, is required.
- Support existing national structures and establish new structures as needed to protect the sector from fragmentation, mission drift and abandonment of identity.
- Committed, informed and representative academic leadership. The management approach must be collegiate and have at its heart the academic mission of the sector.
- Consultation and engagement with all stakeholders, in particular ongoing close collaboration and consultation with TUI at all stages of TU development to ensure its success and sustainability.
- Clarity on policy and strategy and effective communication and consultation across all levels.

2. Local/Regional remit

- Local/Regional remit including support for regional development through national and international development, collaboration and mobility for academic staff and students.
- Protected and diverse programme provision on all local campuses.
- Capacity for provision of levels 6 – 10 on all TU Campuses.
- Enhanced development and support for apprenticeships.
- Increased availability and awareness of green apprenticeships.

3. Teaching, Learning and the Educational Model

- Maintenance and enhancement of the highly successful and effective educational model of RTCs and IoTs.

- Practice-based education informed by research and industry.
- Small class sizes and significant supports for our diverse student body.
- An inclusive and personal educational experience.
- An integrated research model where the great majority of research occurs in academic departments/faculties directly supporting the education of undergraduate and post-graduate students.
- Provision of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics and Arts and Humanities.

4. A New Funding Model

- An equitable and co-operative funding model.
- A 1% levy should be applied to corporate profits to fund higher education.
- Sustained local, regional and campus investment, including capital investment.
- National information campaigns for the TU sector.
- Regulation of public money spent on private consultants.

5. Access and Education as a Public Good

- The TU sector must continue the tradition of widening access to higher education from excluded and non-traditional learners; in providing a ladder of progression from Level 6 to 10 and in opening new pathways to entry from second level and further education.
- Publicly Funded Higher Education.
- Free Higher Education – no student undergraduate fees.
- Affordable student accommodation.
- Access for all students.
- Restoration of Maintenance Grants.

6. Good Governance: Responsibility, Regulation and Oversight

- TUs to be majority academically led.
- A strong emphasis on a Representative/Collegial Academic Governance Model for the sector.
- Rotation of Senior Academic Roles by election, including Heads of Department, Heads of School, Faculty Deans, etc.
- The Executive functions of Presidents (as outlined in the TU Act 2018) to be operated in a measured and considered manner in accordance with good corporate and academic governance.
- Regulation and oversight of the sector by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Higher Education Authority.
- Regulation by QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland).

7. Research, Innovation and Development

- Teaching, Learning and Research must be inter-connected and cannot be silo-ed.
- Teaching, Learning and Research must be civically and socially engaged.
- Innovation and Development – shall be locally, regionally, nationally and internationally responsive and must be civically and socially engaged.
- Open Access Publishing.
- Open Science.

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- Organisational Cultures: Values-Led Organisations.
- Real Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – EDI cannot merely be corporate branding.
- Equality and Diversity to include the 9 protected grounds under the Equality Acts: Gender; Civil status; Family status; Sexual orientation; Religion; Age; Disability; Race; Membership of the Traveller community.
- No Horizontal or Vertical Segregation or Discrimination, for example in relation to recruitment and selection, pay and promotion.

9. Digital infrastructure

- An equality-based, sustainable, connected digital infrastructure.

Key Industrial Relations Issues for Negotiation and Agreement with TUI

1. Nationally agreed contracts for all academic grades

- Nationally agreed contracts for all academic grades.
- Academic Career Framework informed by international university models.
- Enhanced promotional pathways and opportunities for academic career progression that recognises achievement in research, teaching and learning, and civic and social engagement.

2. National Collective Agreements on Policies, Work Practices and Terms and Conditions of Employment for Academic Lecturing Staff

The following national Collective Agreements/Policies are required for the TU sector:

- Majority Academically led Governance Structure and Organisational Design Principles for Multi-Campus Technological Universities.
- A sustainable Workload Model.
- Circular Letter 0041/2016 (Cush Circular) Implementation policy/framework and an agreed HPAL (hourly paid assistant lecturer) policy to address casualisation.
- An Online/E-Learning and Blended Learning agreement.
- A Work Placement Strategy and Framework.

- Integration of Research into Academic Structures/Policies to ensure that all Technological University academic staff can engage in research projects, including a researcher contract aligned with the nationally agreed lecturing contracts and pay scales, including pension entitlements.
- An Equal Opportunities policy to address segregational discrimination – including in recruitment and selection, pay inequality for new and recent entrants, pay gaps and equal promotional opportunities.
- A Recruitment and Selection Procedure, including an appeals mechanism.
- A Values-Led Organisation policy to ensure good organisational cultures.
- A Digital Citizenship Policy (for all staff and students).
- An Anti-Racism policy and campaign.
- A Climate Action policy and campaign (supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: FROM REGIONAL TECHNICAL COLLEGES TO TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITIES

In February 2017, the TUI held a national consultative conference on TUs at which the key concerns of members were addressed directly to the Department of Education and Skills (DES), the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the management body the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA). Following this conference, the DES engaged meaningfully with the Union and there were intensive negotiations concluding in May 2017. This resulted in the May 2017 Agreement between TUI, DES and THEA on Technological Universities. The Agreement assured that:

- Provision will be protected in all of the regions and campus/es of a TU.
- No merger of IoTs would take place unless TU designation occurred on the same day – a one-step process as opposed to the previously proposed two-step process where a merger could be followed by undetermined years as a larger-scale IoT before the achievement of TU designation, or possibly without ever achieving TU designation.
- Enhanced representation for academic staff on Governing Bodies of TUs.
- Additional Ministerial appointments to the Governing Body of TUs increasing the likelihood of broader regional representation and increasing the level of democratic accountability.
- Commitment from the DES for significantly increased funding for the process.
- Agreement on a meaningful consultation and engagement process to continue throughout the process.¹

¹ TUI, DES and THEA Agreement, May 2017, on Technological Universities.
<https://www.tui.ie/fileupload/TUI%20News%20Ballot%20Special%20re-%20Technological%20Universities.pdf>

Additional protections included:

- No compulsory redundancies as a result of TUs.
- Collective agreements to be enshrined in and enforced by circular letter; they will have a national currency.
- Establishment of a National Negotiation Forum for addressing issues in relation to existing and future staff.
- The DES and THEA will ensure that at least one academic staff member, or a representative of the academic staff body selected by the academic staff body, will be co-opted on to the initial Governing Body of each Technological University at the first meeting of the Governing Body of each Technological University. There will be no delay.
- Meaningful consultation with a 'No surprises' clause.
- Financial support for both pre- & post- designation.
- Resources for staff development and upskilling.

