Diversity in HE Systems: binary or unitary systems?

EDULOG, Porto
29 November 2022

Landscape change in HE in Ireland: Creating Technological Universities

Philip Gummett
phil@gummett.com

My background

- Manchester University, UK
  - Professor of Government & Technology Policy; Pro-vice chancellor
- Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
  - Chief executive
- In Ireland
  - 2014-21 Reviews of proposals for three TUs
  - 2017 Review of HE funding model, Higher Education Authority
  - 2019 Chair, Department of Education & Skills review group on TUs
    - (TURN report)
  - 2015-20 Performance reviews & other advisory work for HEA & DES
  - 2022 Reviewing merger outcomes at one university

Irish HE *before* Technological Universities

Higher Education Institutions in Ireland

Universities

1. Dublin City University
2. Maynooth University
3. National University of Ireland, Galway
4. Trinity College Dublin
5. University College Cork
6. University College Dublin
7. University of Limerick

Institutes of Technology

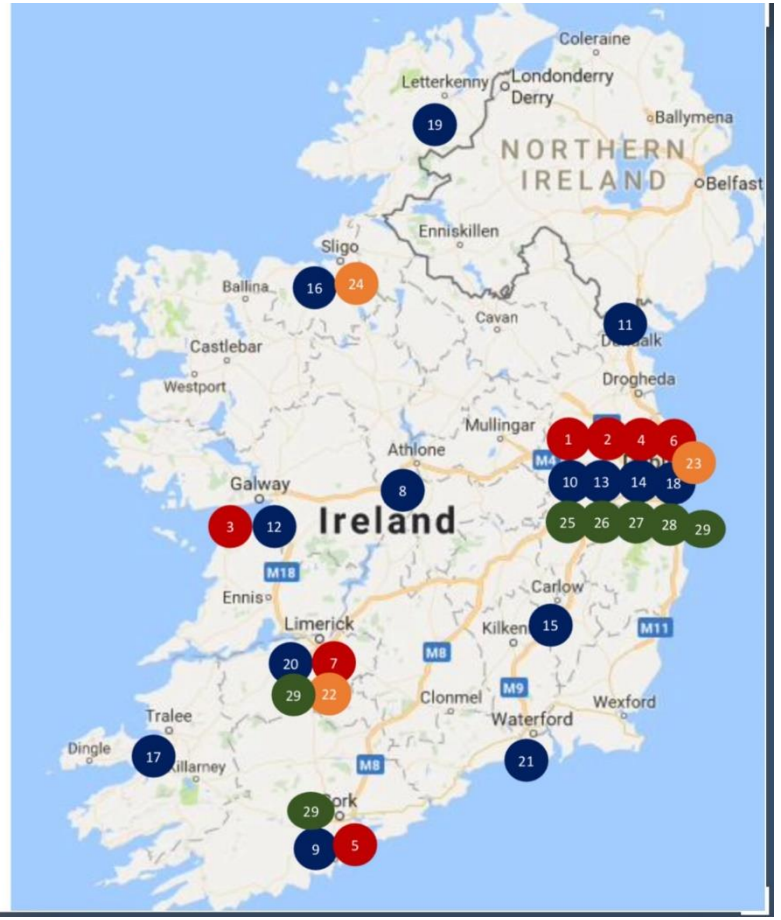
8. Athlone Institute of Technology
9. Cork Institute of Technology
10. Dublin Institute of Technology
11. Dundalk Institute of Technology
12. Galway Mayo Institute of Technology
13. Institute of Art, Design and Technology
14. Institute of Technology Blanchardstown
15. Institute of Technology Carlow
16. Institute of Technology Sligo
17. Institute of Technology Tralee
18. Institute of Technology Tallaght
19. Letterkenny Institute of Technology
20. Limerick Institute of Technology
21. Waterford Institute of Technology

Colleges

22. Mary Immaculate College
23. National College of Art and Design
24. St Angela's College, Sligo

Private Colleges

25. Dublin Business School
26. National College of Ireland
27. Royal College of Surgeons
28. Hibernia College
29. Griffith College



Evolving policy context

- 2010s: Reviews of national economic and educational strategy, and HE strategy, outlined ambitious future for Ireland
- 2011: National Strategy for HE called for change
  - ***from*** binary system of *Universities* & ***Institutes of Technology***
  - ***to*** new (but still binary) system of *Universities* & ***TUs***
- *Programme for Government 2016*, & *TU Act 2018*:
  - laid formal framework for TUs
- **TU Dublin** January 2019; **four more** in 2021-22, covering all regions
- Two IoTs remain

