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Latvia Academic Career Framework Activity

Virtual Study Visit to Ireland

Summary of Q&A Discussions

January 19 and 21, 2021

Day 1: January 19

Overview of the Irish Landscape

Presenter: Ellen Hazelkorn, Professor Emeritus, Technological University Dublin and Joint Editor, Policy Reviews in Higher Education

In Ireland, which institutions focus on accreditation of universities (quality assurance)? What is their legal structure?

QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) is the institution focused on accreditation. In Ireland, there are only publicly recognized universities and Institutes of Technology. An institution cannot simply be established. Accreditation must first be obtained. The quality assurance process in Ireland is primarily focused on an institutional review of universities and institutes by QQI. The review is focused on the internal quality arrangements of each institution.

Regarding private providers, their programs undergo the quality assurance process on a programmatic basis.

Steering the Higher Education System

Presenters: William Beausang (Assistant Secretary, Tertiary Education & Skills Policy Division, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science); Ide Mulcahy; Fiona O'Byrne; Orla Lynch; Stephanie O'Brien

Regarding the consolidation of institutions: How is readiness determined for subsequent stages of consolidation? What are the instruments/tools that guide the consolidation process (e.g., regulation, finances)? What is the impact on academic staff of the institutional consolidation process?

[No response provided due to time constraints; Offered to respond bilaterally]

Is there a framework or steering process for strategic specialization in higher education (to avoid converging toward only a few specialization segments being covered and ensuring that fields that are strategically important to Ireland’s national development are fostered)?

Regarding the system performance framework, targets are agreed upon with institutions on an individual basis, selecting from a menu of targets to ensure that the framework supports both the national priorities, and the individual institutions’ missions.

At what level should the imbalance across teaching, learning, and research be addressed using incentives, at the state level and/or the institutional level?

It isn’t necessarily a matter of either/or but there needs to be a commitment to achieve a balance and, from the perspective of the Department of Further and Higher Education, this means looking at this in an integrated way when considering funding, oversight mechanisms, and policies.

The National Strategy: Attaining the Goals

Presenter: Tom Boland (former CEO, Higher Education Authority)

What are higher education institutions doing to ensure excellence in teaching and research? What is being provided within the state framework?

QQI is a critical element of the system. QQI has the mandate to review quality assurance processes throughout the higher education system (via programmatic and institutional reviews) and further education. QQI has a quite modern and significant legislative authority (to lead) quality assurance processes.

The National Forum for the enhancement of teaching and learning is also important (but not necessarily revolutionary) to: (i) develop/publish examples of good practices in teaching and learning; and (ii) acknowledge excellent practices and teachers annually through awards/incentives.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the primary objective of institutions is to ensure high quality teaching and learning outcomes in their programs. Overall, this process works well using relatively objective results provided by: the National Student Survey and employer surveys.

Regarding the student survey, their responses indicate quite consistently high levels of satisfaction. This was a surprise, given the severe funding restrictions the Irish education system experienced during the recession and in subsequent years. To date, a sustainable funding model still does not exist.

Regarding employer surveys, 75 percent of employers rated graduate employees as “Good” or “Very Good” in the most recent survey. Taken collectively, these surveys—both student and employer surveys—point to a system that is delivering and achieving the right outcomes.

What does the State do to support excellence in teaching and research?

The State is the largest financier of most institutions. Funding is provided that ensures quality outcomes and quality teaching and learning, and to ensure that institutions have implemented the necessary/relevant quality assurance systems which are legally required.

However, there isn't a specific budget allocation dedicated to excellence in teaching and learning. It is, instead, ingrained in the DNA of institutions.

Please discuss the promotion system at universities. How do administrators balance the evaluations of academic staff in the context of teaching and research?

There is a key criticism of the existing promotion system within universities. The process is overly reliant on research activities, and gives insufficient credit to teaching excellence and community engagement. As such, the promotion system is quite sophisticated, but it suffers from the aforementioned deficiency.

Another perceived deficiency (which has receded in recent years) emerged from the financial crisis. The government placed restrictions on the numbers and grades of university staff, which was an intervention/regulation that was previously unheard of in Ireland. It was a necessary regulation due to the financial constraints, but its effects still linger today despite the economic recovery.