As the process developed, there was further agreement that a local/regional Memorandum of Understanding would be agreed between management and TUI before an application for Technological University designation would be submitted. This is to ensure good Industrial Relations with respect to the merger of existing Institutes of Technology and to ensure a convergence process that upholds the equalisation towards best practice of working practices on all campuses and to ensure a commitment to meaningful consultation and negotiation with TUI, pre-application and pre- and post-designation.

There is however a gap in national strategy, which is creating difficulties across consortia. This is leading to unnecessary spending of public money on private consultancy. These private consultants and consultancy firms are also operating within a vacuum of limited national guidelines or strategy. This potentially will create fragmentation and a lack of coherency in the emerging Technological University sector.

This Policy and Strategy document attempts to address this gap in national policy and strategy by outlining some key principles and recommendations and demonstrates a continued commitment by TUI to engaging in constructive consultation, negotiation and dialogue with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, the Higher Education Authority and management representatives on the emerging TU Sector. As part of that commitment, in March 2022 the TUI convened a further Consultative Conference attended by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, officials from his Department and management representatives.

Context

In 2011 the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 recommended a network of Technological Universities.² The Programme for Government (May 2016) stated that the Government would support the creation of Technological Universities. The Technological Universities Act 2018 was enacted by the Government as a legislative priority in March 2018 to provide a detailed and comprehensive statutory framework for the establishment of Technological Universities (TUs).

The first Technological University, TU Dublin, was established on 1st January 2019. In February 2019, the Department of Education and Skills established a Technological University Research Network (TURN) Working Group with an independent Chair, Professor Philip Gumme. TURN was established to examine and report on how TUs could most effectively achieve their sectoral and national objectives and the supports that would be required for them to do this. Membership of the TURN working group comprised the President of TU Dublin and the Presidents of each institute participating in the three TU development consortia that were working towards designation at that time, together with senior representatives from the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA), the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI) was not included in the membership of the TURN Working Group and currently is not a participant in the TU Research Network. The TUI has requested participation and representation on this Research Network, at the National Negotiation Forum for Technological Universities and elsewhere. It is imperative that the TUI, as the trade union representative of academic staff in the IoT/TU sector, is directly involved and included in all national consultation and negotiation forums that will shape the future of Technological Universities and Higher Education policy and strategy in Ireland.

In November 2020, the membership of TURN included TU Dublin and the remaining 11 IoTs:

MTU Consortium (Munster Technological University): Cork IT and IT Tralee (designated as Ireland's second Technological University on 1st January 2021).

TUS: Midlands Midwest (Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest): Athlone IT and Limerick IT (designated as Ireland's third Technological University on 1st October 2021).

TUSE (Technological University of the South East): Waterford IT and IT Carlow (designated as South East TU on 1st May 2022).

CUA (Connacht Ulster Alliance): Galway-Mayo IT, IT Sligo and Letterkenny IT (designated as Atlantic TU on 1st April 2022).

² National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, Report of the Strategy Group, January 2011, p.15.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/072a65-national-strategy-for-higher-education-to-2030/>

DkIT (Dundalk Institute of Technology): unaligned but working towards achieving TU designation, with the assistance of the HEA, through a section 38 application as per the TU Act 2018.

IADT (Institute of Art, Design and Technology Dun Laoghaire): unaligned – no commitment to working towards a merger and TU designation. This is a matter of serious concern to TUI members in IADT.

As the key stakeholder representing academic staff in the IoT/TU sector, TUI wants to continue to engage constructively with the Government, the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the newly formed Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, the HEA and management representatives to inform and develop a National Policy and Strategy for TUs. To date TUI has engaged constructively with Institutes and consortia working towards designation as Technological Universities. TUI was central to constructive industrial relations leading to the successful application of IT Tallaght, IT Blanchardstown and Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) to create TU Dublin, while lengthy consultation and negotiation also took place prior to the designation of the Munster TU, TU Shannon, Atlantic TU and South East TU. In order to ensure the continued successful development of Technological Universities and to ensure their sustainability TUI must be central to the process; this includes meaningful consultation and negotiation on all strategic planning, organisational design, policy development both nationally and locally, and industrial relations issues.

The establishment of the Regional Technical Colleges from 1970 onwards arose from the report of the Steering Committee on Technical Education (or the Mulcahy Report, 1967). The original brief of the new Colleges was to address the lack of opportunity for Irish people to become technically skilled, not least because of the academic bias in the educational system. Originally providing qualifications primarily at National Certificate and National Diploma levels, the new sector (which also encompassed the long-established Dublin Institute of Technology) evolved and developed, as Mulcahy had predicted. All of the Colleges were upgraded to Institute of Technology status in the late 1990s in recognition of the high standards achieved in research and the expanding provision of Bachelor's, Master's and Ph.D. qualifications across the sector.

On 1st January 2019, what previously were IT Tallaght, IT Blanchardstown and DIT were designated as Technological University Dublin. Munster Technological University was designated a TU on 1st January 2021. The AIT-LIT Consortium submitted a successful application and was designated as TU Shannon on 1st October 2021. Atlantic TU was established on 1st April 2022. South East TU was established on 1st May 2022. Significant progress has been made to advance the merger of St Angela's College with Atlantic TU in the near future. DkIT is being facilitated by the HEA in working towards achieving TU designation in accordance with the Technological Universities Act 2018.

