2015

Engagement and Consultation Process on a Technological University for the South-East

REPORT TO THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS
MICHAEL KELLY, 2ND JULY 2015

To: Ms Jan O'Sullivan, TD, Minister for Education and Skills

Dear Minister,

I am happy to enclose the report on the Engagement and Consultation process on a Technological University for the South East.

You had originally intended that the exercise be completed within a period of ten weeks. For a variety of reasons this did not prove possible but I am satisfied that the extension of time has allowed for more reflection locally and overall has been beneficial to the outcome.

The report reflects the limitations of the process undertaken. Given the position taken by WIT, it did not prove possible to have any round-table engagement involving both Institutes as part of this process. Neither has it been possible to produce a validated set of aggregate data addressing TU Metrics, combined across both Institutes. The same limitation applies to a shared Vision Statement.

On the other hand, the process has re-confirmed the commitment of both Institutes to the development of a Technological University for the South East and has articulated the strength of conviction by regional stakeholders about the imperative to progress this without further avoidable delay.

A striking feature of the landscape in the South East is the extent of erosion of trust between the two Institutes. For that reason, any substantive re-engagement could only follow a preliminary engagement process which would involve Chairs and Presidents in the first instance. This would need to ventilate the underlying reasons for the current state of relationships and create a framework within which mutual trust and respect can be re-built, as a stepping stone to substantive engagement.

Given the history, a degree of patience and a willingness to back the process financially and otherwise will be called for. My assessment is that it will not be easy but that it is achievable. The key will be to keep the focus on the creation of an entirely new Institution, to create some early opportunities for cross-campus collaborations and, as soon as possible, to launch a broadly-inclusive cross-campus engagement process on the design of every facet of the new Institution. This can only be productive if built upon mutual respect and trust across the Institutes. This will need to start with the Chairs and Presidents, will require strong leadership throughout and should be given some time to develop.

I have received all possible support from both Institutes, the Department and the HEA during the assignment. I want in particular to acknowledge the value of on-going guidance and support from Deirdre McDonnell.

I will be happy to clarify any aspect of the report as required.

Michael Kelly

2 July, 2015

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Executive Summary

The Technological University for the South-East (TUSE) project was initiated in 2011 and consists of a consortium of two Institutes of Technology; Institute of Technology Carlow (ITC) and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT). The process for designation as a technological university (TU) consists of four stages and requires the merger of two or more institutes of technology prior to application for designation as a TU. The process and stages of the TU designation process are set out in Section 1 of this report.

The TUSE consortium made good progress initially and submitted a Stage 1 submission in 2012. However, following this initial promising start, the consortium encountered a series of challenges and difficulties and did not succeed in finalising a Stage 2 Plan prior to the decision by WIT to suspend all merger activities in October 2014.

Following a series of meetings with the Presidents and Chairs of both Institutes, the Minister for Education and Skills initiated a process of engagement and consultation with the governing bodies, staff and students of both Institutes, together with the wider community in the South-East, in order to articulate and develop a shared vision for a Technological University to serve the South-East region and to report to the Minister on the feasibility and steps required to progress an application for technological university status within an acceptable timeframe. This to be done, having regard to the published criteria and process for designation as technological university which is already in place. This report is the outcome of that process.

Section 2 of this report sets out a selection of relevant data describing some of the key characteristics and trends in the South-East which sets the context for views expressed by stakeholders in the region. The economic and social indicators portray a region that has considerable potential to develop but also highlights areas of particular need in terms of educational attainment, unemployment and development of the enterprise sector.

Seeking to create and develop a TU is a very significant challenge. Section 3 sets out the background to the TUSE project, it summaries the level of time and effort already invested in the project and also identifies difficulties and challenges encountered at various stages and the impact these had on progress.

Section 4 sets out progress towards a shared vision for a TU for the South-East. During the current process, both institutions put forward ambitious visions for a new type of institution. Both acknowledge that merger with a partner institute is a necessary step in this process. The main conclusion drawn here is that there is very significant convergence of thinking and approach by both Institutes to many aspects of the design of TUSE. If there is sufficient resolve to create the new Technological University within both Institutes, the remaining issues should be capable of resolution.

Section 5 of the report sets out a summary of views expressed by both internal and external stakeholders during the consultation process which involved a total of some 40 meetings.

The Governing Bodies of both institutes expressed commitment to the ideal of a university level institution in the South-East. However, there was significant frustration and disillusionment with the existing TUSE project and doubts around the level of commitment of their prospective partner.

Other views expressed by internal stakeholders in both institutes included support for the concept of a TUSE but frustration with the process to-date, concerns over the negative effect of "TU fatigue", doubts over the commitment of the other partner , the need to shift focus to the creation of a new institution and the timescales to meet criteria, the need to address contentious issues, the need to address investment in TU, concerns about rationalisation and location of key functions and the need for cross-campus engagement at all levels and concerns over the damage to the reputations of both institutions given the negative commentary particularly in the last year. There was a strongly held view by many that any re-engagement should be a fully inclusive process.

External stakeholders articulated a compelling rationale for a new type of institution to support the economic and social development of the entire region coupled with a lack of tolerance for any continuation of the current impasse, which many viewed as driven by institutional rather than regional considerations.

One of the decisive issues for regional stakeholders is that TU should be achieved within a reasonable period of time. For those who expressed a particular view on this question, a time-frame of three years would be acceptable but a tighter timescale would be welcomed given the delays to-date.

Following consultation with the Institutes and assuming their individual assessments regarding the current positioning and rate of progress by each institute holds true, it is the author's view that it is likely the consortium would meet the quantitative designation criteria within a period of three years.

Indeed, with a determined approach by both Institutes to work together on the planning and implementation of the necessary steps up to application for designation (Stage 4), there is no obvious reason why the project could not be advanced to Stage 4 within this three year period.

In the context of the views of stakeholders and analysis undertaken, Section 6 sets out a brief synopsis of the options for the future and highlights the need for a decision on the future of the project to be taken without further delay. The strong recommendation is that a re-invigorated process to establish TUSE should be established at the earliest feasible date.

Section 7 sets out a number of enabling and supporting measures recommended for considered in the context of the TUSE. This includes specific recommendations around the project structures for TUSE including the establishment of a Regional Stakeholder Forum, facilitation and change management, institution support and acceleration measures and the longer term funding model for TU.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The South-East is one of three locations nationally in which a consortium of existing Institutes of Technology set out in 2011 on the path of achieving designation as a Technological University (TU). The formation of this new type of University has been made possible in the Irish context following policy decisions taken on foot of the (Hunt Report) on a National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030[1]. As a spur to future economic and social development, this policy is aimed at creating a coherent set of higher education institutions, each of strength, scale and capacity, responding in complementary fashion to national needs and priorities, with a particular goal to strengthen institutional collaboration and consolidation in the technology sector.

Reflecting this consolidation objective, Institutes of Technology with an ambition to achieve TU designation are required to formally merge with a partner(s) as well as meet a demanding set of quantitative and qualitative academic and institutional criteria. Consortia are required to progress through a four stage process, involving scrutiny by international expert panels at stages 3 and 4 of planning and implementation. This level of objective evaluation is designed to ensure that applicants do indeed measure up to the relevant international benchmarks, and in doing so, that they protect the reputation of the Irish University brand.

The four stages of the process involve:

Stage 1: An expression of interest, including financial analysis of transition to TU. To be considered by the HEA in context of system-wide needs and responded to within 6 month interval. If approved, proceed to Stage 2.

Stage 2: The preparation of a plan to meet the criteria, including the process requirements and associated timelines. This stage requires commitment to legally binding memorandum of agreement to merge and consolidate into a single unified institution, along with a detailed business plan setting out the basis on which the Designation Criteria will be met and the developmental pathway for the new Institution.

Stage 3: An evaluation of the plan by an Expert Panel, having regard to the capacity of the consortium to achieve the objectives of consolidation, particularly around scale, academic rationale and degree of integration, and capacity to meet the criteria for designation based on current position and developmental pathway already in evidence. Again a decision is due within 6 months. If successful, the applicant proceeds to Stage 4. If not, no further application can be entertained for a further 5 year period.

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[1] Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, Department of Education and Skills, Jan 2011

Stage 4: An application for designation. This can be submitted where a legal consolidation has been achieved and the applicant can demonstrate that all other requirements for designation have been met. The application is evaluated by an Expert Panel. In doing so, the Panel has regard to the Criteria for Designation, a range of 'general fit' considerations and the overall merits of the case.

This is a deliberately demanding process which repeatedly tests the academic rationale and institutional commitment to drive the necessary level of development, transformation and change to genuinely deliver a step-change in performance from IoT to University level. Institutes of Technology are discouraged from entering into the process unless they can see a clear pathway to completion and can demonstrate the necessary collective leadership and institutional resolve to see it through, regardless of the scale or complexity of challenge involved. The five-year ban on repeat applicants is designed to head off any trivial or poorly thought out applications.

Learning from the experience of all consortia to date, it is clear that the process requires partner Institutes to "take the plunge together" at an early stage. For example, the formal decision to legally merge arises at Stage 2. It is around this decision that an Institute will make its own judgment about the likelihood of success of the application to be made at Stage 4. It is unlikely that any Institute will want to find itself tied into a legal merger without a degree of assurance that the consortium will collectively meet the designation criteria at Stage 4.

Key success factors would therefore include a shared commitment to:

Mission: the same end-goal i.e. a single new institution which addresses stakeholder needs, meets all of the relevant criteria and delivers a step-change in performance;

Integrity: agree the principles for working together, generate the required level of openness and commit to 'saying what we mean and meaning what we say';

Mutuality: a willingness to recognize, respect and build on the strengths of both partners;

Forward-facing: letting some aspects of the past go, in order to co-create a new institution together for the future;

Resolve: an acceptance that key aspects of the new institution must be agreed together, ideally on an evidence-based foundation and that contentious issues will be resolved to firm conclusion;

Trust: belief in each other's capacity and good faith to act in the collective interest.

In parallel with its counterparts in Dublin and Munster, the South-East Consortium (Waterford and Carlow IoTs), worked successfully on Stage 1, leading to a joint submission to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in July 2012[2]. In this submission "both institutes strongly affirm their intention to apply jointly for designation as a technological university in accordance with the process set out in

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[2] The South East Institutes of Technology in the Future Higher Education Landscape, Carlow and Waterford Institutes of Technology, July 2012.

Process and Criteria for Designation as a Technological University". The submission goes on to affirm the commitment of both Governing Bodies to addressing the need for "a stronger and more relevant higher education provision in the South East of Ireland" through a common approach involving "a merger and joint application for Technological University designation".

Despite continuous efforts by both partners, the consortium did not succeed in finalising a Stage 2 Plan prior to the decision by WIT to suspend all merger activities covered by the Memorandum of Understanding with ITC in October 2014.