Regarding IoTs (and Ireland's transition toward technological universities), a proper career structure is needed in this sector, which may be difficult to implement. The technological sector has a strong union which represents a (very) large proportion of academic staff. As such, a difficult negotiation is expected regarding attempts to introduce a formal/proper career structure within this sector.

In Ireland, there are institutional dialogues (with metrics), national objectives exist, and Institutes of Technology are merging to become technical universities. Will these policies and approaches move toward a homogenous sector? Or will there be sufficient differentiation and an institutional typology that meets the various needs of society?

The primary objective of the Strategic Dialogue and performance-based contracts is to safeguard against a homogenous system. If the process works effectively, the government will set objectives and institutions would operate in accordance with their respective missions and comparative advantages. As such, it is more likely that institutions concentrate on their strengths. Ireland's HEIs are not all good at the same things. And they are not all good at everything.

In your presentation, it appears that one national objective—regarding improved regional cooperation—was not met/achieved. Please expand on this specific objective and why it was not achieved.

The idea was the creation of regional clusters of institutions. For example, Galway is the largest city in the west of Ireland which has both a university and an Institute of Technology. The IoT has a campus in Galway and in the neighboring county (Mayo). The approach intended to foster formal collaboration between these institutions and also collaborate with local industry to develop the skills needs of the region. From the Higher Education Authority's point of view, the initiatives/work related to this objective were progressing. However, an alternative policy was developed (the regional skills forum) that pursued a similar (but not identical) objective. The forum was less focused on the higher education component in

the objective i.e. higher education was not driving the regional development under the regional skills forum compared to the regional cluster policy. The skills forum initiative was better-funded and larger in scope.

Rather than actively phase out the regional cluster objective and continuing with the skills forum only, the former was ignored.

Higher Education Authority: The Role of a Buffer Agency

Presenters: Tim Conlon (Head of Policy and Strategic Planning); Ruaidhri Neavyn (Special Advisor on Higher Education Policy Development)

Which indicators were kept (in the context of “less is more” regarding performance metrics)?

The governments issued 201 indicators, which was far too many. To be strategic, roughly 20-40 indicators would be more impactful. Beyond this number, there are simply too many. The government wants accountability to ensure that institutions are delivering. However, 201 indicators is excessive. Currently, the dialogue is centered on whether 20 indicators is sufficient or whether 40 is sufficient.

The performance structure allows for authorities to rescind 3-5% of an institution’s grant/allocation (up to 10%). However, it’s difficult to implement this mechanism in the context of an underfunded system: many institutions would assert that they do not have the resources necessary to achieve their goals. As such, revoking part of their allocation is counterproductive and punitive.

A good practice is to ensure that a baseline (and live tracking) of data for performance metrics/indicators is available to allow for comparison.

Is education free of charge to Irish students (except perhaps for minor out-of-pocket fees)? Or do Irish students pay substantial fees (similar to UK students)?

Students pay €3000 per annum. However, a significant number are eligible to receive a state grant to cover the fee costs depending on their socioeconomic background.

Are universities involved in providing education courses for the Springboard vocational training program?

Yes, Springboard is open to all higher education providers both public and private and all apply for funding under this scheme. Springboard is considered to be a HE professional training and up-skilling initiative as opposed to vocational. Several successful Springboard programs are offered at the higher diploma and masters level.

What were the motivating factors which led to mergers of institutes of technology? Is there any evidence of merger impact on university performance?

The motivation for IoTs merging is the “University” designation and the available opportunities that are presented to the institute and their associated regions. There is no evidence available yet since technological universities are currently only 1 -2 years old.

The TUs will need to either significantly modify or create new contracts and potentially different contracts for different activities i.e. teaching only, mixed teaching and research, and research only, given the very broad remit that the institutes are now expected to cover.

What is your organization’s role as a “buffer” between the institutions and the government?

The previous structure of education posed several challenges since all aspects of education were housed under one department. In recent months, a new department/ministry was created and the Higher Education Authority helps to solidify this new structure. The HEA helps to steer the direction of the higher education sector.