Only one Institute of Technology remains outside of the TU process – The Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dun Laoghaire (IADT). This is not a sustainable position for IADT and TUI members in IADT have expressed the view that they want to become a part of

TU Dublin. TUI has also been mandated by its third level members at its Annual Congress 2021 to ensure that DkIT and IADT are expedited into the TU process. A firm commitment is required from the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science that IADT and DkIT will be progressed in a timely manner to TU designation through Section 38 of the Technological Universities Act 2018.

WHAT IS A TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY?

A description of an Irish Technological University can be found in the Technological Universities Act 2018.

In summary, the Technological Universities Act 2018 states that the functions³ of a Technological University shall be to:

- Provide teaching and facilitate learning that is informed by research and promotes excellence.
- Provide programmes of education that reflect the needs of industry, local communities and interests in the regions in which the campuses are located.
- Facilitate learning by flexible means.
- Provide for a broad education that contributes to students' chosen careers and social, civic and economic life.
- Provide teaching and research opportunities to lecturers and students outside the State.
- Allow for collaboration with other Higher Education Institutes both inside and outside the State.
- Support relevant research at regional, national and international levels.
- Promote excellence.
- Collaborate with business, enterprise, the professions and the community
- Engage with stakeholders in the design and delivery of programmes.
- Support the development of a skilled labour force, including apprenticeship training.
- Support the mobility of staff and students into and out of the labour force.

There is a core emphasis on the regions in which the campuses of a Technological University are located in relation to function. This is also underpinned by their legislative remit to serve the community and public interest by:

- Developing and promoting strong social and cultural links supporting creativity and creating links with the local community, local public organisations and local industry and businesses.

³ *The Technological Universities Act, 2018*, Functions of Technological University, Section 9. (1), pp. 14-17 gives the full list of the functions of a Technological University.

At national level, in so far as possible, Technological Universities are to:

- Contribute to the promotion of the economic, cultural, social, scientific and technological development of the State.
- Respect the diversity of values, beliefs and traditions in Irish society.
- Promote critical and free enquiry, informed intellectual discourse and public debate within the Technological University and in wider society.
- Promote an entrepreneurial ethos.

Fundamentally, the Act promotes:

- Access to education by persons economically or socially disadvantaged.

This Policy and Strategy document by the Teachers' Union of Ireland will outline key principles to underpin a structure that allows for the functions outlined in the Technological Universities Act and that will focus on access to education, collaboration and sustainability.

ORGANISATIONAL DESIGN FOR TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITIES

There needs to be an agreed Organisational Design Model at a national level that is flexible enough to be adapted to individual TUs.

TUI has engaged constructively in local negotiations with TU Dublin, the first designated TU, the development of which is naturally dependent on the creation of new structures in a shorter timeframe than elsewhere. TUI believes that agreement is necessary on overarching principles of Organisation Design supporting the regional mission, multi-campus provision and distinctive identity of the TU sector.

Regional Focus and Responsibilities

All Programmes for Government and all Irish political parties place a heavy emphasis on regional and rural development. Since the 1970s, the Regional Technical Colleges, and the IoTs and TUs into which they have developed, represent one of Ireland's most successful regional initiatives, quite apart from their enormous success in broadening access to third level education.

Each TU has a remit in all its functions to have “particular regard to the needs of the region in which the campuses of the Technological University are located”.⁴ In serving the public good, it is therefore essential that TUs:

⁴ *The Technological Universities Act, 2018*, Functions of a Technological University, Section 9. (1).

- Recognise, promote, and enhance the range of activities and interests (teaching, research, commercial, public, civic and community) across the regions of the TU.
- Facilitate teaching and learning, training, research, consultancy, and active engagement in initiatives for the wider community.
- Recognise, maintain, and enhance the key networks, specialisations, and collaborations which its predecessor institutes have built within their regions.
- Recognise the importance of regional campuses to sustainability, growth, and employment in their region.

Current Higher Education policy is informed by broader National policy. These include, but are not limited to:

- The National Skills Strategy; Innovation 2020.
- Project Ireland 2040; National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development.
- HEA – National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030.
- QQI – National Framework of Qualifications.
- Investing in National Ambition: A Strategy for Funding Higher Education.
- The Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland.
- Irish Educated, Globally Connected.
- National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship; Enterprise 2025.
- National Planning Framework.
- Foreign Languages Strategy.
- Action Plan to Promote Traveller Participation in Higher Education.
- The National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions.

The vision of Higher Education presented is local, regional, national and global in outlook. Higher Education in Ireland is also to be of international quality and excellence providing mobility for both staff/lecturers and students. Higher Education is further recognised as a social good and as critical in addressing the future of work in a digital era. All of the above plans and strategies place an emphasis on lifelong learning and position apprenticeship and training as core to national development.

A Multi-Campus Technological University Sector

For regional access, teaching should be organised according to the following principles:

- In order to ensure fair access to students, courses/programmes from levels 6 – 8 across the broadest range of disciplines should be made available on all campuses of a TU.⁵
- All campuses of a TU should teach across levels 9 and 10, with some specialist level 9 and 10 programmes on specific campuses.

⁵ “Campuses” are understood in this context as the former individual Institutes of Technology and does not apply to each constituent campus of a former IoT.

It is important that there is equality and equity of governance, administration and programme delivery across all campuses. Local campuses and programme provision should also be sensitive to local events and requirements.

The complexity of forging TUs is combined with dealing with what would already be the enormous organisational and cultural challenges of merging disparate IoTs into single entities. A sophisticated and sensitive approach must be taken if the new, unitary organisations are to maintain and build on the strengths of their parent IoTs.

