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**An Comhchoiste um Oideachas, Breisoideachas agus  
Ardoideachas, Taighde, Nuálaíocht agus Eolaíocht**

Tuarascáil Taistil, OT Bhaile Átha Cliath agus OTO  
Phort Láirge, 20 - 21 Aibreán, 2023

Bealtaine 2023

**Joint Committee On Education, Further And  
Higher Education, Research, Innovation And Science**

Travel Report, TU Dublin and SETU Waterford, 20th - 21st April 2023

May 2023



## MEMBERSHIP



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(Cathaoirleach)



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Jim O'Callaghan TD  
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Senator Eileen Flynn  
Independent



Senator Rónán Mullen  
Independent



Senator Fiona O'Loughlin  
Fianna Fáil (Leas-  
Cathaoirleach)



Senator Pauline O'Reilly  
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## Introduction

In 2011 the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 recommended that a network of Technological Universities (TUs) be established across Ireland. Since its implementation these new Technological Universities have been a seminal development in Irish Higher Education. In 2019 the Technological Universities Research Network (TURN) Report, highlighted the central role that could be played by TUs in developing digital literacy, skills, and expertise across the entire workforce as a prerequisite for adaptation to, and mainstreaming of, digital technologies across all sectors of the Irish economy. The TURN report noted that TUs had the potential to make a ‘distinctive national and international contribution through connectedness and collaboration, enabled by digital connectivity throughout the regions in which they are rooted’.

When Minister for Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris appeared before the Committee on the 23rd of February 2021, he informed the Committee that the Government has to date invested heavily in the TU agenda with over €65 million invested through landscape and transformation funding. The transformation fund will extend by €90 million in 2023 with €34.3 million allocated in its first tranche last October. In total over €120 million will have been invested in TU development and progression.

As such, the Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher, Research, Innovation and Science, has made it a priority to visit TUs across the country and to speak with staff and students on the future developments of TU's and key priority issues. The Joint Committee has already visited Technological University of Shannon and Munster Technological University.

It was decided in a private session of the Joint Committee on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 2022 that a travel episode should be undertaken to visit Technological University Dublin, Grangegorman Campus and South East Technological University, Cork Road Campus, Waterford. Sanction was granted for the Committee to travel under the



Terms of Reference of the Joint Committee, whereby it is outlined that the Committee has the

*“(10) power to—*

*(a) engage the services of persons with specialist or technical knowledge, to assist it or any of its sub-Committees in considering particular matters; and*

*(b) undertake travel;*

*Provided that the powers under this paragraph are subject to such recommendations as may be made by the Working Group of Committee Chairmen under Standing Order 120(4)(a).”*

The Committee was represented on the visit by Deputies Paul Kehoe (Chairman), Jim O’Callaghan, Marc Ó Cathasaigh, and Senator Fiona O’Loughlin. The delegation was accompanied by Tara Kelly (Committee Clerk) and Julian Power Foley (Policy Advisor).

## **Technological University Dublin, Grangegorman Campus**

On January 1st, 2019, the former Dublin Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown, and Institute of Technology Tallaght were amalgamated, becoming Ireland’s first Technological University – TU Dublin. TU Dublin has campuses in Dublin City Centre in Grangegorman, Aungier Street, Bolton Street, and one each in Blanchardstown and Tallaght. It is currently the largest provider of part-time education in the country. TUD currently has 28,500 students from 85 countries.

TUD offers over 200 programmes across disciplines including Creative Arts, Humanities, Built Environment, Engineering, Business, Sciences, Tourism, Food and

Sports. TU Dublin is also the only university in the country that offers specialist programmes in, for example, Optometry, Human Nutrition, Transport & Logistics, Environmental Health and Tourism Marketing.

Professor David FitzPatrick, President of TUD, welcomed the delegation to TUD Grangegorman before making a presentation to the delegation along with members of the University Executive Team. Following the presentation, a question-and-answer session ensued between the members of the Committee present and the TUD President and Executive Team.