1.2. Terms of Reference

Following meetings with both Institutes, the Minister for Education and Skills on 4 November 2014 announced a process of engagement and consultation, with the governing bodies, staff and students of both Institutes, together with the wider community in the South-East, in order to articulate and develop the following:

- A shared vision for a Technological University to serve the South-East region;

- To report to the Minister within ten weeks on the feasibility and steps required to progress an application for technological university status within an acceptable timeframe. This to be done, having regard to the published criteria and process for designation as technological university which is already in place.

1.3. Timeframe

The timeframe to completion was extended due to a number of factors. Firstly, due to other commitments, apart from initial contact, a substantive start was not possible until early January 2015. The intention then had been to complete by first quarter 2015 but, in light of progress made and an assessment that some further time would be beneficial to the outcome, the Minister's agreement to extend the time to completion by a further period was obtained.

1.4. Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the support I have received from the Minister and her Department and also from the Higher Education Authority. I also want to acknowledge the engaged, open and courteous response I received from all stakeholders I met during this assignment. Most particularly, I want to put on record my appreciation of the effort invested by the Governing Bodies, Presidents and staffs of both Institutes in ensuring that the process was thorough, in embracing all relevant stakeholders, and that it was constructively received and well supported at all levels in both Institutes. On a personal note, thanks also to Neil O'Sullivan and Martin Dolan for their logistical support and unfailing courtesy.

1.5. Responsibility for Content

While I have met with and listened to many groups and individuals during the course of the assignment, the views expressed in this report, unless otherwise indicated, represent my assessment of the prospects for and enabling measures to support the establishment of a Technological University for the South-East.

2. The South-East region in context

2.1. Introduction

For the purposes of this exercise, the South-East includes the counties of Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford, Wexford and part of Tipperary (formerly SR). Economic and social indicators portray a region that has considerable potential to develop and more detailed analysis highlights areas of particular need, particularly in regard to level of educational attainment. All stakeholder feedback during this process emphasised the positive impact to be gained from the presence of a Technological University in the region. In seeking to understand the significance of this overwhelming local consensus, it is useful to briefly review some of the broad trends which characterise the region.

Available data published by Solas[3] and by the CSO highlight the very considerable challenges faced and provide an insight to some of the obstacles in attracting new investment and employment growth in the region. By extension, they also provide a useful backdrop in considering the advantages that could be brought by a multi-campus university operating across the region with a strong focus on directly meeting the needs of enterprise, both existing and future.

2.2. Education Retention and Unemployment Level

The region has a high rate of early school leaving which is considerably higher than the national average (13% in Q4 2013, National average 8%).   This trend is also reflected in CSO data which shows that, in 2011, the South-East had the highest proportion of persons who finished their full-time education at 15-17 years of age.

Age at which full-time education ceased by region, 2011							
					% of Region		000
Region	Under 15	15-17	18-20	21-24	25 & over	Not stated	Persons
Border	11.0	25.1	19.4	12.1	4.8	27.5	336.8
Midland	8.2	23.4	21.2	11.9	4.5	30.9	182.1
West	9.0	20.4	22.2	15.3	6.5	26.6	293.8
Dublin	7.7	19.8	18.7	18.3	8.5	27.0	834.3
Mid-East	6.2	22.1	21.7	14.9	6.0	29.2	337.0
Mid-West	7.3	21.8	22.0	13.5	5.5	29.9	248.0
South-East	*8.6*	*25.6*	*21.4*	*12.2*	*4.8*	*27.3*	*330.1*
South-West	6.7	20.7	20.8	15.2	6.2	30.5	441.3
Total	8.0	21.9	20.5	15.0	6.4	28.3	3,003.5

Figure 1 Age at which full-time education ceased by region, CSO Quality of Life in Ireland 2013

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[3] Regional Labour Markets Bulletin 2014, Solas

There is also a relatively high unemployment rate compared to the national rate and many of these (20%) were formerly low-skilled and construction workers, although employment in these sectors is now recovering. There is high youth unemployment compared to the national rate (33% against 25%) and relatively low participation in higher education. In addition, CSO data shows that in 2012 the South-East (11.9%) along with the Midlands (12%) had the highest long-term unemployment rates in the country[4]. However, significant progress has been made in reducing the unemployment rate from 20.1% in Q1 2012 to 12.8% in Q1 2015.

Q1 2015 CSO Unemployment Rate & Participation Rate		
Q1 2015 (CSO QNHS)	South-East	National
ILO unemployment rate %	12.8	9.9
ILO Participation rate %	58.5	59.4

Figure 2 CSO Unemployment Rate & Participation Rate Q1 2015, CSO

Live Register Data May 2015									
Region	May 2015			Under 25 years			25 years and over		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
South-East	28,243	18,220	46,443	3,902	2,825	6,727	24,341	15,395	39,736

Figure 3 Live Register Data May 2015

Census 2011 confirms that the South-East has one of the lowest levels as a region of those finishing education with higher education qualifications and is the region with the highest proportion of population finishing education with lower secondary.[5]

Highest level of education completed by region, 2011						
Region	Primary or no formal	Lower	Upper	3rd Level	Not Stated	Persons
Border	20.3	18.8	32.8	23.4	4.6	336.8
Midland	16.7	18.6	36.7	22.9	5.1	182.1
West	17	15.7	34.8	28.5	4	293.8
Dublin	13.4	13.8	31.3	36.3	5.2	834.3
Mid-East	12.7	16.5	36.9	30	4	337
Mid-West	15.1	17.7	36.4	26.1	4.6	248
South-East	***16.5***	***19.8***	***36.5***	***23.1***	***4.2***	***330.1***
South-West	14	17.2	35.4	28.6	4.8	441.3
Total	15.2	16.6	34.4	29.1	4.7	3,003.50

Figure 4 Highest level of education completed by region, 2011, CSO Census of Population

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[4] Regional Quality of Life in Ireland, 2013, Central Statistics Office
[5] Regional Quality of Life in Ireland, 2013, Central Statistics Office

Age cohort analysis shows that almost one-fifth of the region's young adult population (aged 15-19) migrate from the region as they pass from late teens to early twenties.[6]

More detailed analysis commissioned by Wexford County Council confirms that the regional data mask even sharper contrasts in educational attainment based on smaller area analysis. For example, they point to a rate of 18.5% for those completing education with 'No Formal/Primary' in Wexford compared to a national rate of 15.2% and 16.5% regionally and concentrations of low retention in particular areas across the county.

Overall, these data would tend to confirm the picture painted by stakeholders of a region which is under-serviced in higher education provision. While beyond the scope of this exercise, the reasons for relatively low participation are likely to include self-perpetuating cultural patterns as well as problems of access, including cost and other barriers to attendance at courses within and outside the region.

2.3. Increasing Regional Demand for Higher Education: Education Drivers

In looking at future needs for higher education, three main sources of demand are identifiable:

- Future cohorts of second-level students,
- Life-long learning, including up-skilling, continuing professional development and mature students, and
- Students from outside the region, including International Students.

The trend in all three is upward although at different rates. Of the three sources, the increase in second level enrolments is by far the greatest driver of demand. Second level output is a product of demographic growth and retention rates. Both are increasing and provided any access barriers can be addressed, the numbers of second level students progressing to third level in the South-East would be expected over time to increase in line with national trends.

Second level school enrolment by local authority area 2013/14	
Local Authority	Total enrolment 2013/14
Carlow County Council	5,855
Kilkenny County Council	7,460
Waterford City Council	5,234
Waterford County Council	4,215
Wexford County Council	12,051
Tipperary (SR) County Council	6,657
Total	41,472

Figure 5 Department of Education & Skills, Annual Statistical Report 2013/14

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[6] CSO 2009 Population & Migration Estimates

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) projections for full-time enrolments[7] show that enrolments in second level schools are expected to increase by over 13,000 by September 2016. All of the potential scenarios published by the Department show continuing enrolment growth at second level up to the mid 2020s as the increased numbers enrolled in primary schools begin to transfer to second level education. The most likely scenario shows that enrolments at second level are expected to peak in 2025 at over 400,000, the first time in the history of the State. This is up from just over 333,000 in 2013. Although the DES projections are not available regionally, the South-East region has experienced relatively strong levels of population growth in recent years.

This increase will therefore lead to increased domestic demand coming from the second level sector for third level education. DES projections also show that[8] demand for third level full time education is expected to continue to rise every year to 2028 to between 210,000 and 213,000.

Life-long learning is already well established in both Institutes of Technology and is valued both by employers and the community more generally. In a planning context which foresees additional investment and increased volume of employment across the region, the demand for LLL can be expected to increase. The historic regional deficit in educational attainment should add further momentum under this heading.

Both Institutes are already attracting students from outside the region, national and international. In line with the mission planned for a new TU, the number of international students in particular, can be expected to increase significantly.

2.4. Employment Drivers

Analysis[9] carried out by the Skills and Labour Market Unit in SOLAS shows that in Q4 2013, the largest sector in the South-East was wholesale and retail, employing 29,000, closely followed by industry with 28,000 persons employed. While modern industry accounted for less than 10% of industrial units, they produced nearly 60% of the region's gross value of industrial output in 2011[10] which points to the importance of this sector to the region. High value added knowledge intensive market, financial and high tech services combined account for 10% of the region's employment and there is clearly room for growth in the future. Employment by broad economic sector is set out in Figure 6 below:

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[7] http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Reports/Projections-of-full-time-enrolment-Primary-and-Second-Level-2014-2032.pdf
[8] http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Reports/Projections-of-demand-for-Full-Time-Third-Level-Education-2014-2028.pdf
[9] Regional Labour Market Bulletin 2014, SOLAS, pages 64 – 70
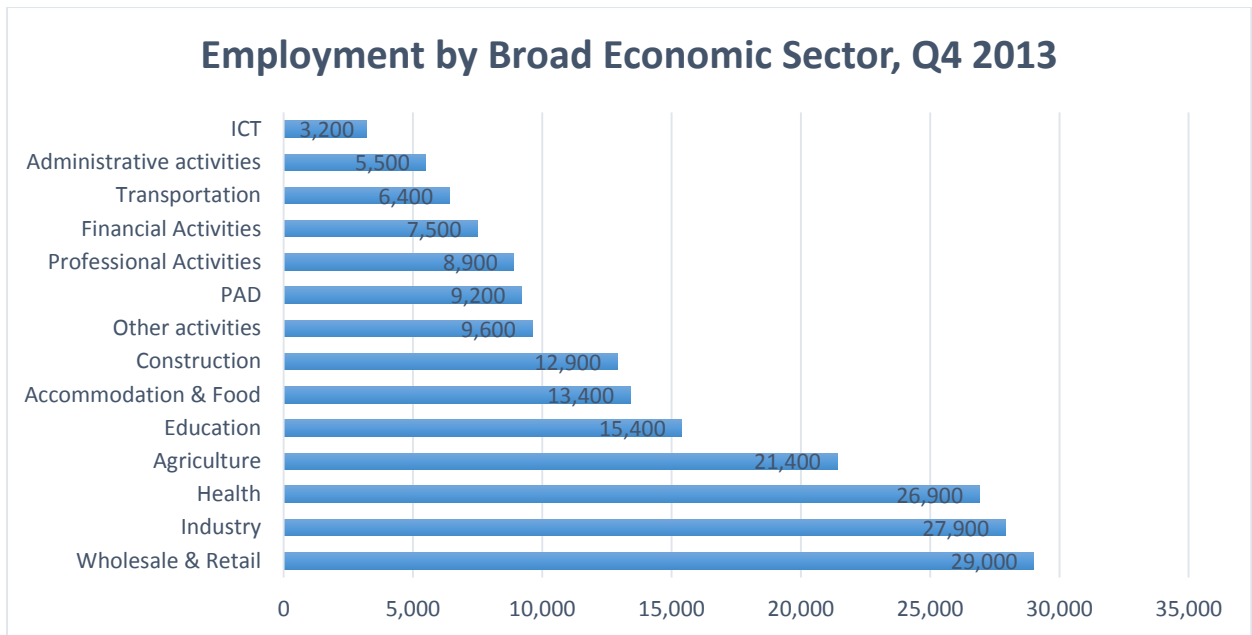[10] Regional Labour Market Bulletin 2014, SOLAS, page 65