Comment accepted/interpreted as a question: In the context of Ireland’s economic recovery, are there other motivating factors driving the systemwide consolidation evident in mergers?

Irish authorities have been accused of forcing institutional mergers for economic reasons to result in fewer universities. The presenter noted that “we have a lot of universities.” To be competitive in the long-term, it is likely that some institutions whose enrollment populations are roughly 3,500-4,000 students will face existential challenges. There will always be a space for niche, art-related academies/institutions in Ireland. Further, many of the smaller universities have a small cadre of administrative staff, pointing to the lack of resources available due to the education budget being spread across several institutions in the system.

As each institution has grown over time, support services (administrative staff) and infrastructure costs have increased.

As a steering agency, how do you motivate academics to do continuous learning and lifelong learning while also supporting their research efforts?

Regarding emergence of TUs, we’re expecting more of them in terms of research output. However, there is also a desire to protect the full range from Level 6 to 10 in the National Qualifications Framework. Academics are being stretched. But they are aware of the opportunities available to them in terms of their careers. They also see the opportunity in terms of their discipline to expand their discipline through research. As such, more resources tend to be available to research institutions, increasing PhD funding, for example. Regarding teaching, some academic staff become stuck: if there are no resources to fund PhD students, the academic staff is unable to supervise. At TUs, however, there is increased research funding and supervision opportunities, enhancing the staff member’s career.

How does your organization support institutions that are likely to encounter downstream effects of mergers?

Governance structures are important. The composition and expertise of the governing body will help to drive the management team and the institution toward delivering.

Links

[System Performance Framework](#)

[System Performance Report](#)

Irish University Association: Role and Ways of Working

Presenter: Nora Trench Bowles (Head of Lifelong learning, Skills and Quality);

What is the point of view of the universities on the institutional dialogues, the metrics, and the process?

The HEI Performance Compacts arising from the Higher Education System Performance Framework can work well in that they acknowledge the diversity of the sector and build on each HEI's specific contexts and missions i.e. not a one-size-fits-all (or rather, one-size-fits-none) model. However, there is a very large number of metrics which could be beneficially pared back. Also, there is more work to be done to raise awareness of the substance of the Compact across the respective HEI.

Promoting Excellence in Teaching

Presenter: Sharon Flynn (Project Manager, Enhancing Digital Teaching & Learning in Irish Universities Assistant Director of the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, NUI Galway)

Could you provide more information about cooperation across the sector as a whole (particularly under the Human Capital Initiative)? What activities are being funded?

The Irish higher education sector is relatively small and highly cooperative. For example, cross-sectoral initiatives like NFETL (as per Sharon's presentation), StudentSurvey.ie, also the HEAR and DARE access schemes. The Human Capital Initiative funded many collaborative projects. For example, the IUA are leading a micro-credentials project across seven universities. We are also one of the co-sponsoring bodies of a cross-sectoral project on recognition (/validation) of prior learning.

Technological Higher Education Association: Role and Ways of Working

Presenters: Joseph Ryan (CEO); Jim Murray (Director of Academic Affairs and Deputy CEO)

The emergence of technological universities has also led to higher expectations from these institutions in terms of (research output). Given the additional budget allocation being directed toward TUs, does it close the funding gap completely? Or does a funding gap remain? How does this new funding strengthen a growing part of Ireland's higher education system?

The new funding for TUs doesn't entirely close the funding gap, although it's a substantial amount of funding. It's more of a developmental transformation fund intended to create the necessary conditions to enable institutions to further develop and increase their output and achieve their outcomes (whether focused on research or on other activities). In addition, an interesting policy discussion will gradually emerge when all of the TUs being planned are established. A significantly reconfigured system will be the result, and how TUs interact with the more traditional university system will—hopefully—create a more coherent system.

The aim is to transition toward more competitive institutions, particularly on the research dimension.

Are there other relevant factors to consider when negotiating a new contract for technological universities? Is there an anticipated shift—mainly, culturally—regarding the traditional higher education system in Ireland? How would the new sector co-exist under the traditional higher education contracts?