The President and members of the Executive Team brought the delegation on a tour of TUD that included the Design and Creative Industries studios, Culinary Science labs, the music hall, and the medical science labs. This enabled the delegation to interact with students studying at TUD from undergraduate level through to PhD candidates.

The delegation, along with the President and members of the Executive Team, were then hosted in the Central Quad training restaurant courtesy of undergraduate students in TUD's Culinary Arts programme. The students devised the menu, cooked the meal, and served the food enjoyed by the delegation.

## **South East Technological University, Cork Road Campus, Waterford**

South East Technological University (SETU) was established on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2022 and is Ireland's newest technological university. There are 18,000 students and over 1,600 staff on campuses in Carlow, Waterford and Wexford. SETU also has a presence in Kilkenny and Wicklow. SETU's courses span apprenticeships to PhDs and offer a dynamic learning experience with over 140 courses that incorporate work-based learning, student mobility, study abroad opportunities and research-led curricula.

Professor Veronica Campbell, President of SETU, welcomed the delegation and introduced them to SETU's Executive Management team on the evening of the 20<sup>th</sup> of



April. The President and Executive Team hosted a working dinner courtesy of SETU's hospitality students. As with TUD, the students devised the menu, cooked the meal, and served the food enjoyed by the delegation.

The following morning the delegation attended SETU to listen to a presentation provided by President Campbell and her Executive Management team. Following opening remarks from President Campbell, presentations were made covering the following areas: Research Programme, Lifelong Learning, Student Mental Health, Ethnic Minority and Female Participation in STEM Courses, and Future Funding of TUs. Following each presentation, a question-and-answer session ensued between the delegation and the Executive Management.

Following the presentation, the delegation attended a working lunch where they were introduced to Students' Union Presidents Mr Patrick Curtin and Mr Mark Dunne who outlined issues faced by students of SETU.

Thereafter the delegation was taken on a tour of the apprenticeship lecture rooms and workshops as well as a tour of the South Eastern Applied Materials Research Centre.

## **Key Issues for Consideration**

Following the Committee's visit to both TUD and SETU, including the interactions between members of staff and students at each University, the following key issues were noted by the Committee.

1. The remaining inability of Technological Universities (TUs) to borrow money on the financial markets is both unfair and unsustainable and puts them at a clear disadvantage. The borrowing capacity could be used for a wide range of purposes including student housing, infrastructure, and research and development expansion.

2. A multi-annual funding programme for TUs needs to be examined by the Department of Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to allow Universities to plan for the future, with improved financial clarity.
3. The role played by the National Training Fund should be examined by the Department of Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, in terms of a potential incorporation into Lifelong Learning programmes at TUs.
4. The OECD Report entitled '*A Review of Technological University Academic Career Paths, Contracts and Organisation in Ireland*' needs to be published and the recommendations implemented as a matter of urgency. The current Academic Contract, where TUs cannot appoint Professors, remains a serious obstacle to both recruiting and retaining Human Talent as well as attracting potential students to TUs.
5. There is a need for clarity on how the Consortium Led Apprenticeships will be rolled out in the TUs with due regard to the need for core/ringfenced funding provided on a multi annual basis.
6. The future funding of the pilot Together All Programme, funded jointly by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the Health Service Executive (HSE) needs to be continued. This online programme provides mental health supports on demand at a sub clinical level but there are no plans in place to renew funding upon completion of the pilot scheme.
7. Demographic changes and the commitment of TUs to Lifelong Learning, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and Progressional Pathways will require proper resourcing and support from the Exchequer.

8. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion are fundamentally important to TUs. It is vital that TUs are provided with the resources to continue to reach out and target specific groups such as travellers, those in Direct Provision, intellectually disabled students, and other vulnerable groups.