Figure 6 Employment by broad economic sector Q4, 2013. Source: SOLAS (SLMRU) based on CSO data

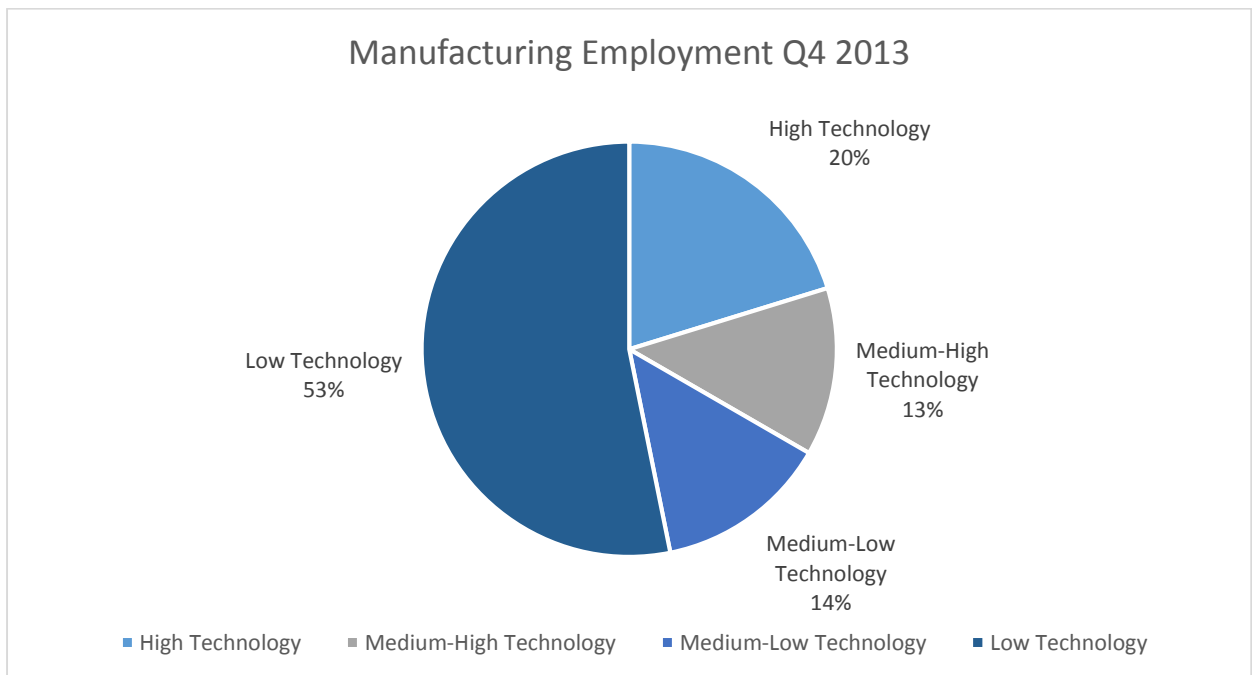The data[11] also shows that high-tech manufacturing accounted for just one fifth of manufacturing employment.

Figure 7 Manufacturing Employment South-East Q4 2013 Source: SOLAS (SLMRU) based on CSO data

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[11] Regional Labour Market Bulletin 2014, SOLAS, page 66

The same report[12] shows that, unsurprisingly, Dublin had the highest share of persons employed in high skilled occupations – almost two-in-five were either professionals or associate professionals, whereas the corresponding figure in the South-East regions was just one-in-four.   Employment by broad occupation in the South-East is set out in Figure 7 below.
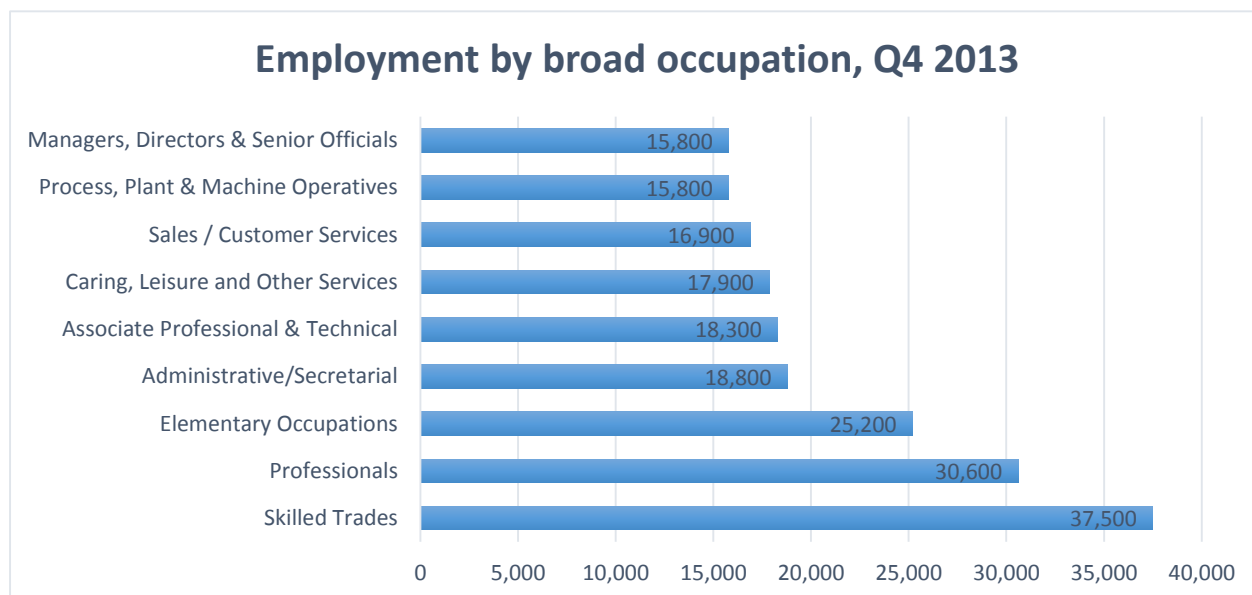
Employment by broad occupation, Q4 2013

Occupation	Employment
Managers, Directors & Senior Officials	15,800
Process, Plant & Machine Operatives	15,800
Sales / Customer Services	16,900
Caring, Leisure and Other Services	17,900
Associate Professional & Technical	18,300
Administrative/Secretarial	18,800
Elementary Occupations	25,200
Professionals	30,600
Skilled Trades	37,500

Figure 8 Employment by broad occupation South-East Q4 2013 Source: SOLAS (SLMRU) based on CSO data

The SOLAS analysis[13] highlights some key trends from the Census 2011 data which includes:

- **Occupation:** All counties in the South-East region had a lower than the national average share (39%) of persons at work in high skilled occupations (managers, professionals and associate professionals), the lowest share was recorded in South Tipperary; all counties had a higher share than the national average of persons at work in skilled trades and all, excluding Kilkenny, had a higher share in operative occupations;
- **Sector:** South Tipperary, Waterford and Carlow had a higher than average share of persons employed in industry. All counties had a lower than average share of persons at work in financial and information and communication activities;
- **Education:**   For persons at work, all counties in the South-East had a higher than average share of persons with lower secondary education or less, particularly Wexford and South Tipperary; all counties also had a lower than average share of persons at work with third level qualifications;

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[12] Regional Labour Market Bulletin 2014, SOLAS, page 1
[13] Regional Labour Market Bulletin 2014, SOLAS, page 70

With employment rates improving and with recent jobs announcements for new industries showing that there will be new opportunities for graduates in the short to medium term in R&D, high-skilled bio pharma and ICT, it is clear that there is also a strong need for high quality research and postgraduate provision in the region.
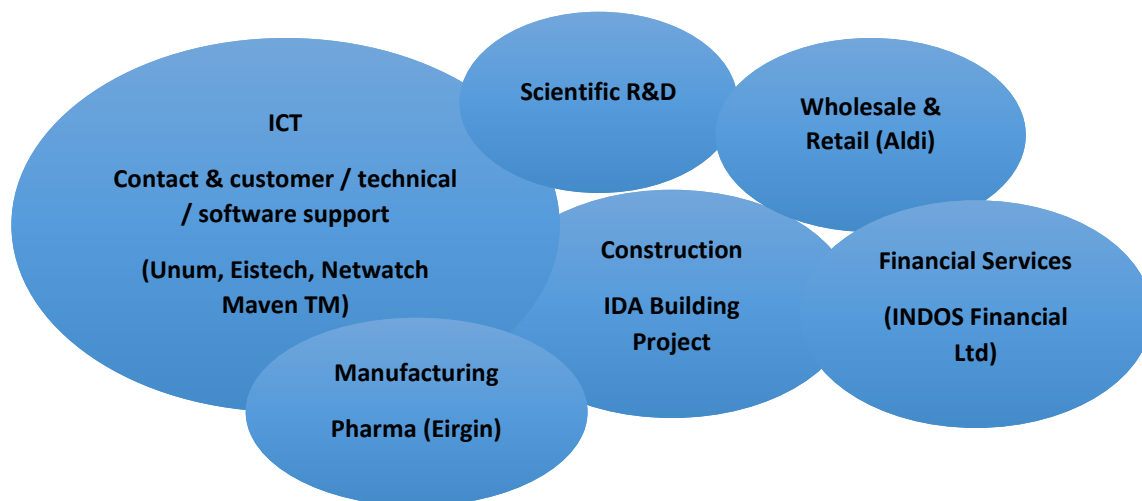

Figure 9 Job creation announcements in the South-East 2013 & 2014 Source: SOLAS (SLMRU)[14]

There is significant potential for the economy in the South-East to grow through the further development and growth of a number of sectors including medical devices, agri services, FINTECH and other internationally traded services. There are many initiatives underway within the region to stimulate innovation many of which involve the HEIs.

It's clear that a multi-campus TU has the potential to provide a diverse range of provision across its campuses to support all segments of the enterprise base.

