

Government Gives Green Light to Ireland's First Technological University

Taoiseach welcomes proposed establishment of Ireland's first Technological University from January 2019

The Taoiseach Mr. Leo Varadkar T.D, the Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton T.D., the Minister for Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform Paschal Donohoe T.D. and the Minister of State for Higher Education, Mary Mitchell O'Connor T.D., today (17th of July 2018) announced that the application for Technological University status from the TU4Dublin consortium would be granted. The TU4Dublin consortium comprises Dublin Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown and Institute of Technology Tallaght.

The new Technological University will be named Technological University Dublin (known as TU Dublin) and it will be the first Technological University (TU) in Ireland established under the Technological Universities Act enacted in March this year.

Today's announcement marks the completion of a comprehensive assessment process carried out by an expert International Advisory Panel to assess that TU4Dublin met the detailed eligibility criteria set out in the legislation to qualify as a Technological University.

A draft order is required to be placed before the Houses of the Oireachtas for approval in the forthcoming legislative term to appoint the day in early January 2019 on which DIT, ITB and ITT shall be dissolved and the new Technological University Dublin is duly established.

The creation of Technological Universities, led by Minister Mary Mitchell O'Connor, is part of the Government's plan to drive regional economic growth and development under Ireland Project 2040 and to make Ireland the best education and training service in Europe by 2026.

In addition, the government also today announced further funding of €4.4 million towards the continuing development of TU Dublin. This latest funding tranche is being provided by the Higher Education Authority under their 2018 higher education landscape restructuring funding call. This will bring the total Exchequer funding contribution to this flagship project alone to almost €9.3 million to date and further underscores the Government's commitment to the development of technological universities both legislatively and in practical funding terms.

Speaking at the launch Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said: "This is an historic day for the future of higher education in Ireland. Project Ireland 2040 prioritises the expansion and consolidation of Higher Education facilities, to boost economic development across the country. Technological universities are central to delivering on this core objective and will stimulate a more balanced growth of population and employment across Ireland. The ambition is simple: to drive regional development and provide more opportunities for individuals, enterprise and the community.

"Making higher education accessible to all is the best way of making Ireland a country of equal opportunities. Dublin's new Technical University will promote an entrepreneurial ethos and provide accessible opportunities to those who are economically or socially disadvantaged. It will be the only university in Ireland offering programmes from Level 6 to Level 10, from apprenticeships to doctorates, serving students from right across Dublin and the wider region."

Minister Bruton said, "Following consideration of the international advisory panel's report and positive recommendation and the supportive views of the HEA, I am pleased to announce my decision to grant TU4Dublin's application for designation as a technological university. TU Dublin has

the potential to be ground-breaking by providing a new, flexible teaching and learning framework to students that is informed by research and offers opportunities for students to pursue diverse programmes across the range of levels on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). This is an opportunity to build a new higher education system that is inclusive and reflects the educational demands and economic needs of Ireland.”

Minister Mitchell O’Connor said, “Today is the dawning of new era in Ireland’s higher education history. The higher education landscape is changing and the people who will benefit most are the students. The technological university model provides the template to drive regional development, enhance opportunities for students, and create a step change in the impact and influence of these institutions regionally, nationally and internationally. I would like to warmly congratulate the many people from the three institutions who have brought us to today’s announcement.”

Minister Donohoe said: “As is often the case: we can do more by working together than we can alone and I have no doubt that this will ring true for TUDublin; the granting of the application for which we are marking here today. Our Institutes of Technology have gone from strength to strength in recent years and the merging of the DITs on a single campus here at Grangegorman has given that added impetus. The further amalgamation of BIT and ITT into a technological university will make that union even stronger, paving the way for other consortia in the years to come. I commend everyone for their efforts in getting to this point and look forward to seeing the benefits that ensue for students, staff and the local regions in which TUs are to be located.”

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr. Katherine Zappone added “The development of TUDublin will ensure that our students continue to have the skills to fill the jobs of the future. By making each of the campuses more efficient and effective the new TUDublin will be in a strong position to build strong alliances and partnerships with businesses. This is a big day in the future development of our third level infrastructure. I want to wish all involved every success as they prepare for a bright new future.”

Note for Editors

As set out in the Technological Universities Act 2018, when considering the International advisory panel report and the views of the HEA, the Minister for Education and Skills Richard Bruton T.D., had regard to the following matters;

- (a) that the needs of students, business, enterprise, the professions, the community, local interests and other stakeholders in the region in which the campuses of the applicant institutes are located would be more efficiently and effectively served by the proposed technological university;
- (b) if the projected demand, based on demographic trends, for higher education in the region in which the campuses of the applicant institutes are located would justify the making of the order to establish a technological university;
- (c) if sufficient financial resources are available to the applicant institutes to meet projected costs arising on the making of the order to establish a technological university;
- (d) the proposed technological university would be financially viable if the order were made; and
- (e) if making the order would comply with such policies of the Government that relate to higher education.

A resolution approving the Ministerial Order must be passed by each House of the Oireachtas, as set out in Section 3 of the Technological Universities Act.

On the appointed day the applicant institutes specified in the Minister’s order (Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB) and Institute of Technology Tallaght (ITT)) shall stand dissolved and the technological university shall be established.

Consortia

There are currently four consortia of Institutes of Technology engaged with the developmental process seeking to become designated as technological universities.

The TU4Dublin consortium comprising Dublin Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown and Institute of Technology Tallaght.

The Munster Technological University (MTU) consortium comprising Cork Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology Tralee.

The Connacht Ulster Alliance (CUA) consortium comprising Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Sligo and Letterkenny Institute of Technology.

The Technological University for the South-East (TUSE) consortium comprising Waterford Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology Carlow.

Each consortium is at a different stage in the process. Progress is related to the scale of each undertaking, to historical relationships, and to the starting point of each group and the challenges they have faced along the way. Each project is prioritising particular actions in order to make best progress.

Funding

Between 2013 – 2017, some €10 million in Exchequer funding was provided to the four consortia seeking to develop TU's as follows:

HEA Funding	Total to date
DIT/ITT/ ITB (TU4D)	€4,876,667
CIT/IT Tralee (MTU)	€2,296,667
IT Sligo/LYIT/GMIT (CUA)	€2,122,000
WIT/IT Carlow (TUSE)	€720,000
TOTAL	€10,015,334

€10 million was provided in Budget 2018 for higher education landscape restructuring including TU consortia development. The HEA issued a call on 26th March 2018 for further funding submissions of €10 million to TU development consortia with the final date for receipt of submissions the 26th April 2018. The final allocation of the 2018 funding call will be dependent on the type and quality of bids received from HEIs and subject to demonstrated progress in agreed project plans. On 17 July 2018, Minister Bruton approved the allocation of €4.4 million, as recommended by the HEA, toward the development of TU Dublin. Further funding allocations will be announced in due course on foot of HEA recommendations in relation to a number of other submissions made under the 2018 call. Estimates of €8 million are also being provided for in the Department of Education and Skill's indicative estimates for 2019 and 2020 for TU development and other landscape higher education restructuring projects.