The most important factor in building successfully will be engagement and negotiation, principally between the academic staff as represented by TUI and the local management, supported by national negotiating structures and principles.

DFHERIS must ensure continued funding allowing full participation of TUI representatives in these complex negotiations, while maintaining sufficient oversight to guard against poor and unagreed Organisational Design models which will undermine the sustainability of TUs and their regional campuses.

TUs must support and reflect the communities and labour markets in the regions in which their campuses are located, with each campus a focal point for community and civic engagement, collaboration with industry and commerce, enrichment of cultural and artistic life, as well as provision of educational and research opportunities across the broadest range of disciplines and demographics. Local knowledge of the history and ethos of each parent IoT will be essential in ensuring that the community retains loyalty, confidence, and identification with the newly established TU.

Besides due regard for these vital interests in local and national negotiations on Organisational Design, the broadly based governance structures enshrined in the TU legislation need to be maintained in order to maximise the range of competences and experience needed to support such multifaceted and geographically dispersed institutions.

Continued constructive engagement with TUI towards consistent, collaborative TU structures will deliver on the promise of TUs for regional development supported by global and national activity and cooperation appropriate to the scale, breadth and ambition of the new institutions.

ACADEMIC CAREER FRAMEWORK

The TUI has advocated for a more balanced academic career framework to be implemented in the IoT/TU sector. Presently, there is a very flat academic career structure as follows:

- Assistant Lecturer (AL)
- Lecturer
- Senior Lecturer 1 (Teaching) (SL1T)
- Senior Lecturer 2 (Head of Department)
- Senior Lecturer 3 (Head of School)

These contracts and terms and conditions of employment are protected in the relevant legislation (Technological Universities Act 2018) as well as in local Memorandums of Understanding. TUI would describe the current contracts as being flexible rather than having limitations. In respect of the AL, Lecturer and SL1T contracts, there is a wide degree of flexibility in the possible range of duties.

The nationally agreed academic contracts for the IoT/TU sector can be found at the following link:

<https://www.tui.ie/third-level-contracts-agreements-/third-level-agreed-contracts-.2196.html>

Recruitment is generally at Assistant Lecturer level. Once an AL reaches the top of the incremental salary scale for this grade, they can apply for progression to the Lecturer grade having met specific criteria, while earlier progression is available to ALs with a Ph.D. It should also be noted that Assistant Lecturers do not assist anyone. The title is professionally problematic as it does not translate nationally or internationally with respect to the position and role of academics in this grade.

SL1T posts are distributed to IoTs/TUs on a ratio basis dating back to the Programme for Competitiveness and Work (PCW) for Third Level 1998, negotiated and agreed between TUI, Managements of the Institutes of Technology, the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Finance.⁶ At that time, 250 SL1T posts were created and the number allocated to each Institute was proportional to the number of then existing Lecturer II posts. This percentage/ratio has decreased dramatically as the number of academic staff has increased.

⁶ PCW (*Programme for Competitiveness and Work*) Agreement Third Level, 1998, Negotiations under Clause 2(iii) A of the PCW National Pay Agreement.

Revised Facilitator's Proposals for agreement on the issues which formed the agenda for the negotiations under Clause 2(iii) A of the PCW Pay Agreement on the Teachers' Union of Ireland claims on behalf of academic staff and the proposals from the management of the Institutes of Technology and the Departments of Education and Science and Finance. Sean Healy, Facilitator, June 1998

Structured Lecturers are used in a very limited capacity in the sector. They are predominantly used in the apprenticeship areas to provide for additional co-ordination and administrative duties.

The Senior Lecturer 2 and 3 grades are Head of Department and Head of School roles respectively. Poor resourcing, lack of supports and their very wide span of control have seen holders of these posts in many instances deflected from academic leadership into work that is primarily managerial and administrative. Both contracts maintain an annual teaching requirement of up to 105 hours, though there are instances where this is not carried out.

These posts are currently permanent, non-rotational posts.

Grade	Incremental Salary Scale	Primary Roles and Duties
Assistant Lecturer	8-point scale Post 2010 appointees are on a lower paid discriminatory pay scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 lecturing/teaching hours per week • Course administration/Quality Assurance • Research • Other Duties
Lecturer	11-point scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 lecturing/teaching hours per week • Course administration/Quality Assurance • Research • Course Co-ordination • Other Duties
Lecturer Structured	11-point scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as the Lecturer contract with a lesser weekly teaching requirement of 6 lecturing/teaching hours per week to provide for more administrative duties
Senior Lecturer 1	8-point scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 lecturing/teaching hours per week • Course administration/Quality Assurance • Research • Academic Leadership • Other Duties
Senior Lecturer 2 Head of Department (Permanent non-rotational posts)	10-point scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Leadership/ Managerial/Administrative • 3 hours approx. teaching per week
Senior Lecturer 3 Head of School (Permanent non-rotational posts)	9-point scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Leadership/ Managerial/Administrative • Strategic Planning • 3 hours approx. teaching per week

Career progression and promotion within the current academic career framework is extremely limited. In a review on staffing within Higher Education carried out by the Gender Taskforce in 2018 the following statistics and data were gathered allowing comparison between the IoT/TU sector and the legacy university sector in Ireland.

The data are three-year average full-time equivalents for the period 2015-2017, for core-funded academic staff only.