2.5. Key Points

Stakeholders across the South-East region believe strongly that the development of TUSE is a vital infrastructure development which would impact positively on the region's future economic and social progress. During this engagement process they pointed to relatively low participation rates in higher education, relatively high unemployment levels and relatively low penetration of high-value employment across the region as three dimensions of regional performance that could be significantly improved through the presence of a Technological University in the region.

The overview of regional data set out above confirms the scope for improvement in the region's profile against the indicators considered, as well as continuing growth in demand for access to higher education based on demographic trends and other factors.

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[14] Regional Labour Market Bulletin 2014, SOLAS

While cause and effect is difficult to prove definitively, based on experience elsewhere, there is good reason to believe that the development of TUSE has the potential to exert a lasting impact on economic and social development in the region. There is a strong, whole of Government focus on regional development and the publication of the Action Plan for Jobs Regional for the South East is imminent at time of writing.

3. Background to the TUSE Project

The pathway to achieving designation as a TU has proved challenging for each of the three consortia now embarked upon it. While both the Dublin and Munster projects have successfully migrated beyond Stage 3 to preparation for a Stage 4 application, the developmental process involved continues to present significant challenges and to absorb a high proportion of time and effort on the part of their respective leadership and staff. As noted earlier, the scale and intensity of development required to achieve the step-change to TU norms is compounded by the complexity of merger as one of the prerequisites for designation. The combined impact, alongside the normal pressures of operating a Higher Education Institution (HEI) to required standards and within tight policy and financial parameters, places considerable pressure on the partner institutions at all levels.

3.1. Particular Factors in the South-East

In the case of the South-East, a number of particular factors are identified locally as adding significantly to the scale of challenge involved. They include:

- The inconsistent definition of the region for different purposes, the existence of a number of strong, often competing, urban centres, the north (Leinster) and south (Munster) affiliations and a perceived loss of status for Waterford as an administrative headquarters or gateway city, all tend to militate against a strongly unified regional identity, for individuals or institutions.

- The previous history regarding application for University status for WIT. The Institute submitted an application in 2005 under Section 9 of the Universities Act, 1997. Stakeholders in Waterford express a strong sense of frustration that previous commitments, as they saw them, had not been honoured. Similarly, they believe that Waterford has 'lost out' on many fronts and that the policy resistance to a conventional university application for Waterford is just another manifestation of this.

- There is little evidence of previous formal collaboration, academic or otherwise, by both Institutes. This may reflect geographic distance as well as previous differences in orientation. It may also reflect the more general regional fragmentation above.

- Equality of esteem has proved difficult to establish, reflecting a widely-held view in WIT that they are already 'at university level'. Many instances of negative commentary, formal and informal, have been unhelpful and hurtful to staff and students and corrosive to the process of collaboration.

- During the period in question, a number of extraordinary events in WIT, including a leadership change and a formal review of its financial affairs, with attendant critical public commentary, subjected the Stage 2 planning process to unexpected stresses and interruption, which have hindered momentum.

- While both Institutes have much in common, each has its own history, strengths, weaknesses and distinctive culture and outlook. Such differences are not unique to the South-East consortium and can usually be accommodated where the values of diversity, complementarity, mutual trust, respect and esteem are recognized. It is a weakness of the process followed to date that this has not been achieved across both institutes.

- The Institutes jointly recognized the scale of the challenge and had made application for a level of financial support (to cover external facilitation, change management etc.) based on their assessment of requirements. In the event, it did not prove possible to provide project support on the scale requested. In this, the South-East found itself in the same dilemma as other consortia. A stronger focus on substantive, bottom-up, cross-campus engagement on the design of the new institution will be a requirement of any renewed engagement on TUSE.

3.2. Steps Taken in Planning for TUSE

In considering how this project might progress, it is useful to briefly look back at the pattern of events to date, try to identify some of the key dividing issues and also the learnings from previous experience, as a foundation for designing a more constructive way forward.

From discussions with both Institutes, it is clear that a lot of thought, time and effort has already been invested in the project by both. While each Institute has had occasion to question the commitment and determination of the other to see the project through, both have remained fully committed to the principle of a Technological University for the South-East.

Key stages in the project to date are summarized in Figure 10, together with some observations to be considered in planning the next steps.

Sequence of Key Events in planning for TUSE	
Time Period	*Key events*
January 2011	Publication of HE Strategy and first contact from Chair of WIT to Chair of ITC.
March 2011	Publication of Programme for Government including reference to TUSE.
April 2011	Establishment of TUSE Project Steering Group including external support.
May – December 2011	Frequent meetings but little concrete progress. New Chair in ITC (October 2011).
Comment	**Some of the key issues in contention already becoming clear, including parity of esteem and joint governance and management arrangements.**
January 2012	New Presidents appointed in WIT and ITC.
January – July 2012	Intensive engagement leading to Stage 1 Submission in July 2012.
Comment	**This was a substantive document which declared a shared intent to establish a Multi-Campus TU for the South-East with a presence in Carlow, Kilkenny,**

	Waterford and Wexford and included an agreed Mission and Vision for TUSE, projected metrics, signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and agreement to merge in context of application for designation as TU. It also provided for due diligence exercises in the context of legal merger.
May 2013	Approval to move to Stage 2 as part of general statement on HE reform by Minister for Education and Skills. This opened the way to preparation by both Institutes of a joint business plan setting out the steps towards application for designation as TU.
Mid 2013	Project Implementation Board (PIB) established, comprising Chairs, Presidents, Project Coordinators, Executive Leads x3 from each Institute and three external experts/facilitators.
Comment	**During the period September 2012-August 2013 there was little concrete progress pending conclusion of the Quigley Report on some aspects of financial governance at WIT. The findings hardened attitudes in ITC around the need for robust financial due diligence.**
August 2013	Appointment of new external Project Coordinator for TUSE.
October 2013	Approval from HEA for funding support of €250,000 for TUSE in response to an application for €1.4 million.
October – December 2013	Series of meetings but no substantive progress on joint planning. Respective due diligence exercises being planned.
Comment	**Deep-seated challenges with the overall approach becoming apparent. Un-resolved issues included nature of due diligence planned by each partner on the other, design of a distributed multi-campus structure, barriers to compilation of joint up-to-date metrics re TU Criteria.**
January – March 2014	Tender for ITC due diligence exercise on Waterford advertised. Emphasis on financial issues.
February 2014	WIT signals its intention to engage an international academic to "test the rationale behind the proposed partnership and address if it is capable of realizing the targeted objective of TU designation".
Comment	**This reads as an unusual step at this stage of the process, given commitments already made. The sense of numerous unresolved issues and insufficient resolve to really tackle them to a point of solution is confirmed by feedback from external facilitators.**
March 2014	Confirmation that WIT had commissioned Professor John Taylor to conduct a due diligence study, as above.
April 2014	Little progress being made by PIB. Unresolved issues not being tackled. Project Coordinator communicates his concerns with rate of progress and sets out recommended steps to move things forward. Review of project undertaken with a view to submission of Stage 2 Business Plan by December 2014. Ability of existing structures to tackle unresolved issues questioned.
May 2014	ITC commissions Baker,Tilly, Ryan, Glennon to undertake due diligence on WIT.

June 2014	PIB is stood down. Chairs and Presidents confirm intention to explore alternative structures to achieve desired outcomes. A meeting of Chairs/Presidents agreed on a number of specifics including completion of due diligence on behalf of ITC and commitment to agree a governance and management model based on the principles adopted earlier.
July 2014	Taylor and BTRG due diligence exercises commence. Significant difficulties encountered on mobilization phase of BTRG review in WIT.
Comment	**It was clear at this stage that there were deep-seated problems in moving the project forward. They manifested in failure to agree a governance/management model, failure to complete the due diligence exercise on WIT and on-going difficulty in achieving substantive engagement on many aspects of the project.**
September 2014	In light of on-going difficulties with the project, meeting of Presidents with Ministers (MES and MPER). Need to progress to Stage 2 Plan was emphasized by Ministers and reasons for delay put forward by President's who also again expressed commitment to achieve progress with TUSE and to developing a business plan by end 2014 / early 2015.
September 2014	Further external facilitator introduced to work with Chairs/Presidents on a number of 'impasse' issues and facilitate engagement of BTRG on due diligence exercise in WIT. Agreement reflected in MoA document signed by both Chairs and Presidents on 29 September, subject to approval by respective Governing Bodies on 13 October.
October 2014	Preliminary draft of Taylor report put into circulation in WIT. Statement by Professor Taylor to both Presidents confirms that there are errors in the draft report and also changes in tone and emphasis which he would like to reflect into a final agreed report. He requests on this basis that the draft report be withdrawn and asks Presidents to convey this to Chairs of Governing Bodies. In line with earlier commitments, ITC formally ratified the MOA at GB meeting on 13 October and had put a communications programme in place to inform stakeholders of new milestone reached. Internal report on the status of the process prepared by the WIT Executive team for the Governing Body of WIT, on the basis of which the GB decided on 21 October to suspend involvement in merger discussions and related activities. The following communication was received by the President of ITC from the President of WIT on 21 October: *"The Governing Body of Waterford Institute of Technology met today (October 21st) to discuss concerns about the process of delivering a Technological University in the South-East. The members agreed to seek an urgent meeting with the Higher Education Authority and the Department of Education and*

Skills to discuss and address their concerns and they further agreed to suspend all activities related to merger. WIT remains committed to a Technological University in the South-East which will have a significant economic and social impact."

This announcement was followed by a suspension by WIT of its engagement with TUSE and cessation of project planning and all related activity, including the completion of due diligence exercises. Following meetings between the Minister for Education and Skills and both Institutes, the current engagement and consultation exercise was instigated.

Figure 10 Sequence of Key Events in planning for TUSE

3.3. Learning from Experience to date with TUSE

Both Institutes remain committed to the development of a Technological University for the South-East. Both have developed their own strengths and reputations and have built enduring relationships with local stakeholders. Neither Institute on its own can currently address the full requirements of the South-East Region nor can either achieve TU designation without a partner.

Both Institutes entered into the TUSE planning process with enthusiasm and energy and have addressed the challenges involved conscientiously and in good faith. The initial stages up to submission of the Stage 1 Report seem to have been characterised by a very positive dynamic. Some of the particular challenges identified arise naturally from the geography, current configuration and historic lack of engagement between the two IoTs in the region. Others arose from unanticipated events which had a de-stabilising impact on momentum and mutual trust.

Two consequences of the history to date are a sense of 'TU Fatigue' among the staffs and students of both Institutes and an understandable questioning by each Institute of the motives and behaviours of the other.

If the two Institutes can agree a basis on which they will re-engage on the planning process towards TUSE, a number of learning points from this experience should be brought to bear. These include:

- Placing primary focus on the regional ambition for an entirely new institution, offering a new level of capability and regional reach, rather than competitive positioning in the context of a merger of existing Institutes.

- The need to build mutual trust and respect as the foundation of equality of esteem. No attempt at substantive re-engagement should be made in advance of a preparatory stage involving the leadership of both Institutes, to provide assurance that these and other relevant principles are unequivocally taken on board.