## Conclusion

The Joint Committee intends to ensure that the Committee continues to engage proactively with TUs across the country in a spirit of partnership into the future. The Committee has, and will continue to, learn valuable lessons following engagement with staff and students from TUs. The Committee also commits to raising salient points with the relevant government departments on issues concerning TUs, as well as the broad issues facing the further and higher education sector.

The Committee has been impressed by the ambitious goals outlined by both TUD and SETU, as well as the enthusiasm that radiated from the staff and students that the Committee interacted with. The Committee also wishes to express its sincere thanks and gratitude to both TUD and SETU for engaging so positively with the Committee and for all their hospitality and assistance. The Committee would also like to express its specific thanks to the students who provided both the lunch and the diner enjoyed by Committee in TUD and SETU.

## APPENDIX 1 – Members of the Delegation from the Joint Committee



Paul Kehoe TD *Fine Gael*  
(Cathaoirleach)



Jim O'Callaghan TD  
*Fianna Fáil*



Marc O Cathasaigh TD  
*Green Party*



Senator Fiona O'Loughlin  
*Fianna Fáil* (Leas  
Cathaoirleach)

### ACCOMPANYING STAFF

Tara Kelly, Clerk to the Joint Committee

Julian Power Foley, Policy Advisor

## APPENDIX 2 – Programme for Visit

### AGENDA

| <i>Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> April and<br/>Friday 21<sup>st</sup> April</i> |   |
|--|---|
| <b>10.30 am</b>  | Committee delegation arrival at East Quad, TUD Grangegorman Campus. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting with University Executive Scheme and President from TUD University Executive Team</li> </ul> |
| <b>11.30 am</b>  | Meeting with staff and students in East Quad.   |
| <b>12.00 pm</b>  | Meeting with staff and students in Central Quad.  |
| <b>12.30 pm</b>  | Lunch in Central Quad training restaurant.  |
| <b>14.30 pm</b>  | Depart TUD.   |
| <b>16:45 pm</b>  | Arrive at Dooly's Hotel, Waterford.   |
| <b>18:30 pm</b>  | Delegation arrival at SETU, Cork Road Campus, Waterford. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dinner hosted by Professor Veronica Campbell, SETU President</li> </ul>   |
| <b>10:30 am</b>  | Delegation arrival at SETU, Cork Road Campus. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation and Question-And-Answer Session with SETU Executive Management</li> </ul>                                     |
| <b>12:45 pm</b>  | Informal lunch and meeting with Students' Union Presidents.   |
| <b>13:00 pm</b>  | Tour of SETU Campus.  |
| <b>15:00 pm</b>  | Depart SETU.  |

## **APPENDIX 3 – TUD University Executive Team**

- Professor David FitzPatrick, President, TUD
- Mr Denis Murphy, Chief Operations Officer
- Dr Mary Meaney, Registrar & Deputy President
- Dr Brendan Jennings, Vice President, Research and Innovation
- Niamh Shannon, Vice President , Organisation, Change and Culture
- Jennifer Boyer, Vice President, Sustainability
- Thomas Stone, Vice President, Partnerships
- Dr Eoin Langan, Dean, Faculty of Business
- Professor James Curtin, Dean, Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment
- Professor John Doran, Dean, Faculty of Science
- Dr Orla McDonagh, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities
- Dr Pramod Pathak, Dean, Faculty of Digital and Data
- Mr Mark Henry, Head of University Communications and Marketing

## **APPENDIX 4 – SETU Executive Management**

- Professor Veronica Campbell, President, SETU
- Dr Joseph Collins, Head of Faculty, Business and Humanities
- Mr David Denieffe, Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Dr Frances Hardiman, Head of Faculty, Engineering
- Dr Allison Kenneally, Vice President, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Dr Helen Murphy, Head of School, Lifelong Learning and Education
- Mr Cormac O'Toole, Vice President, Corporate Affairs
- Dr Tom O'Toole, Head of School, Business
- Ms Elaine Sheridan, Vice President, Corporate Affairs
- Dr Ken Thomas, Head of School, Engineering





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