Universities

	FTE Female	% Female	FTE Male	% Male	Total
Professor	116	23%	400	77%	516
Associate Professor	113	32%	244	68%	357
Senior Lecturer	351	38%	575	62%	926
Lecturer	1,291	51%	1,255	49%	2,546

Full-time Equivalent (FTE) Posts: **4,345**

Academic Promotional Posts: **1,799**

Academics in a promotional post in a University in Ireland = 41%

Institutes of Technology/Technological Universities

	FTE Female	% Female	FTE Male	% Male	Total
Senior Lecturers (1,2 & 3)	152	34%	300	66%	452
Lecturer	1,378	45%	1,713	55%	3,091
Assistant Lecturer	469	49%	491	51%	960

A further breakdown of numbers shows the incredibly low number of SL1T posts. The Academic Leadership roles, as well as teaching and research duties, of SL2 and SL3 posts are often significantly displaced by the heavy and growing workload arising from managerial and administrative duties. A key objective of the TUI is to see these posts rebalanced and properly resourced and supported.

	FTE Female	% Female	FTE Male	% Male	Total
Senior Lecturer 3 (Head of School)	25	31%	55	69%	80
Senior Lecturer 2 (Head of Department/ Assistant Head of School)	85	40%	126	60%	211
Senior Lecturer 1 (Teaching)	61	33%	121	67%	182

2015-2017

Full-time Equivalent core staff:	4,503
Senior Lecturer 2&3:	291
Senior Lecturer 1 (Teaching):	182

The percentage of SL1Ts (highest academic teaching contract) in the IoT/TU sectors is approximately 4%.⁷

As already noted, there is flexibility in the current contract if it is used in conjunction with a fair workload allocation model.

The TUI proposes the following principles:

- Development of an appropriate academic career framework for the TU sector to be negotiated and agreed with TUI.
- A commitment to aligning the percentage of promotional posts beyond the entry and career grades of AL/Lecturer from 4% to over 40% in line with the legacy university sector.
- All posts above the AL and Lecturer grades to be filled internally by negotiated and agreed criteria with TUI.
- Creation of an agreed professoriate – primarily in the first instance to be filled by internal promotional/progression criteria where suitable candidates are available.
- Promotional opportunities to professor grades to recognise achievement and engagement across teaching and learning, research and engagement (community, industry, civic, etc.).
- Current SL2 (Head of Department) and SL3 (Head of School) post-holders have suffered from a vastly increased span of control, contributing to the creation of a managerial and administrative culture within the sector. As noted with the SL1T grades above, the percentage/ratio of SL2s and SL3s has decreased dramatically as the number of academic staff, programmes and students has increased in departments and faculties sector wide. In line with the principle of increasing promotional opportunities to over 40%, there should now be a review and analysis of the span of control appropriate to the SL2 and SL3 grades to ensure they maintain an academic focus. A necessary reduction in the span of control for these grades will lead to the creation of new promotional pathways for AL/Lecturer grades and also ensure that departments and faculties remain academically led. TUI policy continues to favour rotation of academic management posts by election. It is important that academic staff on existing, nationally agreed contracts and terms and conditions are not prohibited in any capacity from any academic promotional opportunities.

⁷ *Accelerating Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions: Gender Action Plan 2018-2020*, Report of the Gender Equality Taskforce, (2018).

<https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2018/11/Gender-Equality-Taskforce-Action-Plan-2018-2020.pdf>

- Ensure the equitable distribution of promotional posts across campuses of multi-campus TUs based on agreed and transparent metrics, e.g. student numbers, staff numbers, etc.
- Resolve pay discrimination for academics recruited post-2010 in the sector who are on lesser pay than their colleagues in order to reduce barriers to entry and enhance recruitment.
- Invest in career development for existing academic staff in order to provide them with necessary skill sets and qualifications to develop their careers.
- Reduce the unsustainable weekly teaching hours of 16/18 hours per week for ALs, Lecturers and SL1Ts and develop a workload model through consultation, negotiation and agreement with TUI.

WORKLOAD MODEL

The Review of Lecturing was agreed between the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the TUI under the auspices of the WRC in May 2016. This agreement stated:

The Croke Park Agreement provided for a review of matters relevant to lecturing in Institutes of Technology. This review will take place involving the Department of Education and Skills, the HEA, TUI and institute management representatives. This review will be completed by March 2017.⁸

After a three-year delay this resulted in a discussion document entitled “Review of lecturing in Institutes of Technology/Technological Universities, International Review Module” (Prof. Tom Collins, November 2020). This review document refers to the ambitions of the TURN Report and states, “These ambitious developments and related monitoring and evaluation arrangements, would entail a root and branch transformation of the working life of academics in the Institutes of Technology that transition to become Technological Universities”.⁹ The Collins Review studies a variety of possible Workload Allocation Models (WAMs) for Academic staff, and outlines the benefits and challenges of implementing a WAM. Collins says that WAMs can provide “...a mechanism by which thresholds of reasonableness, fairness and equity can be defined, workload models can have a role in protecting the academic against work overload and threats to academic freedom”.¹⁰ He further stresses that “There are, however, some key starting-out

⁸ ‘Balance of Lecturing Workload’, Department of Education and Skills/TUI Agreement May 2016. Access: <https://www.tui.ie/fileupload/Final%20TUI%20DES%20document%20090516.pdf>

⁹ Tom Collins, Una Crowley, Kathleen Quinlan, *Review of lecturing in Institutes of Technology/Technological Universities International Review Module (Final Report)*, prepared for Department of Education and Skills, 30th November 2020, p.10.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.19.

assumptions in the development of such models. All studies point to the need for communication, negotiation, local solutions and a long lead in time.”¹¹

Online Learning, E-Learning and Blended Learning

TUI is astonished and disappointed at the stubborn insistence by Department and Management representatives in national negotiations that online learning does not involve additional workload. There will be a need for more online and blended learning, but this can only be done if supported through appropriate resourcing and agreement with TUI. It is simply not possible to sustain existing delivery within the current workload model. TUI is not against online/e-learning. However, quality assurance and workload must be taken into consideration. In the context of COVID-19, emergency remote teaching (ERT) is a completely different activity.