- That process should also agree the broad strokes of a shared vision and establish a framework which ensures that all relevant issues will be jointly processed to an agreed conclusion.

- Both Institutes will need to acknowledge the value of diversity, build on their individual and shared strengths and be open to the opportunity to develop additional capacity across the region.

- Building a new Institution which delivers a genuine step-change in higher education provision in the South-East Region is not a trivial challenge, as borne out by the history to date. If it is to succeed, it will need additional concrete support on a number of levels, starting with stronger investment in the planning and change management processes involved.

- This exercise has emphasized the need to maintain strong on-going contact with external stakeholders across the region to ensure that their needs and expectations are made central. This should influence the shape of any future structures to support a renewed planning process.

4. Towards a Shared Vision for TUSE

4.1. Introduction

While the terms of reference at paragraph 1.2 envisaged the engagement and consultation with stakeholders taking place around a vision for TUSE shared in the first instance by both Institutes, this did not prove possible in the context of this process.

4.2. Respective Vision Statements

In the absence of a shared document, both Institutes have put forward their own vision statements for a Technological University for the South-East.   These vision documents are available separately to this report.

While these do not amount to a shared vision, they are useful in seeing where both Institutes are coming from and what they both see as important in the materialization of a Technological University for the South-East.

Each puts forward an ambitious picture of the new TU and both acknowledge that merger with a partner institute is a necessary step in the process. Both envisage a scale of development and transformation which would respond to the desire of regional stakeholders for the formation of an entirely new institution, rather than any extrapolation forward of existing provision in the region.

This exercise has proved useful, both for the Institutes themselves and for the wider regional audience in pointing up the real potential of TUSE to lift the performance of the South-East in multiple ways over the years ahead. It has also laid some very useful groundwork in articulating the direction of travel envisaged by both Institutes in addressing the immediate requirements for designation as TU, but doing so within a longer-term framework which is appropriately ambitious and would ultimately position TUSE strongly among comparator institutions internationally.

4.3. Some Core Features

A shared vision can only emerge from shared working by both Institutes in a unified process, which also embraces external stakeholders. Any attempt to derive or impose an externally generated vision, against the previous background of this project, would rightly be challenged on grounds of legitimacy and credibility. For these reasons, this report stops short of proposing a particular vision statement on TUSE.

However, it is possible to draw out some core features of a unified new institution from the outlines presented in the respective vision statements. For convenience, the headings follow the frame used in the published Criteria for a Technological University[15].

4.4. Mission

Both Institutes outline mission statements that are consistent with the broad mission outlined in the first paragraph of the Criteria for a Technological University referred to above. Both express in multiple ways a commitment to:

- Systematic focus on the preparation of graduates for complex professional roles in a changing technological world;
- Advancing knowledge through research and scholarship;
- Dissemination of this knowledge to meet the needs of society and enterprise ; and
- Particular regard to the needs of the Region.

The means by which the Institutes would pursue these ends are described under the subsequent criteria headings in their respective vision statements.

Both Institutes are appropriately ambitious in setting their sights high and in describing a developmental trajectory which would take them well beyond minimal compliance with the metrics for TU designation. Both are realistic in drawing out implementation pathways to achieve their stated ambitions.

4.5. Institutional Profile

Breadth of Programme Provision: Both Institutes are committed to providing a full range of programmes from Level 6-10, including retention of programmes at Levels 6&7 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and specifically to continuation of trade apprenticeship programmes.

Vocational/Professional Orientation with strong focus on Science and Technology: Both point out that this is already part of their tradition and strongly reflected in their current institutional mission. While embracing the STEM disciplines, both also see the inclusion of the humanities and social sciences in future programme offerings. Both also point to the potential for and value of inter-disciplinary programmes and the need to develop capability and competencies for long-term societal needs and sustainability, as well as address short-run commercial priorities.

Structured Work Placement: Both are committed to including work placement as a feature of programmes.

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[15] https://www.tu4dublin.ie/contentfiles/publications/Process-and-Criteria-for-Designation-as-a-Technological-University.pdf

Address Social and Economic Needs of the Region: This comes across as a shared core priority. Both refer to regional engagement processes already in place but commit to an enhancement of these as an intrinsic feature of how the TU would relate to its stakeholders at multiple levels. This is variously reflected in commitments to a TUSE Regional Engagement Partnership, proactive relationships with enterprise and employers, collaborative relationships in the design of education and research programmes, working closely with other public and private actors in the region and, overall an entrée for active stakeholder input to the thinking processes of the new TU in all aspects of its mission.

Both statements are drawn against the backdrop of detailed analysis of lower than national average performance in the South-East across a range of economic and social indicators, including participation in higher education. The opportunity for campus development in Wexford and Kilkenny to broaden the extent of community engagement in those parts of the region is recognised. Both Institutes put emphasis on wider opportunity for participation through access initiatives and commit to intensifying their relationship with education partners across the Post-Primary, Further and Higher Education sectors.

Both express commitment to full participation in the Southern Regional Cluster by the new TU.

Pedagogical and Research Capacity: Both place emphasis on excellence in Teaching and Learning and describe a range of measures to support continued development of pedagogy. Both attach priority to combining theory, practice and personal development through the learning cycle in all programmes. Programmes would be consciously designed around a set of graduate attributes combining knowledge, skills and competencies and aimed at maximum impact on regional and national needs. They would be designed and delivered from a 'whole of Institution' rather than campus perspective.

Both point to their respective track records in developing the student experience and in a variety of ways commit to continuously investing in quality provision through development of people, facilities and services to ensure the TU delivers an outstanding learner experience.

Both position research centrally in the new TU and give prominence to creativity, innovation and problem solving throughout. The principle of enquiry-based learning is seen as an embedded feature across all programmes.

Both statements make it clear that the requirement for existing capacity in at least three fields of knowledge/study outlined at Paragraph 6.2 of the Criteria Document can be addressed.

There are some differences of approach and emphasis evident in how the two Institutes see the development of research across a combined institution in the future. The issues in question are not insurmountable obstacles and should be solvable if both Institutes are prepared to approach it from a collaborative 'whole of institution' mind-set. This is one of a small number of headline topics which should get priority in any renewed TUSE planning process.

Effective and Efficient Governance and Administration: Both statements acknowledge the requirement for a single unified governance and management structure in a new TU, integrated across all campuses and designed in accordance with the TU legislation now in preparation. Both reflect a need for new ways of working at every level. Both see greater devolution of decision-making to Faculty level, within a robust accountability and governance framework.

The choice of model to achieve unified governance and management is an aspect of both documents where some difference of approach and emphasis is evident. The ITC statement places weight on the principles previously agreed by the Presidents and Chairs of both Institutes on how a distributed management structure should work. This approach is not directly addressed in the WIT document but is known to be controversial and unlikely to attract wide support.

This is another of the headline topics that will need specific attention in any renewed process.

Active Research Policy with focus on Applied/Problem Solving/Knowledge Transfer: Comments above relating to research are relevant.

Intensive and Broad-based Links with Region: Comments above relating to regional development are relevant.

4.6. Towards a Shared Vision

This high-level commentary on the respective vision statements is not intended as an in-depth analysis. Both documents present a rich tapestry of considered ideas and approaches, each of which would fit comfortably within the conceptual framework for technological universities drawn out in policy documents to date.

The main conclusion drawn is that there is very significant convergence of thinking and approach by both Institutes to many aspects of the design of TUSE. If there is sufficient resolve to create the new Technological University within both Institutes, the remaining issues should be capable of resolution. Doing so will require a shared commitment to do what is best in creating an entirely new Institution which reaches into and has a presence in all parts of the region. Agreeing to be guided by external expertise and to adopt an evidence-based approach to decision-making, should help to maintain focus on solutions which achieve greatest impact for the new TU and the Region.

Priority action points in any reengagement process should include:

- Preliminary engagement (by Chairs and Presidents with facilitation) to take stock of the new position and agree broad brush strokes of a shared vision for TUSE;
- Identify areas of broad agreement and aspects on which further work is required;
- Agree next steps to take both forward, with emphasis on cross-campus bottom-up engagement to build out and develop shared thinking around areas of broad agreement and identify the process to be employed in progressing remaining issues. Two such issues are an

agreed institution-wide approach to Research and Innovation and the model of Governance and Management to be adopted;

- The process on these and any other remaining issues should in the first instance be 'external expert' led and should be evidence-based. Subsequent work-up should enable broader institution-wide engagement on the detailed design, once the high level principles are settled;
- An immediate engagement to develop a shared set of aggregate data, using common standards and definitions, setting out the current position in relation to metrics for TU Designation and identifying priorities and action -=points for joint follow-up. Progress made on this item in the immediate short-term should be a reliable guide to the level of genuine commitment across both Institutes to progressing the TUSE project.

While due diligence exercises have been given attention at earlier stages of the TUSE project, they do not merit immediate priority in the context of a renewed project. Future needs under this heading should be considered by the Steering Group at a later stage, with the general approach being considered as part of the Preliminary Engagement above.

5. The Views of Stakeholders

5.1. Governing Bodies

The engagement process opened with a meeting with each governing body. These meetings provided an opportunity to hear at first hand the perspective of each on their experience of the TUSE Project to date and to agree the process for wider engagement and consultation.

From the outset, both Governing Bodies expressed continuing commitment to the ideal of a university level institution in the South-East, frustration at the lack of momentum over the course of the TUSE Project, doubt about the real level of commitment of their prospective partner Institute and overall, a sense of disillusionment with a good idea apparently going wrong.

More specifically, the formal opening position of WIT towards this engagement process was initially hostile. This arose from a belief that the terms of reference were unduly restricted and amounted to an undermining of the autonomy of the Institute in regard to its options on strategic positioning. Subsequent rounds of engagement with the Institute at all levels were positive and constructive.

IT Carlow adopted a positive and constructive position from the beginning and this was maintained throughout.

Each Governing Body expressed its own aspirations and concerns and these are a useful backdrop to an understanding of their respective positions on the development of TUSE.

IT Carlow

The Governing Body in Carlow IT referred in particular to:

- Overall support for the principle of TUSE and recognition of its potential to impact on the performance of the entire South-East region;

- Pride in the Institute's achievements across the board and most particularly in its transformation in recent years, including quality improvements and the development of teaching and research infrastructure and capability, using own resources;

- Acknowledgement that in common with other TU Consortia, both Institutes have ground to make up on designation criteria relating to Research, Staff and Student Profile, as well as Life-long Learning. Also assertion that based on measures already taken by the Institute, ITC will be in a position to meet all criteria within a reasonable time-frame.

- Need to defend the reputation of the Institute, given misleading and damaging image being portrayed by negative commentary emanating from within WIT;

- Need for robust due diligence exercises, as a sensible precaution prior to merger;

- Doubts about the real level of commitment to TUSE in WIT, reflected in failure to acknowledge equality of esteem, decision to commission report on 'feasibility' at late stage in project, unwillingness to co-operate with financial due diligence and refusal to work to shared data set;

- Frustration at the stop-go nature of the TUSE project, mainly due to governance problems in WIT;

- Concern about the impact of recent history of project and publicity on staff and student morale;

- Commitment to strong governance and support for the principles previously agreed by Chairs and Presidents on governance and management structures.