It's a huge challenge that entails a huge cultural change. It also requires a transition. It's a gradual process. It's clear that the ambitions for technological universities are so significant and that the existing construct is unable to deliver on these ambitions. As such, all stakeholders—including the unions—agree to look at the issue using a different approach. Furthermore, it isn't a "technical resource" to simply manage the institution; it must be mutually agreed upon and co-created with partners, unions, and staff to deliver the coming changes.

It's very clear that the focus has to recognize and respect teaching, learning, and research engagement, and also answer to the different talents of different staff and have different pathways, perhaps even at different stages of staff members' lives. It's going to take time.

Would it be possible to create a completely different model or new model? Are there segments of your constituents who are advocating for the university model? Is there room for innovation in the system and are you able to leverage it?

Yes. There is room for innovation. To give a practical example, one of the issues that has emerged regarding technological universities, and it's quite predictable, is about the Professoriate. The main question is how do we overlay a Professoriate that has equality with traditional universities but is also a new approach for these technological universities? How we meld different systems when the government decides on funding allocations. The aim is to move autonomy from that center (government) toward the universities. Traditionally, once universities like Dublin City University (DCU), or the University of Limerick (UL) have been created, they become increasingly independent, strong, and (ultimately) self-sufficient. A similar trajectory is anticipated for technological universities, but it will take some time. This transition process is going to be the aspect which needs oversight / to be managed. Where we want to go will actually be clearer than how we get there.

What are your main recommendations for building trust-based relationship with your sector?

We have a commitment to our constituency which entails our institutions. But we also have a commitment to the overall system. Teachers/lecturers are absolutely at the heart of that system. It's very sensitive, however. And individuals often have difficulties dealing with change around them. They're comfortable with the current construct. But they're wise enough to know that it has to change.

Technological universities are not just advanced institutions of technology; they are completely different. Their ambition is completely different. The aim is to find a process, whereby a dialogue is possible in a safe space about these issues and facilitate as many views as possible. We looked at international examples in a paper prepared on the topic of the lecturing contract, which considered Australia, Finland, and Scotland, among others. The paper analyzed how other countries constructed this pathway.

It is important to note that the creation of technological universities is not being imposed on the staff cohort. They are involved in the discussions and their representatives have had votes on the issue. They are part of the process and they also share in the ambition of becoming technological universities. The

main sensitivity emerges from the shift away from general support for the principle toward the effects on staff as individuals.

Are salaries of academic personnel set centrally at the national level or this is up to institutions to negotiate with the staff?

Yes. Salary scales for all academic staff in public higher education institution are set nationally.

What are the principles for setting salaries?

There have been benchmarking exercises (national/international) undertaken in the past to set the scales. Public sector (pay) negotiations also play a large role.

How are salaries balanced based on workplace? I assume that Dublin is a more expensive place to live than other cities.

There isn't a city weighting, although the issue has been discussed [to create weights based on the cost of living]. It appears that the recession of a decade ago allowed for an informal resetting of living costs. Prior to the recession, living in Dublin had become quite expensive.

Is there publicly available information regarding the approach used to determine compensation (and outline differences across positions/roles)?

Yes. Links are available.

Day 2: January 21

National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Role and Impact

Presenters: Lynn Ramsey, Board Chair, and Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Letterkenny Institute of Technology (TBC) and Lewis Purser, Board Member, and Director Learning, teaching and Academic Affairs, IUA

Could you elaborate on the impact of the National Forum?

We've spent a lot of time reflecting on how to quantify the impact of the forum. An impact analysis structure was developed to better understand the forum's impact. A summary of accomplishments includes: fostering more collaboration across institutions for substantial projects; operational changes within Ireland's higher education sector; responding more rapidly during the pandemic due to the work that the forum has been doing to create an evidence base, create a shared understanding in terms of what the organization does, and provide a range of structured supports and resources.

Alternatively, what would happen if the National Forum didn't exist? It was introduced to consolidate funding and efforts across small institutions. Whether we have achieved that mandate partially is clear; whether we will achieve it fully is an open question.

