IT Sligo

An Institiúid Teicneolaíochta, Sligeach

A Strategy for Change

Building for the Future

2009 - 2012

Strategic Plan 2009 – 2012

A Strategy for Change
Building for the Future

Contents

Foreword

The decision to re-examine and renew the current Strategic Plan for the remaining period until 2012 recognises the inexorable pace of social and economic change in our community.

The process of review has been one of partnership. We maintained a dialogue with our external partners to ensure that the new priorities we have identified have their roots in the realities we face as an institution of higher education, serving a region in an increasingly borderless and global society.

Challenges are merely opportunities. Social, economic and environmental change asks us to provide leadership and direction to the community we serve. As this Strategic Plan sets out, we will do this in a number of ways. We will extend our student base and programmes to meet the requirements of lifelong learning and occupational mobility; we will develop and refocus our research capacity to contribute to sustained economic recovery and regeneration; and we will, by example and by a range of initiatives, be more prudent and resourceful in our stewardship of finite resources and in other aspects of how we care for our environment.

You will see that our agenda until 2012 is both a creative response to change and a prologue to the next decade. During that time it is our ambition to place IT Sligo and the North West region in the forefront of progress. I referred earlier to partnership as the key to growth and development. It is a reality, however, that the funding constraints upon us will not be relaxed during the next few years. We will continue to face turbulence in our operating environment and in our planning process. Therefore, we must seek to add value to our work by entrepreneurship and innovation. We must also identify new income streams, using the scholarship, skills and the unique body of knowledge that resides in a modern institution of higher education. This means extending and strengthening both our national and international connections to take advantage of the synergies and other benefits of collaboration and shared experience.

The Strategic Plan is not a blueprint. It is more of a roadmap, setting out the way forward and including appropriate milestones by which we can measure our progress. The Plan's aspirations are bold, but I am confident that the Strategic Priorities and Key Themes it sets down will be the impetus to a period of growth and prosperity. I hope that everyone at IT Sligo and our partners throughout the region will accept their place in realising its success.

I look forward very much to a productive alliance.

Terri Scott
President

Introduction

The Strategic Plan is our way of addressing the new realities of our operating environment and, ensuring that we collectively respond in a way that is practical, innovative and ambitious. The Plan scrutinises the objectives that we set ourselves in 2006 and revitalises them for the period of the Plan until 2012. It realigns our priorities, sharpens some objectives that have become core to our success and eliminates or changes those that are not.

The Plan re-establishes our mission, re-affirms our values and expands our vision. It facilitates this Institute in addressing the challenges of the 'Smart Economy' setting out key areas of economic and scientific importance that we must focus on. It describes key themes that will be the subject of interdisciplinary focus. The thematic focus connects us to our community and our region, aligning our research to the needs of enterprise and enabling new initiatives in sustainable community development. It brings together everyone involved with IT Sligo, re-establishing a common purpose so that colleagues are better empowered to make both their individual and collective contribution more meaningful.

Our five priorities are clear and their embedded objectives are real and formidable. The priorities are the direction posts on our critical path forward. To help in achieving our objectives we have undertaken a rigorous costing exercise to ensure that our ambitions are affordable and that a realistic level of resources and funding can be assigned. They are designed to challenge IT Sligo to be the best, to inspire the community and region. We recognise that leadership and innovation are critical for success. To achieve this, and in the interest of accountability, each priority is led by a member of the Executive who is responsible for monitoring and reporting progress. The Executive Team and Senior Managers will lead through example and energy and we will demonstrate our capacity to be excellent in our mission, true to our values. A companion to this Strategic Plan is the Financial Plan, to ensure that the new priorities are adequately resourced.

Mission

Our mission as a higher education institution is:

To create an open, supportive and flexible environment that encourages and supports all learners by:

· Raising standards through effective quality assurance

· Transforming the learning environment

· Promoting research and scholarship

· Advancing knowledge management systems

· Encouraging academic diversity

· Investing in staff development

· Supporting regional growth and success

Values

The quality of our work in serving a changing society will be inspired by a commitment to the universal values of:

Excellence: Progressiveness, Independence, Courage, Quality

Inclusion: Diversity, Equality, Openness, Partnership

Respect: Honesty, Integrity

Vision

To be recognised nationally and internationally as a relevant, dynamic and innovative third level institution, stimulating and supporting the development of the region.