Waterford IT

The Governing Body in Waterford IT referred in particular to:

- Overall support for the principle of a TUSE, but not confined to any specific partnership;

- Opposition to the restrictions built into terms of reference for this process;

- Recognition of the needs of the South-East region and the imperative for a university level institution in the region as a key driver of regional performance;

- Pride in what had already been achieved by WIT over previous 15 years, particularly in the growth of its research and innovation capability and overall transformation;

- Frustration at the refusal to allow WIT to proceed on its own merits and reluctance to partner with ITC due to their belief that this would lead to significant delay in meeting some of the key designation criteria;

- Scepticism about real level of political and official commitment to the development of TUs of appropriate strength, in the absence of any commitment to investment and against evidence of very stretched resources in the IoTs, relative to international counterparts;

- Frustration at the engagement with ITC to date arising, inter alia, from a lack of acknowledgement of the prior difference in orientation of the two Institutes and respective levels of preparation for TU ;

- Outright opposition to any suggestion of 'forced mergers';

- Doubts about level of real commitment in ITC, reflected in reluctance to set ambitions beyond terms of merger deal, refusal to discuss outcome of (feasibility) due diligence report, and duplication of programmes;

- Belief that WIT academic achievements and stage of transformation towards university level should lead to TU primary location in Waterford;

Both initial meetings reflected a degree of frustration with the process to date but both Governing Bodies indicated an openness to further reflection and engagement. Subsequent meetings enabled the Governing Bodies to reflect on some of the feedback from regional stakeholders and to consider future positioning in that light. At all times, the Governing Bodies made clear their commitment to do what they believed would be in the best interests of the region, while also mindful of the governance responsibility they had to act in the best interests of their own Institute.

What comes across clearly from this entire process is a real sense of commitment by each Institute to the ideal of a TUSE, combined with a degree of doubt about the corresponding level of commitment by its prospective partner. Such doubts will need to be firmly addressed and resolved during the Preliminary Stage of any renewed planning process towards TUSE.

5.2. Consultation Meetings

As a measure of its support for the process, each Governing Body agreed that the engagement process would be supported by the Institute and the TU Co-ordinator in each provided administrative and logistical support for all meetings. A total of some 40 meetings were held with groups of stakeholders and a record made by the relevant Institute of the main points put forward at each.

Stakeholders met included:

Institutes: Governing Body, President and Executive Team, Academic Staff, undergraduate, post graduate and lifelong learning students, Professional and Support Staff, PIB members, Trade Unions, Campus Companies.

External Stakeholders: Local Authorities, Chambers of Commerce, Employers, Enterprise Development Agencies, Education and Training Boards, Guidance Counsellors, Collaborative Partners, Social and Community Groups, Wexford Group.

A number of one-to-one meetings also took place with members of the Oireachtas representing the region or at the request of individual stakeholders and these views have also been incorporated. Meetings also took place with a number of the external facilitators or advisors previously linked with the TUSE project.

Given the absence of a common vision statement at Institute level which could have served as the basis for a more concrete discussion, the consultation process centred around three main questions:

- How important is it that we have a Technological University for the South-East?
- Is it possible to draw out a vision for it which would address the region's needs?
- What might the feasibility pathway look like?

Overall, there is a lot of common ground in the views expressed across the region and they can be conveniently summarized around the questions posed, as in paragraphs 5.5 to 5.7 below.

5.3. Some Key Distinctions

Firstly, there is a significant, if understandable, difference between the concerns of internal and external stakeholders. While the range of views and concerns expressed at 5.1 above surfaced to varying degrees at meetings with many of the internal groups in either Institute, external stakeholders have for the most part a quite straight-forward viewpoint. They put forward a compelling rationale for a TUSE, are quite discerning about what its level of capability should do for the region and have little tolerance for any continuation of the current impasse, which many would view as driven by Institutional rather than Regional considerations.

A second distinction was geographic, as between some Waterford-based stakeholders and those from all other parts of the region. In Waterford, there is a widely-felt strong sense of entitlement to a university in the city, which it was argued would also serve the needs of the wider region. It is based on arguments about equal treatment with other comparable cities, impact on economic and social development, need to compensate for re-location elsewhere of other administrative functions and offices, the business case already made by WIT and overall, an ambition that has deep roots culturally and over a long time-span.

Stakeholders from other parts of the region are quite clear that a Waterford-only solution would not meet their needs or expectations and that they wish to see a more distributed institution with direct links to all parts of the region.

5.4. Other Options

Against the backdrop of the current impasse, a common question from stakeholders, particularly in Waterford, was around the possibility of seeking a solution to the region's needs by considering a wider set of options, such as:

- WIT on its own
- A two-stage process which could accommodate the time-lines of each Institute separately or
- Some alternative to the ITC/WIT combination

While regarding these options as outside the scope of this exercise, I did feel a responsibility to address them when raised. Although one or more of them may have initial appeal as a work-around, on closer examination it becomes clear that none of them would be viable if the objective is to establish a TU which addresses the region's needs within the policy framework set down nationally.

The reasons in each case are as follows:

Firstly, no Institute of Technology will be allowed to proceed on its own in a policy context which sets out to develop new institutions of scale and capability based on consolidation of existing Institutes. Any deviation from this for any one Institute would inevitably lead to an undermining of the consolidation objective and, over time, a possible threat to the Irish University brand. All stakeholders agreed that this was not a risk that could be contemplated.

Secondly, the degree of 'whole of institution' integration achieved around a unified mission is one of the areas of particular focus by Expert Panels at Stages 3 and 4 of the Designation Process. This is regarded as a key success factor in evaluation of an emerging new Institution's chances of successful growth and sustainability. It is simply not conceivable that a Panel would see a two stage process, where one entire campus moved at a different pace, as reflecting the advanced level of 'unified institution' expected of an ambitious TU in formation.

More significantly, assuming the assertion by each Institute that it will meet the TU Designation Criteria within a reasonable time-frame can be validated, through the early preparation of an agreed joint data-set, any rationale for this option quickly dissolves.

Thirdly, while in principle either Institute could try to work with a different partner in furthering its own institutional development, the only combination that directly addresses the needs of the South-East within the region itself is one involving WIT and ITC. Given the intensity of stakeholder expectation within the region, there really is no alternative to meeting the region's needs other than a partnership between ITC and WIT.

In general, once the options were talked through in these terms, stakeholders across the region accepted that the best course would be to proceed with development of a new TU, building on the existing strengths of both Institutes, provided this could be achieved within a reasonable timescale.

5.5. Theme 1: How Important is it that we have a Technological University in the South-East?

The most significant finding under this heading is the strength of conviction across the region that a university level institution in the region is an absolute imperative, in planning the transition from 'must do better' to superior performance by the South-East Region. This is a deeply shared sentiment across the region, expressed equally strongly by commercial and business interests, in relation to development and growth prospects and community and family respondents, in their hopes and ambitions for their own children and the community interest more generally.

It is also significant that, while stakeholders express a high level of respect for both existing Institutes, they are very clear that they are looking for real change and would see little point in a re-badging or re-branding of current higher education provision in the region. They articulated the need for a step-change in regional capability of a scale and standard that could exert a real and lasting impact on economic and social indicators for the South-East. They believe that the necessary scale, capability

and regional reach could only be achieved through the development of an entirely new Institution, drawing on the strengths of both existing Institutes but also adding further capacity across the region.

The case is argued on many grounds. Ultimately, it revolves around the anticipated impact on quality of life for the region's population, following from:

- greater volume of quality employment,
- greater access to life's opportunities through participation in higher levels of education leading to better jobs,
- retention of young people and human talent in the region and, overall
- a big boost to regional capability and self-confidence, with positive impact on economic and social development across the board.

While there remains some attachment in Waterford to a 'traditional' university, stakeholders across the region accept the current policy reality that the strongest likelihood of success in meeting regional aspirations in the near future lies with following through on the formation of TUSE.

Enterprise Development

A particularly compelling case is argued by those involved in promoting Enterprise Development in the region, including both business representatives, enterprise development agencies and local authorities. They point to:

- Weak performance by the region on many economic and social indicators relative to other parts of the country. This picture of unrealized potential in the region is shared by many stakeholders and is confirmed by the data set out in Section 2 earlier. This clearly reflects higher than average unemployment rates, lower than average earnings, lower than average participation in higher education and lower intensity of inward investment;
- The evidence that the presence of a high-profile university in a regional location is one of a number of criteria now considered important in attracting new investment;
- The need for high visibility and ready supply of quality graduates in relevant disciplines and strong research and innovation capability in the region to support higher value employment.

While expressing satisfaction with their own experiences of working with both Institutes and a healthy respect for what they currently achieve, all can see the growth in opportunity and potential for the region in the emergence of a new unified TU.

Educational Access and Progression

Similarly, Guidance Counsellors, parents and students paint a very convincing picture of the need for regional access to university level programmes. They point to the very real costs to families of supporting their student daughters and sons to attend universities outside the region and difficulties of access via public transport networks to existing Institutes. While accepting that these challenges are not unique to the South-East, they believe they have poorer access by reference to other parts of

the country of comparable population density. Students on the Wexford Campus of ITC spoke in particular of the 'cause and effect' relationship between the convenience of access to the campus and their participation in higher education. Again they referred to barriers of cost, to attend elsewhere, and travel within the region using public transport. Given the particularly weak HE participation profile for Wexford in particular (see Section 2), this may provide useful insight in the context of future campus planning.

The over-whelming sentiment expressed around this question suggests an absolute imperative to progress the development of an ambitious TUSE, focusing on the longer-term development of the South-East region without any further avoidable delay.

5.6. Theme 2: Is it possible to draw out a shared vision to address the region's needs?

During the course of the project, each of the Institutes drew up and published its own vision statement for a Technological University and stakeholders had access to both documents during later stages of the project. Since there was no agreed vision statement, or willingness on the part of WIT to participate in preparation of one within this process, it has not been possible to answer this question definitively.

While both published statements resonated with stakeholders as offering a valuable foundation for further joint development, they did not see the point of engaging in detailed analysis of individual statements at this stage. They believe that a resumed TU process should quickly get to grips with a shared vision for the new TU and that regional stakeholders should have direct input to that process.

In the course of the project many suggestions have been made which could usefully be reflected into the thinking process around a shared vision. These include:

Creating a shared vision	
Be Ambitious	Think out the long-term trajectory for an entirely new TU, which sees meeting the Designation Criteria and Merger as short-run way-points on a much longer voyage of continuous improvement, positioning TUSE as an international leader among peer institutes.
Student-Centred	Design the new Institution around its raison d'être and carry this principle into every facet of its activities. Involve the students in the design.
Culture	Recognise the differences in culture and capitalize on them. Each has value in building a new culture which transcends both. Mutual respect and trust are basic building blocks.
Workplace	Recognise need for institution-wide adoption of modern work practices, consistent with the new mission and work with staff and unions to bring them about collaboratively.