It is important to note that universities/institutes have internal offices for teaching and learning, and/or a Support Center for Teaching and Learning, and/or staff who will help academics and teachers in that university or that Institute, and improve their teaching methodologies, their practices, help introduce innovative practice on the ground, or change the way things are done, respond to student feedback, among other responsibilities. The National Forum has had a meaningful role in strengthening these centers by bringing them together, helping them share expertise, giving them a (rough) set of additional resources, which have been tested and had their value proven nationally and internationally. As such, a community of practice has emerged across the institutions which has really grown in stature and is now better able to support individual academics or teams of academics across the country. The network and structure are some of the downstream effects of the National Forum.

How is the National Forum funded?

The short answer is that the forum is funded in a way that is relative to the scope of its work. In practice, the National Forum is funded from an allocation (slice) that is designated for higher education institutions. Its annual budget is roughly €2.25 million. Additional funding has been provided to the Forum to support enhancement activities over the past two years by aligning teaching and learning funds from the HEA with the four strategic priorities that the organization identified for the National Forum. This has amounted to €5 million/annually for the past two years (which will not be ringfenced this year). Previously, the budget for enhancement activities would have been closer to €0.65 to €0.8 million (depending on the Forum's budgeting).

There was a specific question about funded networks: the Forum has allocated funding to support other networks on innovation and conferences, among other activities (roughly €0.1 million). The Forum funds 17 networks based on 54 applications.

Do universities "share" lectures i.e. can students from one university take a class at another?

This is an area where the Forum would like to do more. Generally, it's not common in Ireland's university sector due to healthy demographics regarding the student population. In some cases, sharing lectures happens at the PhD level, but hardly at the undergraduate level. Classes tend to be too large rather than too small.

A micro credentialing project (under discussion) may contribute to sharing lectures in terms of allowing students autonomy to develop their own pathways and leverage expertise across the system which would, in turn, free up time for academics to do other activities.

Could you give more details on the research/teaching fellowships: How are they selected? Do you fund their projects? Are there any examples to share?

We worked in partnership with the Irish Research Council to understand their system of how they fund the fellowships. We consulted widely across the sector to have an open process and support applicants.

It was a two-stage process where the group of applicants who passed the first stage were brought together, shared experiences, and received feedback. International advisors also supported this process.

In terms of the topic, successful candidates are identifying their own topics, but they partner with the Forum and aligned with some of the strategic priorities.

How do you ensure that consultations among actors run smoothly? And that any changes or initiatives are being implemented effectively within a reasonable period?

There are several stakeholders, but in a small country, there's an advantage of knowing each other. Several stakeholders are involved because education is not a top-down managerial process. Stakeholders have particular perspectives or expertise which need to be brought to the table.

The inclusive nature of the discussions allows for different perspectives to be raised quite early on. For example, in the response to our COVID crisis, there has been strong coordination across stakeholder agencies, led by the government departments, and also involving QQI, the funding agency, the Institutes of Technology, the student union, and staff unions. We've avoided several conflicts and students continue to learn.

Has Ireland considered having a Higher Education Council? Please comment on the role of the HEA in the sector. Ireland is one of the few countries where a buffer organization exists. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the HEA rather than a council?

The HEA's origins date back roughly 50 years as a buffer organization. The role of higher education in society was increasing and the number of universities and institutes of technology was growing rapidly. Since its founding, there have been many economic, political, and social changes. But the HEA continues to operate under the legislation that existed 50 years ago. However, legislation will be revised this year, but specifics are unknown, beyond the need for thorough modernization.

The role of the HEA itself is in question due to the creation of a new government department. Previously, one department was responsible for all education sectors, and higher education was sometimes neglected (when focusing on pre-tertiary education and *skills*). The role of the HEA is likely to change, whether in name or in function.

The HEA used to be more policy oriented. From an insider's perspective, it was viewed more as a funding agency. As such, the government decided the budget, and the HEA allocated the budget depending on formulae/criteria/special projects/political priorities. All public institutions report to the HEA, both in terms of funding and performance. The idea of a Higher Education Council, like the Portuguese one, has not been tabled. One idea being discussed is a Higher Education Commission, rather than a Council.

In Ireland, how do you maintain the morale of stakeholders in the context of changes and constant reform initiatives?