Process of Review

Through a managed and incremental process over a number of months we have sought input and feedback to the review process. Before agreeing the priorities, the Governing Body, Senior Management Group and staff representatives were invited to comment. We robustly reviewed progress against the objectives set in 2007 and collectively agreed our key priorities, our objectives and associated metrics for the remainder of the current planning period.

Our Revised Strategic Plan will drive our activities and we will monitor progress against performance targets and report to the Governing Body twice a year.

The Irish Universities Quality Board's sectoral project, entitled "Good Practice in Strategic Planning for Academic Units in Irish Universities", identified three questions that are fundamental to strategic planning. These questions provided the framework for our review and established our willingness and desire for transformation and change.

1. **What are we doing now?**

   Is what we are doing relevant? Is it efficiently and effectively undertaken? Does it give value for money and is it what we should be doing?

2. **Where do we want to go?**

   What sort of organisation do we want to be? Are there factors, internal or external, which demand a shift in trajectory or momentum, a change in the conception of the organization and what it stands for, or a refinement in aspirations?

3. **How do we get from where we are to where we want to be?**

   This assumes that aspiration or rhetoric is not sufficient of itself to deliver shifts in attitude, behaviour and performance, especially in a coherent strategic sense. Strategic planning should be viewed as an instrument of organisational change. [1]

   [1] *National Guidelines - Irish Universities Quality Board Sectoral Report 2008 (Page 14)*

Framework for Change

The revised Strategic Plan outlines the strategies, priorities and objectives of the Institute for the next two years. It recognises the significant challenges that we face and sets out a framework for organisational change. The Plan is predicated on empowering the people within the organisation to respond to change and more effectively use funding and resources to create a progressive third level institution.

IT Sligo - Agenda for Change
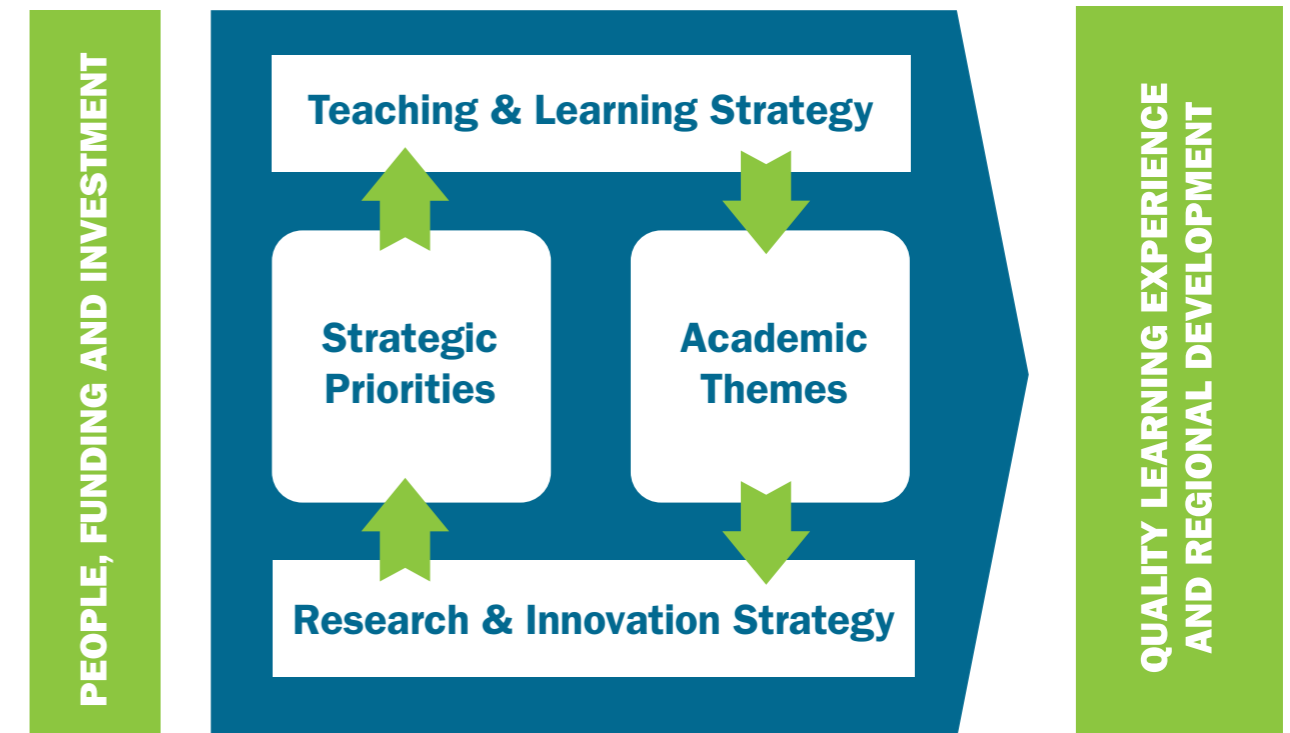
Key Strategies