Mission	Requires excellence in Teaching and Learning as well as Research Excellence across the entire Institution. Recognise and reward the value of both. Avoid mission creep by retaining vocational, practical, job-ready graduate focus. Avoid 'over-academic' orientation.
Provision	Retain breadth of provision: employers (and particularly SMEs) have a continuing requirement for technician type level 6/7 skills, alongside the need for higher level qualifications.
	Ensure progress towards higher academic reach of TU is not at the expense of less opportunity for weaker students.
	Life-Long Learning needs to be given greater priority. Employers value flexibility and student-centred approach.
	An entrepreneurial dimension should be built into every programme.
	TU needs to tap into and help develop local strengths right across the region, through a presence in Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford.
Employer Engagement	Industry Links (already strong) will need continued development.
Resourcing	The true investment needs of building a TU to international benchmark standard should be honestly evaluated and provided for, to realise the benefits of the step-change in performance and outcomes anticipated.

Figure 11 Creating a shared vision

Overall, stakeholders believe that there is sufficient common ground between the respective offerings of the two Institutes and their interpretation of regional needs to make the development of a shared vision possible in a renewed process. While noting that differences of emphasis had arisen in earlier rounds of the TU process, stakeholders do not accept that the issues in contention are beyond resolution, provided the mindsets on both sides remain constructively fixed on the prize of a new TU which meets the needs of the region in a different way for the future.

5.7. Theme 3: What might the Feasibility Pathway look like?

Once again this proved difficult to analyse in very concrete terms in the absence of a shared vision statement. However, it is possible to draw out some broad brush strokes in terms of approach.

A key determinant of the feasibility path will be the timelines to achievement of TU designation criteria, and particularly those relating to staff, student and research profile as well as Life-long Learning for the new Institution. While the hope had been to present an up-to-date shared assessment of aggregate data across the relevant metrics for both Institutes, this did not prove possible in the context of this process.

Based on the individual assessment of current positioning and rate of progress by each Institute, it is likely that in aggregate, they will meet the quantitative designation criteria within a period of three

years. However, this position needs to be validated through the joint preparation of an agreed data-set addressing each of the TU Designation Criteria.

Assuming their individual assessments hold true and with a determined approach by both Institutes to work together on the planning and implementation of the necessary steps up to application for designation (Stage 4), there is no obvious reason why the project could not be advanced to Stage 4 within this three year period.

One of the decisive issues for regional stakeholders is that TU should be achieved within a reasonable period of time. For those who expressed a particular view on this question, a time-frame of three years would be acceptable. Of course, if a tighter timeline was possible, regional stakeholders would wish to see this achieved.

Given the current state of play on the project, with a continuing suspension of engagement by WIT, no firm prediction can be made at this stage about the prospects of re-engagement or achievement of a successful outcome. Based on close contact with both Institutes over the period of this project and the engagement with stakeholders, it is possible to identify a number of measures which could improve the prospects of success and these are picked up in Section 7.

5.8. Other Internal Perspectives

The main concerns expressed by the Governing Bodies of both Institutes are summarised in Paragraph 5.1 above. While many of the same themes permeated the meetings with staff groups in each Institute, a range of other perspectives were also offered that should be weighed into the mix.

Executive Teams

- The perspective in each case closely mirrored the views of governing bodies;
- Both expressed a lot of frustration with process to date and doubted the commitment of the other, offering numerous instances to prove both points;
- Team in ITC saw no real obstacles on its side to progressing TUSE and remained committed to the project. Work on development of Vision Statement (then) in progress;
- Team in WIT defended the position taken by the Institute, emphasised the stage of transformation already achieved and introduced its new Vision Statement for a TUSE;
- **Concrete issues from both sets of meetings identified as:** imperative to shift focus to creation of new institution, timescales to meet criteria, need to bottom out contentious issues, need to address investment in TU, absence of 'unified group ethos'.

Academic Staffs

- Common focus on excellence in teaching and research and pride in own achievements to date;
- Minimal experience of previous collaboration and little sense of cross-campus engagement on TUSE;

- ITC generally supportive of concept of TUSE, apprehensive about motives of WIT, mindful of superiority expressed by WIT and lack of respect expressed towards ITC, problems viewed as in the 'Chief's Tent' rather than on the ground, comfortable with level of in-house engagement and information sharing, normal worries about rationalization;
- WIT put emphasis on need for common culture and for partner institute to be at similar level of transformation, absence of commitment to investment, lack of academic rationale for mergers, worries about standards and time-scale to achieve designation;
- **Concrete issues identified as:** Need to shift focus to vision for new 'University Standard' Institution, need for evidence of willingness to invest in quality, opportunities for collaboration, need for cross-campus engagement at multiple levels.

Students

- Overall very positive and enthusiastic about the development of TUSE;
- Some concerns about the organisation of student services in a new unified institution but nothing insurmountable;
- Important that TUSE would continue to make space for students at all levels of ability;
- Some concerns about transitional issues e.g. possibility of retrospection of awards;
- Serious level of concern about damaging impact to reputations of their places of study, from negative commentaries;
- **Concrete Issues identified:** need for full student involvement in any re-engagement, need to alert 'authors of negative commentary' to extent of collateral damage, including self-defeating reputational damage.

Professional Services Managers

- WIT team placed emphasis on similar range of issues as Academic Staff, e.g. no history of collaboration, need for similar culture, pride in WIT achievements to date, energising effect of process around new Vision Statement and defended the decision to suspend engagement;
- ITC team were generally positive about the development of TUSE, resentful of a condescending attitude from WIT, felt that cross-campus engagement might be more successful at lower levels of both Institutes, also that the Governance/Management discussions had been focused on the wrong issues;
- Level of concern expressed about normal range of rationalisation issues, including location of key functions and roles;
- **Concrete Issues arising**: Need for cross-campus engagement, including opportunities for collaborative projects.

General Services Staff

- Were generally positive about the development of TUSE;
- Perspective reflected family and community-related concerns, as well as professional interest
- Normal range of rationalization related concerns;

- Concrete Issues arising: Ensure inclusivity in any re-engagement, need for process and clarity on rationalization issues in the event of re-engagement.

Trade Unions (1) [IMPACT, SIPTU,UNITE]

- Both branches of all three unions broadly supportive of principle of TUSE development but disillusioned with practical application in the South-East. All distinguished between their general support for a measure they felt would bring wider community benefits and their reservations about particular aspects of its implementation;
- All expressed a range of concerns about the process to date in the South-East. These included 'staff weariness' with protracted process which seemed to be achieving little progress, absence of shared vision or agenda, concerns about the possible impact of rationalisation of programmes and positions;
- WIT-based representatives saw justification in the WIT position, if it was genuinely the case that TU designation could be significantly delayed resulting from merger with ITC. However, they acknowledged that there was little hard data in circulation to support this;
- ITC-based representatives expressed skepticism about the motives of WIT, and some puzzlement about the resistance to due diligence in WIT;
- All argued for a fully inclusive process in the event of any re-engagement.

Trade Unions (2) [TUI]

- Meetings took place with each Branch and jointly with both Branches at the request of TUI;
- Concerns expressed at individual Branch meetings reflected a similar range of concerns as reflected at the Academic Staff heading earlier;
- Core points raised by the TUI collectively included:

  o While not opposed to the concept of TU, per se, they were dissatisfied with the poor level of understanding about the definition of a TU and how it would be different from either an IoT or University;
  o They felt the whole TU/consolidation policy masked a 'cash savings' agenda. Linked this to lack of investment in Higher Education on this or other policy objectives, accentuated by the experience of the austerity period over recent years;
  o Were strongly opposed to 'forced mergers' and believed a 'federation' model would be more practical;
  o Were reinforced in this view by recent public statements reflecting no new investment in the establishment of TUs;
  o Level of frustration felt by academic staff on the ground, for these and other reasons;
  o A principled objection to the 'casualisation' of the Teaching Profession;
  o Lack of engagement in the TUSE process to date expressed by members in both Branches;
  o **Substantive Points emerging:** Need to ensure inclusive processes in any re-engagement

This brief summary could not do justice to the full range of views expressed at each of the relevant meetings. While the main points raised are referred to, it is the case that a wider range of concerns and viewpoints were also raised. The notes made by each Institute of the meetings should be available as a valuable source of guidance to those involved in any re-engagement process.

6. Options for the Future

In most situations of choice, 'do nothing' is one of the options to be considered. In thinking out the future for the TUSE Project, there are really two options. One is to push ahead with the project, in line with the strongly expressed wishes of stakeholders, and the other is to accept that the difficulties encountered are of an order which makes progress to successful completion impossible. A clear decision should now be made one way or the other. Any further delay in deciding direction is unlikely to be helpful to the TUSE project, the Institutes or the region more generally. The primary actors around this decision are the two Institutes.

In the context of the current policy framework, which will be reinforced with the passage of the TU Bill planned for late 2015, a decision not to proceed would have profound implications for the South-East region and indeed for both Institutes. It would effectively amount to a decision to limit the development of both Institutes and to ignore the potential to satisfy the ambitions of regional stakeholders for a more vibrant regional performance for the future, with a strong unified Technological University as a core feature.

Such a decision might be contemplated in circumstances where it was clear that every possible measure had already been taken in a coherent and determined programme to bring the TUSE project to fruition. Based on experience of leading large-scale change programmes, including similar TU projects, it would be difficult to accept this was the position regarding the TUSE Project.

A number of features of the process to date reflect weakness in project design and implementation and less than the required level of commitment on the ground. These include:

- Absence of an integrated project team working the project on the ground
- No joint meetings of Governing Bodies
- Lack of cross-campus engagement with the TUSE process expressed by staff
- Little concrete outcome from joint working groups established
- No readily available shared data-set re TU Metrics
- Little evidence of collaborative projects or behaviours

Against a backdrop where both Institutes remain committed to the ideal of a TUSE, but mindful of the absence of key features as above, a decision to 'do nothing' at this stage would have little supporting rationale.

 In my discussions with the leadership of both Institutes, each puts forward numerous instances of attempted collaborations which did not materialize for one reason or another. Both also refer to instances of direct competitive behaviour by the other. In the absence of any round-table discussion involving both, I have been unable to draw clear conclusions as to what may have lain behind these alleged breaches of good faith. Overall, they do seem to reflect a damaged set of key relationships and this will need to be recognized in any attempt to re-start the process.

As noted earlier, this project has not been helped by a number of interruptions, at least some of which arose from circumstances beyond the control of those then leading on the TUSE Project. For a whole host of reasons, it has proved difficult to gain real momentum in previous iterations, apart from the very productive period leading up to the Stage 1 submission. With the appointment of new Governing Bodies and new leadership in WIT, both Institutes are now in a more stable position and the environment should be more conducive to successful completion. However, this will require the mindset in both to be positively and constructively focused on the prize of achieving TU designation, as the starting point of a longer term development of this new Institution. It will also require a set of behaviours throughout the two Institutes which is decidedly collaborative and is characterised by mutual respect, trust and integrity.