The TU concept

Evolving from existing Institutes of Technology

- their focus was *mainly* levels 6-8 , apprenticeships, strong part-time as well as full-time, campus & work based, diverse student base, strong employer links, strong regional roots, mostly modest scale, generally very limited research

The new TUs would:

- have greater scale & scope
- have a focus on preparing graduates for complex professional roles in a changing technological world
- advance knowledge through research & scholarship, disseminated to meet the needs of society & enterprise
- have particular regard to the needs of their region

This implied a step change, to:

- Full university **status**
- Greater **geographical** coverage, at **higher HE levels**
- Driving **regional** development, with national/international reach
- **Full scope** (Levels 6-10) provision for employers & learners
  - **Preserving** the former IoT lower level provision
- Sharply increased staff & postgraduate **research capacity**

Criteria for designation as a TU were laid out in **legislation**

Achieving TU status: criteria (*abridged*)

- Programme provision across HE **Levels 6 to 10** of the National Framework of Qualifications
- **Vocationally/professionally oriented**, with a strong focus on science & technology
- Structured **work placements**
- Address the social & economic **needs of the region**
- Resources, faculty expertise & **mass** to ensure appropriate **pedagogical & research** quality
- Critical **mass** for effective & efficient **governance & administration**, including student services
- Active **research policy** primarily focused on **applied, problem oriented** research; effective knowledge transfer; consulting/problem solving services of particular relevance to the region
- **Intensive regional links** with business, enterprise, professions & related stakeholders that inform curriculum, teaching & learning, assessment, & research

These were developed in detail - some with specified levels of present & future performance

Student profile criterion

- Programmes at **all HE Levels 6 to 10** meet local, regional & national demand
- At time of application, enrolment in research programmes at **Levels 9 - 10** to be **not less than 4%** of FTE **enrolments at levels 8 - 10**
- …….. *with plausible trajectory to **reach 7%** by ten years from date of designation*
- **Level 10** provision will be **concentrated** in a small number of fields/departments with capacity & credibility to offer this level of training to the national PhD standard
- A **minimum of 30%** of all students will be **lifelong learning** students on professional programmes & industry up-skilling, including part-time, work-related or work-study programmes, and/or mature learners

Staff profile criterion

Contractual & appointment procedures that

- give weight to professional practice & institutional engagement activities
- provide an appropriate balance between teaching, **research**, engagement & academic administration

At the time of application

- **90%** of full time academic staff on HE programmes to hold a **Level 9** qualification or higher
- **at least 45%** of full time HE academic staff to hold a **Level 10** qualification or *equivalence* in professional experience, plus an appropriate terminal degree. (*The proportion of staff holding such an equivalence not to exceed 10% of full time HE academic staff).*
- *a **trajectory** showing capacity to reach levels consistent with other Irish universities but **not less than 65% within ten years** of designation– with not only **Level 10** (or equivalent) **qualifications**, but also sustained **research** activity*
- in fields offering **doctoral level** programmes, the proportion of **staff with Level 10 qualifications to exceed 80%**. Generally, only staff with Level 10 qualifications to deliver & supervise Level 9 work. Only those with Level 10 qualifications & a sustained record of research will deliver & supervise at Level 10.

Research criterion

A TU will

- Focus on **applied, problem-oriented research**, & social & technological development & innovation, with direct social & economic impacts, & public & private benefits in its region
- Support & sustain research activity that can be compared to appropriate **international benchmarks**
- Demonstrate approaches to the formation of level 10 knowledge, skills & competencies that are appropriate to its research mission. This will be through **practice-led, professional, & industrial doctorates as well as more traditional approaches**

At the time of application

- Have existing research capacity to support programmes, projects & doctoral training in **at least three fields**
    - *With a trajectory showing that it can **extend into two further fields***

Position in May 2022 : 12 IoTs → 5 TUs

Higher Education Institutions in Ireland

Universities

1. Dublin City University
2. Maynooth University
3. National University of Ireland, Galway
4. Trinity College Dublin
5. University College Cork
6. University College Dublin
7. University of Limerick