1. **Teaching and Learning**

   We will continue to develop a world class teaching and learning environment, embracing the development in pedagogy, adapting new technologies and methods, and meaningfully engaging with a changing student body.

2. **Research and Innovation**

   We will develop a capability in applied research and cultivate an innovation culture that removes fear of failure from amongst our staff and student body. We believe that this is an essential backdrop to the delivery of high quality teaching and learning at third level and beyond.

3. **Learning Environment and Infrastructure**

   We recognise the changing profile of students and the demand for more adaptive and flexible learning opportunities. We will create an environment that is conducive to the diverse needs of learners and will develop our campus and virtual infrastructure. The student as an individual will be at the centre of all developments.

Academic Themes

Social, economic, scientific and educational developments point to an increasing need for all higher education institutions to focus on multi-disciplinary activities. Increasingly, graduates need to have a wider set of competencies and learning experiences that enable them to contribute and adapt to a new and global business and industrial environment.

This need, together with the challenge of supporting and enabling regional development and the requirements and potential for rationalisation, has given rise to a new focus by the Institute in four thematic academic areas. This will require the current academic activities to be aligned to those four areas. The academic themes are:

- Sustainability and clean technologies
- Creativity and design
- Health care and quality of life
- Economy and society

Sustainability and Clean Technologies

Key to the sustainable future is the development of a workforce, educated to third level and capable of creating and supporting enterprises in the long term. These enterprises will include clean technologies and energy management and also environmental protection and ecological awareness. The workforce will require multidisciplinary skill sets as diverse as quality energy management, environmental science and ecotourism.

Creativity and Design

The future of the Irish economy will be governed by our success in a global marketplace. Essential to success in this competitive environment is product differentiation. This in turn is built on a strong ethos of creativity and innovation in design. This encompasses functionality and ergonomics and reaches from concept formation, prototyping, manufacturing, architecture and mechatronics to software development and web design. It is a culture of inventiveness, innovation and enterprise.

Quality of Life and Health Care

Quality of life issues have increased in importance as we are to move to a fulfilled society. Support for the quality of life is diverse, ranging from child support and support for the aged, to health care and to the social and recreational infrastructures. Strong interdisciplinary bonds exist between healthcare and physiology, health and safety, biomedical engineering, social studies, early child care and education and recreation and leisure. This synthesis should be exploited to its full potential.

Economy and Society

It is essential that Ireland emerges from the current economic climate in a position of strength. This will require a cohort of graduates with skills in accounting, financial services, business, management, communication, administration, marketing and enterprise development. These graduates should aspire to be the future leaders in business and enterprise in both the public and private sectors.

Strategic Priorities

The review process has five strategic priorities identified together with a number of key objectives each with associated metrics and delivery responsibility.

Number	Priority
Priority 1	To provide student-centred learning and high quality education through delivery of relevant programmes in thematic areas in order to equip students with the knowledge, skills and competencies for prosperity in the knowledge based society.
Priority 2	To increase the quality and scope of on-line learning through innovation and flexible delivery.
Priority 3	To target applied research, technology and knowledge transfer to support wealth creation and a better quality of life.
Priority 4	To support regional development through engagement and collaboration with business, industry and the wider community.
Priority 5	To deliver a flexible, adaptive and dynamic learning environment.