The TUI has a long-standing claim for additional resources for the design and delivery of e-learning/online programmes. Whilst the pandemic has required innovative and alternative ways of continuing education, there is still a need to properly research the educational implications for both learners and academics. TUI’s experience with members where there are local resourcing arrangements confirm that e-learning programmes need to be pedagogically designed with the digital considerations factored in from the outset. Engagement in this digital format is also very different and invariably more time-consuming than in a traditional face-to-face format.

Digital transformation will continue to develop in an educational context. However, TUI believes that this should be targeted and programme specific. Education is about far more than a qualification and the TUI believes that while there is a need for such programmes tailored for specific cohorts in line with national and regional considerations, the majority of learning should take place in a face-to-face setting, which is by the far the most appropriate and beneficial format for the great majority of our students. TUI further believes that a national agreement on online learning education programmes would be highly beneficial to all parties in the sector.

Concerns

- The sector will be held back and will not achieve its potential under the current practice of having (all) academic staff teaching the maximum number of hours (16/18 per week), which is very high when compared to international practice.
- In most IoTs/TUs there are no workload allowances, for example, for lecturing at higher levels 9 – 10 or dealing with large classes.
- There is very little facilitation of research activity and opportunities for existing lecturing staff.

¹¹ Tom Collins, Una Crowley, Kathleen Quinlan, *Review of lecturing in Institutes of Technology/Technological Universities International Review Module (Final Report)*, prepared for Department of Education and Skills, 30th November 2020, p.6.

- Newly appointed lecturers at the AL grade find it particularly difficult to continue or complete research with an untenable teaching workload higher than their more established colleagues, at a time in their career when they are building and developing their teaching resources.
- The role of the lecturer in the IoT/TU sector has become hugely complex over the past 25 years, with increased expectations in areas of administration, student support and engagement. Any WAM will have to include allocations for these and the many more activities in which academics are involved (invisible work).
- Casualisation appears to be integral to the business model on which many universities depend. TUI will never agree to such an approach in the TUs as they develop.
- There is a false distinction between academic lecturing staff and researchers as the approach of many IoTs/TUs seems to focus exclusively on the positioning of research in separate centres, outside the structure of Faculties/Schools/Departments, while employing researchers on inferior terms and conditions, and inferior pay, sometimes on a succession of short-term contracts. Irish TUs could attract and retain the highest quality research staff by offering improved contracts and better employment security, on a par with lecturing staff. Such an approach could allow academic staff the flexibility to concentrate predominantly on lecturing or on research at different times in their career, to the great benefit of the TU.
- In common with the rest of the public sector, additional working hours forced on public servants under austerity must cease: in the case of lecturing staff in our sector, these are the additional 78 hours per annum directed towards the reduction in evening weighting from 1.5 to 1.25 and the removal of church holidays. The refusal to address these matters under Building Momentum because of the pending OECD Report is entirely unacceptable.
- Better office accommodation is needed for academic staff.

The Way Forward

- The current weekly teaching norm in the IoT/TU Sector is significantly greater than the European norm for similar institutions (European Commission/EACEA/ Eurydice 2017 Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe: Academic Staff 2017 p.69) and needs to be reduced for TUs to fulfil their potential and perform well across the full range of functions set out in legislation.
- The unreasonably high teaching hours make it very difficult for lecturers to engage in research. This also has a serious impact on academic promotional opportunities. This must be addressed in a workload model that must be negotiated and agreed with TUI. There must be an hours allocation model recognising the workload associated with the following:
 - Programme chair.
 - Course leader.
 - Research, civic engagement, engagement with industry.
 - Course co-ordinator.

- Year Co-ordinator of full time and part time programmes.
- Managing significant events, e.g. science week, maths week, engineering week, art and design shows, conferences, etc.
- School visits and external promotional events.
- Staff undertaking teaching and learning modules.

Principles

- There shall be no diminution of conditions of service and terms and conditions for new staff.
- Existing staff will have their contract honoured.
- The great majority of research should take place in academic departments/faculties informing and supporting the education of undergraduate and post-graduate students.
- Opportunities must be given to existing lecturing staff to develop, re-ignite, continue research ideas and projects.
- Researchers should be treated as academic staff including equitable treatment regarding contracts, pay and pensions.
- Any negotiated and agreed WAM considered must be applicable across the sector.

RESEARCH

Research, teaching and learning are inextricably linked. TUs are in a unique position to engage across disciplines – Arts, Humanities, Science and Technology – and to innovate and contribute to knowledge. Research, teaching and learning are core to society and citizenship.

The sector currently has staff who wish to focus primarily on teaching, but many others wish to carry out more research, or even full-time research and the workload model developed by the TUs needs to support all of these possibilities.

TUI would like to see TUs involved in all types of research and staff should not be precluded from being research-active in any area whether it be STEM, Arts or Humanities. We would like to see both pure and applied research, research with an industry focus and research that is community based, certainly initially as we seek to grow research capacity in the TU sector. Research in as broad a list of categories as possible should be encouraged. Narrowing the list of topics for research which will be supported, on the basis of alignment with management's policy priorities or the strategic plan, will demotivate staff and shut down potentially valuable opportunities.

In terms of research funding, the IoT/TU sector for historical reasons struggles to attract research funding at the same rate as the legacy universities. TUI would like to see a

substantial proportion of traditional research funding (e.g. SFI) ringfenced for TUs (i.e. where TUs are the lead on a project) for the first 10 years, and a further portion ringfenced for collaborative research projects.

Spread of funding: We would also argue that the funding should be more widely spread across the TUs. Rather than a small number of applicants receiving very large grants, we need a wider distribution of funding spread geographically and across much more diverse areas. This would avoid certain TUs and researchers, who for historical reasons are in a better position to receive large grants, thereby dominating the landscape and preventing the development of a more rounded sector. If we want the development of research-informed teaching, then we need to avoid a situation of all (or nearly all) of the research money being monopolised by Professors in research centres who have very little interaction with either students, teaching staff, the community or industry.