There is a culture of innovation and enhancement, and an appetite to do your best within that public service element. It's perhaps cultural. There are high levels of motivation within institutions, despite the challenges. It's partly how the institutions support and develop their staff over the long term.

Smaller countries like Ireland need to be more agile than larger countries. Otherwise, they may get left behind and could struggle to be relevant and competitive. This may also help to explain why stakeholders remain motivated as Ireland continues to iterate and introduce reforms.

To what extent and how the career management models in universities and institutes of technology affect the success of staff development? Does Ireland have teaching-only positions at universities? Or are all teachers required to do research?

Within universities represented, there are no teaching only positions. The workload may be tweaked regarding the teaching and research components depending on the stage of one's career or research funding one has received. However, faculty are expected to perform both roles of teaching and research, and are evaluated on both components. There are a few teaching only positions. Those are part-time and short term; they are linked to hiring constraints regarding full time permanent positions per the government. Ideally, there would be much fewer short-term part-time teaching posts.

One of the challenges in the Institute of Technology sector is that most staff hold permanent positions, including promoted posts. As such, there's very little scope for people to move up the system unless someone moves on or retires. There's little flexibility within the system and this is something that the sector is having to grapple with as transitions towards a technological university. Staff on the academic side are mostly on teaching only contracts; they may choose conduct research, but they're not required to do so. Furthermore, their research is taking place somewhat in the margins. There's a structural challenge within the technological sector in terms of the research capacity, but also in the career development models.

[Promoting Academic Staff Development in HEIs: A Panel Discussion](#)

Panelists: Jennifer Harvey (Head Learning, Teaching & Technology Centre, TU Dublin); Alison Hood (Dean of Teaching and Learning, Maynooth University); and Moira Maguire (Head of Learning and Teaching, Dundalk Institute of Technology).

Please comment on the six Research Centers.

The research centers are dedicated research centers with researchers who are generally full-time researchers or postdoctoral researchers working in particular areas. For example, in *ICT Health and Aging* there is the Smooth Muscle Research Center; and the Regulated Software Research Center which specializes in medical device development; and another research center.

Please provide more information about the checklist.

The one-pager checklist for success has been developed over a decade by bringing students and staff together, and exploring the transition into the third level for a variety of strategic actions.

These are used as a guide at different stages of the transition process into the third level from early orientation—where you start the first contact and build a sense of belonging between the student and the program, and also other students—to an extended orientation where students become familiar with processes and practices and start to develop new skills of the third level into assessment, feedback, and early feedback as another way to familiarize individuals with processes and get feedback on their learning.

Regarding learning analytics: what kind of data is being collected and how is it being used to support academic staff and teaching?

Evaluations, feedback, and surveys are collected from students, peers, and peer-evaluations from staff. In addition, units report regularly; and regular quality reviews are conducted which focus on teaching and research. There are various conditioning structures that will look at specific issues and act on the analytics and data received. These committees can be at the faculty level or the Academic Council level. As such, data are collected in several ways, but is less focused on “hard data” analytics.

Programs are managed by program boards which is a key source of information about the learning experience. The boards analyze data this data in addition to “soft feedback” submitted by students via other channels.

In terms of more advanced analytics, the virtual learning environment, Moodle, is used. Training/support is provided to Moodle users to monitor programs focused on fostering engagement. These analytics are more helpful during the pandemic relative to in-person classes. At small institutions, classes are also relatively small, allowing staff to be more aware of student participation and engagement (forgoing the need for sophisticated analytics on engagement).

Do you use the same data to evaluate teachers and staff members when they are promoted? Or are there other practices being used?

At Maynooth University, there were several issues discovered regarding the use of student evaluations for evaluating teacher performance. For example, a teacher could be teaching a difficult and unpopular course or, alternatively, teaching a popular course. There are also gendered aspects and racial aspects to consider. As such, three broad areas are considered, which mitigates the overreliance on a single source of feedback such as student evaluations: teaching, research, and service.