Priority 1

To provide student-centred learning and high quality education through delivery of relevant programmes in thematic areas in order to equip students with the knowledge, skills and competencies for prosperity in the knowledge based society.

Context:

Our programmes will be market led and play a significant role in the transformation to a knowledge-based society. We will provide graduates capable of contributing to a changing economy. While we will continue to focus on traditional school leavers, we will embrace a growing and diverse student population inclusive of adult learners and international students.

Ref	Objective	Target Date	Outcome / Metric
1	To implement appropriate methods of obtaining and responding to employer and student feedback.	September 2010	Responses by Programme Boards to data collected and applied to maintaining relevance of the curriculum as reported on EAP 7 Analysis of 5 year trends in key performance indicators.
2	To increase the percentage of adult learners and international students.	December 2012	10% annually over 2008 baseline figure.
3	All programmes to have appropriate work-based research projects, case studies or placements.	September 2012	Reflected in revised programme schedules by September 2010, *with all programme schedules updated by target date.* Established networks of business, industry, cultural and community organisations that will support student outreach (projects, placement).
4	To increase the number of staff undertaking applied research and professional development that informs their teaching.	December 2012	At least 50% of staff will have engaged in applied research and/or professional development.
5	To expand the number of staff updating in pedagogy, programme delivery and assessment methodologies, working within a new learning environment.	December 2012	Establish staff awards for excellence. 30% participation rate in pedagogy training by 2012. Move towards new teaching skills, as learning facilitators and training for on-line delivery.

Priority 2

To increase the quality and scope of online learning through innovation and flexible delivery.

Context:

The emergence of affordable communication and learning technologies has given rise to a market for more sophisticated and flexible online programmes. IT Sligo has led this development within Ireland and has successfully adapted and used new technologies to offer a suite of synchronous programmes and has promoted the development of new and complementary competences within our staff.

Investment in teaching capability and learning technology is a priority within the revised Strategic Plan and is central to the transformation of the organisation. This development supports the national priorities of competitiveness, accessibility, value for money and workforce transition.

Ref	Objective	Target Date	Outcome / Metric
1	To increase the proportion of revenue generated from the provision of Online learning programme, with an emphasis on workforce transition by re-skilling and re-training.	September 2012	1500 students of which 100 will be based overseas.
2	To seek strategic alliances that extends the scale and reach of the online learning environment.	December 2012	Secure at least one strategic alliance with a technology /international partner.
3	To increase the number of staff capable of delivering programmes online.	September 2012	20% annually over 2008 baseline figure. To achieve 50% of staff available to deliver this by 2012.
4	To provide systems and technology to support the stable and consistent delivery of cost-effective online programme.	September 2012	Integrated CRM system. Real-time processes to support a complete and effective service. Flexible and adaptive management of online services.
5	Establish academic partnerships that deliver greater programme diversity and value.	September 2012	Increased access to high quality content and delivery. Five joint programmes with other HEIs and international contribution to additional six programmes.

Priority 3

To target applied research, technology and knowledge transfer to support wealth creation and a better quality of life.

Context:

Creating an 'innovative Ireland' through high value research and development is central to the Government's framework for a sustained economic recovery. We address these goals by supporting the development of applied research programmes in collaboration with community and business partners.

We will promote a innovation culture, encourage community regeneration, and identify strategic initiatives that focus on the national economic, social and cultural goals. This priority also places emphasis on the continuous professional development of staff, their recruitment and retention, and recognition of excellence.

Ref	Objective	Target Date	Outcome / Metric
1	To establish a number of "Strategic Research Groups" allied to thematic areas and focus seed funding, capital investment and resources to achieve critical mass, foster international links and build reputation.	2010- 2012	Agreed Strategic Research Groups (SRG). Achieve external funding per SRG of €300,000 per annum by 2012. Publication index up 10% year on year using 2009 as a benchmark. Launch seed funding by 2010.
2	To become the regional hub for applied research promoting engagement with the community and industry.	September 2012	Ten new community and business projects annually. Level 9 delegated authority application for all research areas and level 10 in new designated areas. Level 9-10 research registrations to increase 10% year on year. Funded Research income to increase 15% year on year.
3	To increase the number of 'research active staff' through incentives, training, recruitment and better retention.	September 2012	Number of academic staff with experience in applied research (grant writing, publication histories and supervision) to increase by 5% annually. Up to 10 short term returns by staff to industry/community. Target funding for travel and conferences towards research active staff, and develop a research award scheme.