Research in Arts and Humanities must be developed in the emerging TUs. Research in these areas raises questions rather than providing absolute answers. One of the functions of a Technological University, according to the Technological Universities Act 2018, is to promote critical and free enquiry, informed intellectual discourse and public debate within the Technological University and wider society.

APPRENTICESHIP

The history, ethos and deep knowledge of the IoT/TU sector in its long experience with apprenticeship means that TUs will be uniquely placed to play a key role as national policy favours significant further development of apprentice opportunities.

- Apprenticeship as a model of earning while learning needs to be developed with employers and offered at appropriate levels of the NFQ including from levels 6 to 9.
- There needs to be cooperation between FET and HE relating to the implementation of a national skills strategy and providing pathways for transition and progression.
- Staff should have the opportunity to undertake work placements with companies to enhance technical knowledge and expertise which is relevant to their institute.
- There is a need to provide resources to facilitate further cooperation with industry/business to identify the skills needs for the workforce.
- Students' employability needs to be enhanced by agreeing meaningful work placement opportunities.
- The European skills agenda needs to be implemented including the development of apprenticeship programmes to cater for Green skills, Digital skills, Retrofitting skills.
- The Sustainable Development Goals need to be embedded into curriculums relating to skills and apprenticeship.
- TUs should engage with employers and workers to supply skills development programmes to enable a just transition to new forms of work within a low carbon economy.

- TUs need to provide opportunities for workers to upskill, reskill and engage in education and training in a flexible way.
- Both the FET and HE sectors need to actively engage in promotion of apprenticeships as quality career path opportunities.
- There is a need to fully resource and promote the Ireland Skills and participants in the WorldSkills to showcase apprenticeship skills.
- FET and HE should enhance their linkage with the European Alliance for Apprenticeship and seek to strengthen cooperation and collaboration throughout Europe.
- Maintaining quality apprentices will require monitoring of standards and the regulation of sectors.
- Both student and staff mobilities to education centres or companies should be encouraged and resourced within the European Union.

DIGITAL STRATEGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR TUS

Currently there is no national digital strategy for Higher Education. A digital strategy is required to address the development of online and blended learning modules and programmes in Higher Education Institutes. A digital strategy is also required to address the future of work. The digital revolution is dramatically changing how we work and the types of work we engage in.

In order to ensure provision of a digital infrastructure that will enable a collaborative TU sector, comprehensive strategy and policy are needed to ensure coherence and equity. Both individual TUs and individual campuses require significant investment in a sustainable digital infrastructure.

Moreover, e-learning, online and blended teaching require expertise. They are also labour intensive. TUI is currently seeking a national collective agreement for e-learning, online and blended teaching for lecturers in the IoT/TU sector.

TUI also supports the roll-out of a digital literacy programme for students and lecturers across the sector. This programme should also be available to the broader community.

Current National Digital and ICT Policies

- Programme for Government 2020: National Digital Strategy.
- Digital Transformation: Assessing the Impact of Digitalisation on Ireland's Workforce.
- Projects Funded Under the Digital Innovation Programme.
- Minister Bruton launches 2018 Digital Plan for Schools.
- QQI - Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes.

EU Digital Policies and Strategy - Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027)

The Digital Education Action Plan (2021 – 2027) outlines the European Commission's vision for high-quality, inclusive and accessible digital education in Europe. It is a call to action for stronger cooperation at European level to:

- Learn from the COVID-19 crisis, during which technology is being used at an unprecedented scale in education and training.
- Make education and training systems fit for the digital age.

The new Action Plan has two strategic priorities:

1. Fostering the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem.

This requires:

- Infrastructure, connectivity and digital equipment.
- Effective digital capacity, planning and development, including up-to-date organisational capabilities.
- Digitally competent and confident teachers and education and training staff.
- High-quality learning content, user-friendly tools and secure platforms which respect privacy and ethical standards.

2. Enhancing digital skills and competences for the digital transformation.

This requires:

- Basic digital skills and competences from an early age.
- Digital literacy, including fighting disinformation.
- Computing education.
- Good knowledge and understanding of data-intensive technologies, such as artificial intelligence.
- Advanced digital skills which produce more digital specialists and also ensure that girls and young women are equally represented in digital studies and careers.¹²

¹² *Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027): Resetting education and training for the digital age*

[Digital Education Action Plan \(2021-2027\) - European Education Area \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-room/pages/press-room-detail.aspx?lang=en&id=12345)

(Date accessed: November 10th, 2018.)

A FUNDING MODEL FOR THE TU SECTOR

TUI upholds the principle of a publicly funded Higher Education system. TUI is advocating for an equitable and co-operative funding model for the Technological University sector.

Eliminating Casualisation

As the TUI has previously observed, low pay is still evident in the education sector. This is the product of a number of factors, including the prevalence of part-time work. Although progress has been made in ameliorating the problem of part-time work in the education sector in recent years, every budget needs to include measures that require employers to provide full-time work and not to fracture full-time jobs.

New Entrants – Discriminatory Pay Rates

Funding is required to eliminate pay inequality by ensuring that lecturers who entered the public service on or after 1st January 2011 are placed on the same rates of pay that apply to their colleagues who entered prior to that date. Despite the progress made to date, pay inequality continues to undermine the public education system. Failure to address this issue will inevitably result in damaging industrial relations unrest and disruption to public education services.

Investment in Education

In terms of education, there is broad agreement about the need to restore and enhance service to students.

For example, there is no dispute that a significant increase in public investment, on a multi-annual basis, is required at third level. The capacity of higher education institutions – particularly those seeking to move towards Technological University designation – to meet the rapidly evolving needs of students, broader society and the economy remains severely compromised by inadequate investment in staffing and infrastructure. The student experience has been sharply diminished by this chronic inadequacy.