Institutes of Technology

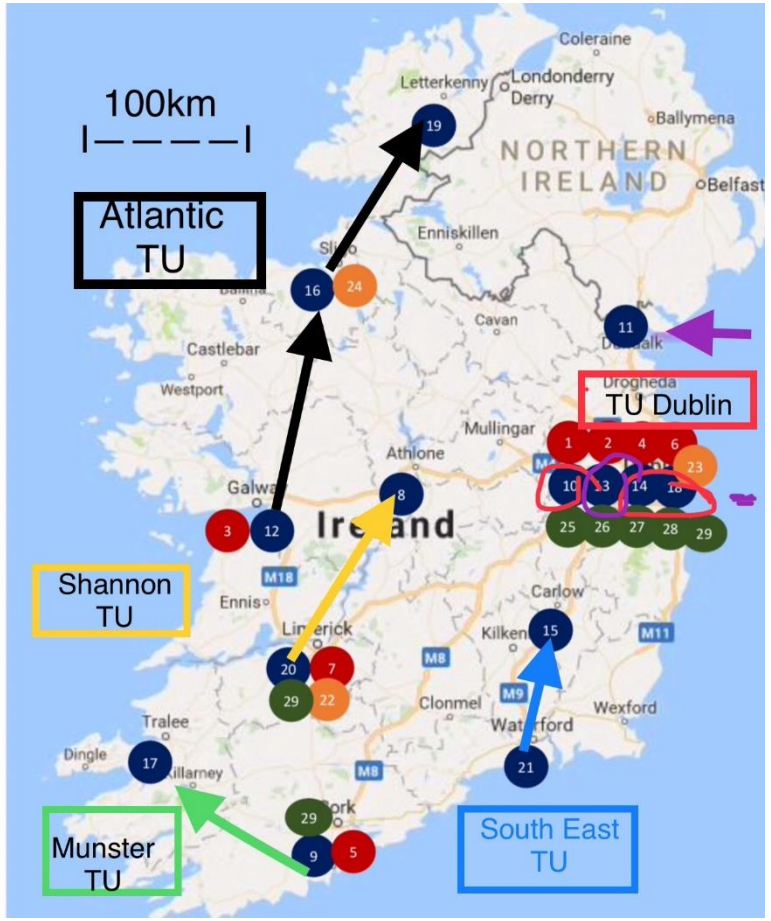
8. Athlone Institute of Technology
9. Cork Institute of Technology
10. Dublin Institute of Technology
11. Dundalk Institute of Technology
12. Galway Mayo Institute of Technology
13. Institute of Art, Design and Technology
14. Institute of Technology Blanchardstown
15. Institute of Technology Carlow
16. Institute of Technology Sligo
17. Institute of Technology Tralee
18. Institute of Technology Tallaght
19. Letterkenny Institute of Technology
20. Limerick Institute of Technology
21. Waterford Institute of Technology

Colleges

22. Mary Immaculate College
23. National College of Art and Design
24. St Angela's College, Sligo

Private Colleges

25. Dublin Business School
26. National College of Ireland
27. Royal College of Surgeons
28. Hibernia College
29. Griffith College