Ref	Objective	Target Date	Outcome / Metric
4	Research led teaching to become an integral part of programme delivery.	September 2011	Research students to deliver seminar series for undergraduates. Research active staff to supervise final year level 8 honours projects. Increase the percentage of level 9/10 progressions. Research methods, enterprise and Innovation integrated in all programmes.
5	Develop the number of research projects and the supporting process that is capable of generating patents and intellectual property.	September 2012	Develop intellectual property management and process. Establish a commercialisation process and infrastructure to support patent filing and licensing.

Priority 4

To support regional development through engagement and collaboration with business, industry and the wider community.

Context:

The EU challenge of sustainable economic development for each region is embedded within the mission and vision of each Higher Education Institution. It is a challenge that is embraced by business, industry and academic entities and is addressed through partnership and between those entities. As a partner in economic development we will engage in the planning and capability development of the region, matching needs to output in human capability and applied research. IT Sligo is central to the development of the region and we will proactively engage with key stakeholders in the region. We will support the sustainable development of the regional economy by providing the requisite skills and competencies for growing employment in the knowledge based economy. Through our engagement, communications and outreach we will support R&D and the creation and support for new enterprises.

Ref	Objective	Target Date	Outcome / Metric
1	To establish meaningful engagements with the key employers and influencers in the region with the Innovation Centre as the primary gateway.	September 2012	Establish/participate in 3 business/research collaborative projects per annum. Engage key employers in the governance/ operational management of the Institute (Governing Body, Oversight/Advisory Boards).
2	Provide educational solutions to assist the development of the SME base in the region.	September 2012	Engage with SMEs to develop relevant education and training programs (2 per year) and applied research projects (2 per year).
3	Foster the development of R&D through new technology and commercial enterprise in the region.	September 2012	Support 10 new innovative businesses per annum in the Innovation Centre, identifying those that have high commercial and export potential to produce 1 significant (>€1M) spin-in and spin-out in two years.
4	Promote the development of sustainable community enterprise in the region.	September 2012	Participate in 3 significant sustainable community enterprise projects in the next two years.
5	Gain recognition as an essential contributor to the economic and social development of the region by actively engaging with key partners.	Annual from 2010	Host a series of workshops, one national conference per year and lead two public seminars or public discussions per term. Establish and take forward: communications and marketing strategies and a Register of research & professional interests/external engagement.

Priority 5

To deliver a flexible, adaptive and dynamic learning environment.

Context:

IT Sligo has set the development of its learning environment as a priority within the Strategic Plan, recognising this to be a key differentiator in attracting a diverse student population and meeting changing market needs. The development of the virtual environment will be integrated with the physical campus infrastructure. We will recognise the importance of facilitating both the on-campus and online student, providing new technologies and facilities that support their learning.

We also recognise the value and benefit of promoting and supporting the individual well-being of our students. We will provide the social, learning and recreational facilities to promote a balanced life style and positive civic responsibility.

Ref	Objective	Target Date	Outcome / Metric
1	To enhance and support the delivery of all learning using developing education and communication technologies.	September 2010	Establish a Strategic Advisor Group (SAG) on Virtual Learning Environment to guide investment.
2	To review and update the Campus Master Plan and Development Plan. Realign capital infrastructure priorities within the context of revised plan and priorities.	December 2010	Updated Master Plan and Campus Development Plan. Develop Business Cases & Project Briefs for the prioritised investment including Canteen/ Science Extension.
3	To achieve optimal space and facility utilisation to enhance quality of teaching & learning and enhance staff/student engagement.	September 2011	Develop SAG to guide Capital Investment. Implement Centralised Timetabling.
4	To develop and enrich the student experience and promote student well-being.	September 2010	Increase participation in recreational activities through the availability of enhanced sporting facilities. Effective use of Student Services Centre.
5	To make fuller use of the campus and facilities in promoting better outreach and community engagement.	December 2009	Increased use of facilities through widening the user base and range of activities and associated revenue.

Notes

Photograph by Sean Mullery

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