technopolis group

April 2026

Transport and Telecommunications Institute Consolidated Institutional Assessment

Final report

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1 Summary of Unit-Level Performance

The Transport and Telecommunications Institute (TSI) submitted two units for evaluation in Engineering and Social Sciences, and both received an overall score of 3. This indicates a consistent level of performance across the institution. Both units are small, with the Social Sciences unit being notably smaller in terms of research staff, and both units are strongly applied in orientation, with research activity focused primarily on technological development, data-driven solutions and industry-relevant problem solving. Despite their limited size, both units demonstrate a clear upward trajectory, having significantly increased the volume and quality of publications and strengthened international research collaborations over the evaluation period.

Across both units, economic and social impact is relatively strong compared to scientific quality and disciplinary impact, reflecting the institution's applied mission and close engagement with industry and professional sectors. Both units require further development in similar areas, notably strengthening publication profiles in higher-impact journals and deepening international research networks beyond project-based collaboration.

Overall, strengths and weaknesses appear systemic rather than isolated, suggesting that unit-level performance is largely shaped by shared institutional characteristics, including the applied research model, a small critical mass, and reliance on project-based funding. The broadly aligned assessments of the two units indicate a coherent institutional research profile, with development potential linked to continued growth in scale, internationalisation and scientific depth.

Full details of the unit's FTEs and scores are in Appendices A and B.

2 Institutional Context

The institutional self-assessment report presents TSI as a small, specialised higher education institution with a clearly applied research mission, focused on transport, logistics, telecommunications, information technologies and related social science dimensions. The institutional strategy emphasises industry relevance, technological development and close cooperation with professional and commercial partners. This strategic orientation provides an important context for interpreting the unit-level results, particularly the strong performance in economic and societal engagement relative to more moderate scores in scientific quality and disciplinary impact.

Research at TSI is organised through a limited number of research units and centres, with governance structures that are relatively centralised and closely linked to institutional management. This structure enables coordination of applied research activities, particularly in industry-funded and contract-based projects, but also reflects the institution's limited critical mass and dependence on project-based funding. Institutional arrangements, including research support services and infrastructure investment, appear to prioritise practical applicability and responsiveness to external partners, which helps sustain economic and social impact but constrains the scale and depth of academically oriented research.

Both evaluated units share similar strengths and limitations, pointing to a coherent institutional research profile. While the institutional environment effectively supports applied research and technology development, it provides more limited support for the sustained production of high-impact scholarly outputs (e.g., protected research time, targeted support for publishing in leading international journals) and for international leadership within academic disciplines.

TSI has addressed several recommendations from the previous evaluation in a constructive and visible manner. The institution has strengthened its research management structures, increased support for international collaboration, expanded participation in competitive projects, and improved research information systems and quality assurance mechanisms. These actions have contributed to a measurable increase in research output and international engagement; however, the overall impact of these reforms remains moderated by structural constraints related to institutional size and research scale, which continue to limit the institution's capacity for higher-level scientific performance.

While the institutional self-evaluation highlights the relevance of interdisciplinary perspectives, there is limited evidence of a systematic institutional framework for integrating the Engineering and Social Sciences units into coherent joint research agendas. Interactions between the two units appear to be largely project-based, rather than embedded in shared strategic priorities and governance structures. This limits the institution's ability to fully exploit the potential complementarities between technological innovation and social, regulatory and behavioural research in areas such as transport systems, digitalisation and telecommunications.

3 Overall Institutional Score and Rationale

Assigned overall score: **3 (good), strong national player with some international recognition.**

The overall institutional score of 3 reflects a synthesis of the unit-level evidence and the institutional context, indicating that the Transport and Telecommunications Institute demonstrates a solid and credible research performance with clear international engagement, while operating within a relatively small and specialised institutional framework. Both evaluated units were assessed at a similar level, and there are no significant outliers in performance, suggesting a coherent and consistent research profile across the institution.

At the unit level, TSI shows particular strengths in applied research, technological development and engagement with industry and professional sectors, resulting in visible economic and societal relevance through activities such as industry partnerships, applied research projects addressing practical technological challenges, and contributions to professional practice and sectoral development. Research output and international collaboration have increased during the evaluation period, and both units demonstrate growing participation in international projects and networks. However, the overall level of scientific quality and disciplinary impact remains moderate (e.g., in terms of originality and methodological rigour of the research, the extent to which research contributes to advancing knowledge within the discipline), with limited evidence of sustained influence on international academic debates or leadership within scientific fields.

TSI's applied mission, centralised governance and project-based funding model effectively support industry-oriented research and innovation, but also constrain the scale, depth and sustainability of academically driven research. Taken together, the unit-level results and

institutional environment justify the score of 3, positioning TSI as a strong national player with some international recognition, with a clear applied niche, but with limited critical mass and research depth to support higher levels of scientific impact.

4 Recommendations

- Strengthen disciplinary visibility alongside applied excellence. While TSI demonstrates strong performance in applied research, technological development and industry engagement, the Chairs of Disciplinary Expert Groups recommend placing greater strategic emphasis on building sustained scientific depth and international disciplinary visibility. This could include focusing support on selected research themes where TSI has the greatest potential to generate original scientific insights, encouraging publication in higher-impact international journals (recognised within the discipline, applying rigorous peer-review standards, and having strong visibility and influence in international research communities), and strengthening long-term international research partnerships beyond project-based collaboration.

- Strengthen synergy between engineering and social sciences to enhance research impact. The Chairs of Disciplinary Expert Groups recommend that TSI leverage the complementary strengths of its Engineering and Social Sciences units at the interface of technology, transport systems, digitalisation, regulation and societal factors. Developing joint research themes, co-supervising doctoral projects of the two disciplines, and integrating project teams would not only enhance the societal relevance and policy impact of engineering research but also strengthen the scientific profile, visibility, and sustainability of the Social Sciences unit within the institution's overall research strategy.

Appendix A FTE academic and research staff at units as reported in the self-evaluation reports

	FTE academic and research staff at units as reported in the self-evaluation reports																	
	2019			2020			2021			2022			2023			2024		
Unit	**Academic**	**Research**	**Total**	**Academic**	**Research**	**Total**	**Academic**	**Research**	**Total**	**Academic**	**Research**	**Total**	**Academic**	**Research**	**Total**	**Academic**	**Research**	**Total**
Transport and Telecommunications Institute Engineering	3.58	18.8	**22.38**	3.87	18.9	**22.77**	5.08	19.9	**24.98**	5.65	21	**26.65**	6.1	23.5	**29.6**	6.21	24.3	**30.51**
Transport and Telecommunications Institute Social Sciences	0.83	6.06	**6.89**	0.98	6.27	**7.25**	1.68	8.17	**9.85**	1.81	8.74	**10.55**	2.17	8.98	**11.15**	2.01	8.27	**10.28**

Appendix B Unit scores assigned by disciplinary Expert Groups

	Unit scores assigned by disciplinary Expert Groups						
Unit	**Overall score**	**Quality of research**	**Impact on the discipline**	**Economic impact**	**Social impact**	**Research environment & infrastructure**	**Development potential**
Transport and Telecommunications Institute Engineering	**3**	3	2	4	4	3	3
Transport and Telecommunications Institute Social Sciences	**3**	2	2	3	3	3	3

Assigned overall score: **3 (good), strong national player with some international recognition.**