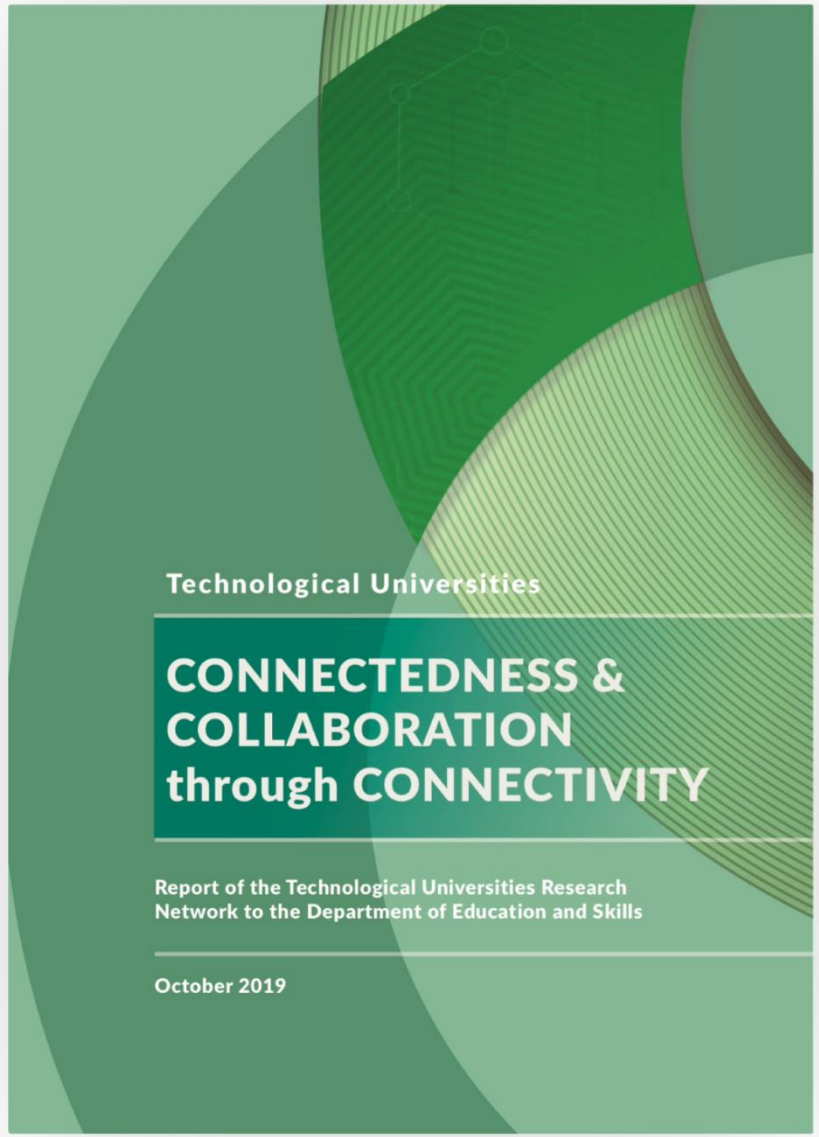


Succeeding as TUs: the TURN exercise – a ‘reboot’

***Technological Universities Research Network**: February – June 2019*

- Presidents of established/proposed TUs/precursors
- DES, HEA, & IoTs representative body (THEA)
- Reporting to Minister

- ***To distil what’s distinctive about TUs***
- ***Draw out a shared vision, for promotion to Government, HE institutions, IoT/TU staff/students, wider public***
- ***Identify priorities for fast & effective start***



https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/connectedness-collaboration-through-connectivity.pdf

TURN main recommendations:
priorities for Government, Funders, and TUs

- **Realign/reshape policy & regulatory environment**
  - Accelerate reform of old binary **funding model**
  - Establish new **career frameworks**, especially for **research** expectations
  - Enable TUs to **borrow** for capital finance (denied to old IoTs)

- **Create collaborative networks between TUs & with other HEIs**
  - to build sectoral cohesion & address regional challenges
  - to address governance issues; leadership capacity building; change management; systems integration; presenting TUs to the wider world.

- **Build research capacity, with substantial start-up & recurrent investment**

- **Invest in leading edge digital technology for effective pan-regional operation**

Investment in research capacity

- Great expectations for TUs, but disadvantaged starting point:
  - ***'Catching up' is very hard in a competitive funding environment***
  - Good research in all, but generally in pockets of excellence
  - In 2015/16, IoTs accounted for just 14% of total research income of Irish HEIs
  - Research staff in established universities v. IoTs = 37% v. 11% (2017)
- Increased **funding** needed for developing researcher human capital
- And to address serious deficits in research **infrastructure**
- Meanwhile, TUs should publish research development **strategies**
- Need new **Career Framework**, appropriate for research institutions

Investment in digital infrastructure

- TUs are complex multi-campus organisations, expected to operate uniformly across their regions, regardless of geographical challenges, in respect of, eg:
  - Learning (all modes & levels), student support, partnership working (educational, employers, other local partners), research (national & international) ….
- Advanced digital infrastructure needed by all HE, but ***TUs can't succeed without it.***
  - (Covid pandemic experience helped with sceptics)

Subsequent actions

9 October 2019 - Minister announced

- New **Technological Universities Transformation Fund**
- €90 million over 3 years

Since then

- OECD project on **career structures & staff contracts**, drawing on international experience – work still in progress
- New **HEA Act** (but has NOT established borrowing power)
- Work proceeding on **reform of funding model**
- SFI & IRC have launched **schemes to support research in TUs**
- **Digital infrastructure** partly addressed within national (government) shared services planning, plus some EU funding

Some final observations

System change needs system-wide strategy

- Clear, consistent and lasting Government/Funder positions
  - To establish and maintain momentum
  - To avoid contradictory developments & counter-pressures
  - To ensure necessary investment: ‘catching up’ is very hard
  - To address regulatory/policy impediments
    - Career structures (Professorships)
    - Borrowing powers (Capital investment)

Bold, committed and skilled institutional Leaders (Governors & Management)

- A clear vision (at Governing Body & Senior Leadership levels)
  - Continuously presented to staff, students, and regional stakeholders
- Excellent consultative/planning/change processes
  - With a strong contribution from an independent, external element
  - Committed leaders, at all levels