Ultimately this project will succeed if the will is present and sufficiently strong in the leadership of both Institutes to make it happen. Leadership in this context connotes not just the Governing Body and President but also the Academic, Professional and Support Services Leads in both Institutes. The external stakeholders in the South-East have made clear their ambitions and expectations. They are calling for a more resolute approach by both Institutes in generating a new dynamic for the region. Both are being asked to do so in the knowledge that the new TUSE will have the potential to play a central role in transforming the lives of future generations in the South-East. The opportunity should be seized and taken forward enthusiastically.

Based on all that I have learnt in the course of this project, my strong recommendation is that a re-invigorated process to establish TUSE should be established at the earliest feasible date.

Recognising the challenges in doing so, a number of enabling and supportive measures are identified in Section 7.

7. Enabling and Supportive Measures

7.1. Introduction

Earlier sections have identified the scale of challenge faced by Institutes generally in setting out on TU designation. The particular challenges in the South-East are reflected in the history of the project to date, summarized earlier. It will be important in moving to a new phase that the learnings from previous experience are fully taken on board.

In doing so, a key environmental issue is the policy position currently adopted on the level of support to be provided to Institutes generally setting out on the road of TU designation. Public statements reflecting an intention to provide little or no investment support were a cause of serious concern, and questioning of serious policy intent, at all levels in both Institutes and also among some external stakeholders.

Future positioning on this question should place greater emphasis on the wider benefits to be expected, which might justify some additional investment in the short-run. Wider benefits identified in other European HE Systems include those associated with:

- Increased Quality
- Realisation of Economic Gains
- System Consolidation
- Strengthening Institutional Position , and
- Geographic Drivers

While the strategic intent in the formation of TU's is not primarily about cost savings, it will of course, be vital that all possible efficiency gains are availed of in the course of consolidation. The primary goal must be to achieve a step-change in performance and outcomes from what could be achieved by Institutes of Technology, at a given level of investment, to what should be achieved by Technological Universities benchmarked against the best internationally. Full realisation of the potential value of this step-change will need to take cognizance of short-run investment needs.

The experience of other European countries in the transition to new types of institution and particularly, those formed following merger, is also instructive. The general experience is that the transition period is one which requires considerable 'set-up' investment, if the expected dividend in quality of outcomes is to be realized later and the pay-back period can be extensive. Unfortunately, experience also suggests that it is as easy to fail as to succeed.

Against this backdrop, a number of enabling and supporting measures are recommended for consideration in the context of the TUSE. These are designed to provide some level of assurance to the leadership of the two Institutes and to stakeholders, as well as to create a more optimistic dynamic around the project more generally.

7.2. TUSE Project

The following measures closely reflect the approach originally proposed by the two Institutes, with some additions. Each is regarded as essential in ensuring that a new phase of the project continues to completion.

Project Steering Group

Membership to include Chairs, Presidents, GB Members (2x2), International Academic (2) and Independent Chair.

- All appointments should be made on the basis of competence for the role, enthusiasm for the project and willingness to make the considerable time commitment involved.
- The Chair and International Members should have the full approval of both Institutes.
- The Chair should be of a calibre to command the respect of both Institutes and, within a process to be agreed by the Steering Group, should have the authority to push issues of contention to final conclusion and close-out.
- It is assumed that Academic and Professional Leads, as well as other staff of both Institutes, would attend Steering Group meetings as required.

Joint Project Team

This should be a team of appropriate size (6-8), competence and leadership to be determined by the Steering Group. It should be drawn from a range of backgrounds across both Institutes. There should be one Team Lead who commands the respect of both Institutes and works collaboratively with both. Members of the team should be released from their normal roles and have a full-time commitment to the project for the period to Designation.

Appointments to the team should have the approval of the Steering Group and individual selections should be based on competence, overall fit with team and enthusiasm for the project.

Regional Stakeholder Forum

Stakeholders throughout the region have already expressed a huge level of interest in the TUSE Project and a collective concern to 'get it right' for the region. They provide a useful voice in grounding the new Technological University in its regional context.

The Forum is not intended to supplant the role already played by Governing Bodies, Local Authorities, other regional fora or public agencies in reflecting business and community viewpoints into institutional thinking.

Rather, it is intended as a very concrete under-pinning of the potential of this new Institution to exert a transformational impact on the region by inter-acting very closely with stakeholders throughout its formative stages.

It should reflect the same range of perspectives as included in this process and could operate through a number of channels. Its specific design, including composition, should be a matter of further discussion between the Steering Group and the Department.

Facilitation and Change Management

Reference was made earlier to the leadership challenge now faced by both Institutes. An early manifestation of the quality of that leadership will be the extent to which bottom-up engagement can be mobilized on a cross-campus model around every aspect of the design of the new TU. Future engagement will need to be organized around a clear implementation plan, including work-stream framework which sets timelines and expected outcomes as explicit accountabilities for Project Leads and a clear track for all key decisions, milestones and ultimate decision-making authority.

Key elements should include:

- Agreed Vision and Values
- Organisation Model and Governance
- Integration Programme
- Implementation Road-Map
- Project Portfolio and detailed project charters
- Financial Model

Against the background of the TUSE project to date, the challenge involved in this should not be under-estimated. It will require a quantum of external support, at least proportionate to similar projects elsewhere and probably more. The Steering Group should give early consideration to assessing needs and should be empowered and supported to commission external support as required. The investment already made by the Institutes, through own resources and with HEA support, has produced outputs and a level of understanding about the scale and complexity of transformation required, which should form a solid foundation for the next phases of work.

While 'due diligence' has been a strong flavor in external work commissioned to date, the priority should now attach to the detailed design of the new Institution. The need for any remaining due diligence assessment should be considered by the Steering Group, in the light of its knowledge of the workings of both Institutes, at a later stage.

7.3. Institution Support and Acceleration Measures

Both Institutes have already invested significantly in their own campus transformation programmes in planning towards TU designation.

WIT

WIT has demonstrated a degree of foresight and institutional leadership and determination over a period of 15 years in developing a vibrant research culture which positions it as a leader among peer Institutes of Technology in research quality and output. This is manifest in a number of high profile research specialisms and in the development of an innovation eco-system which is highly valued and supported by relevant industries and the enterprise development agencies. The research campus developed at Carriganore, in particular, reflects the wisdom of serious and sustained investment in high-end research infrastructure in terms of output and impact.

The Institute makes a justifiable case that it has developed this level of capacity and a research-led institutional culture over a long period without recognition in its funding base for the very considerable cost overhead involved. Staff at every level in WIT express pride in their involvement in developing and contributing to this culture, and there is a sense of collective 'sacrifice in a noble cause' in their account of how this has been achieved over the years.

On the other side of the equation, the Institute has engaged in a number of other infrastructure investments over recent years which have left a significant debt overhang to be funded through an annual charge on its revenue funding allocation from the HEA. Notwithstanding the public accountability rationale for the current arrangement, it is unlikely to be compatible with the order of effort now required of both Institutes to deliver credibly on the regional ambition for TU.

ITC

ITC has also developed strong capability in a number of research fields, demonstrating both strong academic impact and commercial potential. Examples include its:

- GameCORE : Interactive Applications Software & Network Research Centre
- EnviroCore : BioEnvironmental Technologies Research Centre

both of which should have a natural fit with the Computing and Bioenvironmental specialisms in WIT

It has also demonstrated a pioneering spirit in the development of new research themes relating to Aero-Engineering and Security Technologies, among others, the seeds for both of which have grown from established relationships with major enterprises, both public and private. Engagement with campus companies also reflects strong incubation support and commitment to realizing the commercial potential of research and innovation capacity. Again the feedback from Enterprise Development Agencies and business representatives reflects a clear recognition of what has already been achieved and a commitment to work with the Institute in the continuing development of its research activities.

A particular mark of the Institute's proven determination to develop its research capability is the recent investment it has made, from own resources, in the Dargan Centre at a capital cost in excess of €6.5million. This will accommodate up to 150 post-grad researchers at capacity and provides cutting-edge facilities and infrastructure to support programmes currently in Bioenvironmental, Product Design, Security Technologies and Health Sciences areas. The evidence is that research programmes in ITC are producing high impact outputs in the increased number of doctoral and post-doc students and in the volume and quality of publications and citations.

As a further demonstration of the Institute's on-going development and transformation, it is at an advanced stage in the planning and development of a new Teaching and Learning Centre at a capital cost of €7million, again funded by own resources. The plans for further development of its Wexford Campus reflect its commitment to regional out-reach. Given its scale and resource base, achievements to date reflect very positively on the level of ambition and determination to succeed now in evidence in the Institute.

While ITC came later to the development of a research-led institutional culture, it has made rapid strides based largely on own investment. The Institute has moved to rapidly expand the rate of growth in research volume, in post-graduate student numbers and in the qualification profile of its academic staff.

Summary

Both Institutes have in their own way made a very considerable investment, both financial and in terms of institutional effort, to ratchet their own level of performance on a number of fronts.

Given the importance attached by stakeholders to achievement of TU designation within an acceptable time-frame, no avoidable risks should be taken with the completion of the necessary preparations by both Institutes. Based on an assessment of a jointly-produced data-set addressing TU designation metrics, the Steering Group should consider the possibility of further acceleration measures across both Institutes which could assist in meeting the designation criteria in a convincing and timely fashion.

In a context where there is a willingness by both Institutes to re-engage and to work in a determined way on the shared task of bringing TUSE to fruition at the earliest feasible date, the Department and HEA should favourably consider any proposals under the heading above.

7.4. Longer-Term Funding Model for TU

The general point has been made in 7.1 above that in order to reap the rewards of establishing TUs they need to receive the necessary set-up investment and to have their on-going costs evaluated rigorously and objectively. In doing so, allowance should be built in for the efficiency gains to be made from consolidation and from an increased contribution via earned revenues, once the new Institutions are up and running in steady-state. In the short-run however, consistent with the experience internationally, it would be realistic to expect that initial investment, re-structuring and

change-management will require a higher spend over the early years of formation. Skimping on these 'hump costs' can be expected to have negative impact on outcomes and reputation later. As investor, the Department will wish to consider the choices here.

Secondly, an exercise should now be initiated by the HEA to consult with relevant institutions and examine objectively the future funding model for TUs. It is highly unlikely that the step change in performance being sought from this new type of Institution will be realized, if everything else remains as is. While the need for this exercise is being surfaced in the context of the TUSE project, it clearly has wider application and a starting point could be to place it on an agenda for discussion between the Department, HEA and the various consortia now working towards TU designation.

7.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the development of the TUSE project, has the potential to add significant value to a region that has experienced significant under performance.   The HEIs in particular are pivotal to realising the potential of the region to the benefit of all regional stakeholders.   The measures outlined in this section will support this in becoming a reality.