Disadvantage and Inequity

A decade of cuts and under-investment must be reversed so that third level public education can offer the best service to increasingly diverse cohorts of learners. TUI notes:

- The significant and on-going increase in student numbers at all levels and the demographic projections over the next number of years.
- The depletion of student support systems.
- The exacerbation of disadvantage caused by the reduced capacity to provide the appropriate and necessary supports to marginalised students and communities.

Unsustainable Under-Resourcing of the IoT/TU Sector

- The steep cuts in the funding and staffing of the IoT sector at a time when student numbers rose significantly.
- That difficulties with sustainability have been magnified in small institutes and smaller campuses of institutes.
- That one consequence of the above is that lecturers have been doing more teaching and less researching and that this is not compatible with ambitions of attaining TU status or of fulfilling the functions of a TU.

The Crisis of Casualisation in Teaching and Lecturing

- The heavily casualised and precarious nature of employment for recent entrants to lecturing and the resulting crisis within the profession.
- The unacceptably high levels of part-time working and the resultant income poverty of many lecturers.
- The positive impact of implementation of the Cush Report recommendations and of DES Circular Letters 49/2016 in addressing aspects of the crisis.
- The ongoing discrimination against new entrants to lecturing who – in spite of measures secured by the TUI that reduce the extent of the disparity – are on a lower pay scale than their peers who entered the profession in 2010.

HIGHER EDUCATION – A EUROPEAN CONTEXT

A collaborative, civic, equitable, non-marketised model for the Technological University sector would also align with broader European policy and a vision for a European Higher Education model.

In 2017 at the Gothenburg Social Summit, the European Commission laid out its vision for 2025 of a European Education Area in which the free movement of learners is guaranteed. The European Commission is currently working on three key priorities that will boost mobility and student exchanges for all:

1. A Network of European Universities.
2. The automatic mutual recognition of diplomas.
3. A European Student Card.

In its *Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027)*, the European Commission recognises how 'Higher education and its links with research and innovation play a crucial role in individual and societal development and in providing the highly skilled human capital and the engaged citizens that Europe needs to create jobs, economic growth, and prosperity.'

The Europe 2020 strategy also set a target that by 2020, 40% of young Europeans have a higher education qualification.

How can Irish Higher Education Policy align and achieve these European goals? A key aspect of the European Commission's strategy is co-operation in order to:

1. Tackle future skills mismatches and promote excellence in skills development.
2. Build inclusive and connected higher education systems.
3. Ensure higher education institutions contribute to innovation.
4. Support effective and efficient higher education systems.

TUI Principles for European Engagement

- Initial research capacity building initiatives need to be resourced in order to enhance research engagement levels and increase the number of active researchers.
- European research networking opportunities need to be resourced including opportunities for mobility and collaborations.
- Staff mobility opportunities need to be expanded to include short term (up to one month), medium term (up to 9 months) and long term (up to 2 years) placements in HEIs or businesses or a combination of both which are relevant to the HEI.
- There is a need for deeper collaboration between HEIs and industry at European level with a particular emphasis on sustainability.
- Applied research initiatives which focus on skills development, work initiatives and innovations need to be resourced.

NATIONAL STRATEGIES AND POLICIES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

The ***National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development*** provides a framework to harness the potential of the higher education sector to provide the skills, knowledge and research that will underpin further development of the green economy in Ireland.

The development of the TU sector is an opportunity for Ireland to create a connected, collaborative, inclusive, innovative and effective higher education model that meets the societal needs of Ireland in a global context.

Irish Political Parties – Higher Education Policies and Strategies

Across the political spectrum, all parties have outlined the importance of Higher Education and its value to both local and national development and sustainability. TUs can play a key role in achieving a vibrant regional and rural Ireland.

TUI also submitted a number of questions to each of the political parties during the General Election in 2020. The responses to those questions can be found at the following link:

[TUI General Election 2020 document.pdf](#)

PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT 2020: HIGHER EDUCATION

In the Programme for Government 2020, the current government (Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and the Green Party) have stated their support for the new TU sector:

The creation of Technological Universities (TUs) is a radical reconfiguration of the Higher Education landscape and will deliver significant advantages to national priorities in relation to Higher Education access, research-informed teaching, and learning excellence, as well as supporting enterprise and regional development. We will support the recently established TUs and work closely with consortia to establish new TUs. In particular, we recognise the urgency attached to the establishment of the TU of the south east of Ireland.

The current Government (Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and the Green Party) have outlined a number of priorities for Higher Education in their Programme for Government. Some key items include:

- Funding and Restructuring.
- Lifelong Learning - Education, training and reskilling.
- Apprenticeships and Green Education and Skills.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Research.

For full details see: Programme for Government – Our Shared Future, 2020.

There are both differences and points of commonality between TUI and the Programme for Government 2020, across funding, access, equality, diversity and inclusion, the enhancement of apprenticeships, lifelong learning and research. There should be a joint commitment between TUI and the Government/Department for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, THEA, TU Dublin and MTU to progress joint positions in an effective and timely manner. The two sectoral IR Forums – the IoT IR Forum and the National Negotiation Forum – should also work more effectively towards identifying common positions that could be progressed in a more timely and beneficial manner for all parties and stakeholders concerned.

CONCLUSION

National Policy and Strategy for the Technological University Sector

The Teachers' Union of Ireland, as the trade union representing academic staff in Technological Universities, will continue its constructive role at the fore in shaping and developing national policy and strategy for this new sector. This will ensure the sector's success, sustainability and development into the future. Academics are the key stakeholders whose work over decades has enabled RTCs/IoTs to develop into TUs. The academic voice, articulated in a focused and authoritative way through TUI, will be central to the establishment of a Technological University sector which will realise its full potential in contributing to Irish society as a whole and that can be both local, national and global in its remit.

This Policy and Strategy document demonstrates the Teachers' Union of Ireland's full commitment to engaging, participating and leading national policy and strategy development for Technological Universities and Higher Education in Ireland.

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