Teaching performance considers four areas of engagement:

- Engagement (quantity)
- Quality
- Teaching enhancement
- Leadership and teaching

It is important to note that when using evaluation materials, in the promotion process administrators emphasize that a score/rating, used in isolation, is not meaningful. If, however, a teacher reflects on feedback by making changes in how s/he delivers specific tasks in practice, it is a more meaningful approach that reflects one’s self-improvement. It appears that administrators do not use the score per se, deferring instead to the faculty to incorporate their score in their overall portfolio of performance factors.

At Dundalk IoT, student evaluations are not used as inputs to assess teacher performance or promotion possibilities. Rather, student evaluations are used to assess modules. TU Dublin also does not use student evaluations to assess teacher performance.

Are there other ways that measure teaching and learning activities as part of professional/career development?

Professional development courses are considered in promotion applications. *Leadership* in teaching is also considered in the promotion process, including staff participation on committees for teaching and learning. Improvements made in other areas to increase diversity/equity/inclusion, increasing student numbers, interdisciplinary collaboration, and incorporating one's disciplinary research into teaching (or research in the area of teaching and pedagogy) are also considered, among other aspects/elements.

Who evaluates the teaching portfolio? Is it part of the academic evaluation performed by peers? Or are there professionals doing the evaluation on the teaching and learning side? When it comes to promotions?

Maynooth University: There are portfolios for the teaching award application and also for seeking promotion. Regarding the latter, the portfolio is part of the promotion which is reviewed by the promotion board i.e. the president, registrar, vice-presidents, dean(s), faculty representatives, and an external evaluator (which helps to ensure transparency and adhere to international standards).

TU Dublin: Achieving parity in prestige between/among teaching and research and engagement. Many indicators which contribute to improved recognition are focused on research.

Dundalk IT: The promotional rounds at the IoT is different from universities' processes. The academic career structure in the Institutes of Technology is fairly flat. Staff do not periodically apply for promotions. Instead, they progress within the same grade. Opportunities for promotion are associated with specific criteria.

Do research centers employ only short-term staff? Are projects their main source of funding [since permanent positions always include teaching]?

Dundalk IoT: Most of the funding comes from projects but there are permanent staff. The amount and nature of teaching varies.

Maynooth University: Staff who attract project funding are seconded into the research centers and teach less during the term of that secondment/project.

When considering staff promotions, is teaching considered in the evaluation? Do teaching and learning indicators have an impact on the progression of an individual's academic career?

Maynooth University: Promotion criteria were recently revised to address this issue. It is now possible for individuals to gain promotion through excellence in research OR teaching OR both.

How does your university motivate academic staff? What are possible options for professional growth?

Maynooth University: Leading by example is important in teaching. The university's president teaches a first-year class of 400 students and grades the exam papers.

Dundalk IoT: Learning and teaching enhancement is an important source of motivation for our staff. There is a very high level of engagement with this among staff and it is a real source of professional growth.

How do you incentivize academic staff to transition from one part of the system (historical) to another (relatively new institutions)?

There is room in the system for a "third space" in which a different type of education is developed to exist alongside universities. As such, technological universities are being positioned in that "third space." These (new) institutions are also being positioned in the context of applied knowledge, applied learning, and practices. Other existing institutions are not necessarily operating on the applied side. The new institutions are not meant to follow the entrenched institutions in their offerings. But it's possible to create alliances within this space to position the burgeoning institutions alongside other technological universities globally.

Teachers Union of Ireland: Role, Priorities and Ways of Working

Presenters: Michael Gillespie (General Secretary) and delegation

What is industrial action?

Industrial action comes from the 1990 Industrial Relations Act. This legislation governs how trade unions can operate collectively during a dispute. For example, if there is an employment dispute, and if there is a process to dispute through the industrial resolution mechanisms, under still no resolution, the Union can ballot its members (under a secret ballot). If the majority of members accept the ballot, then the Union's executive committee can sanction the industrial action. Industrial action would be a collective action (strikes or another form of collective action).

What is social partnership?

Social partnership is the trade union engaging with the government and other agencies of the government on specific issues whether policy or pay/compensation issues. It's a model that is returning in the form of social dialogue. Previously, social partnership meant that all partners involved were treated equally. This approach disappeared during the recession in 2008 and a different model emerged (during the austerity years). Now, particularly during COVID, the need and benefits of social dialogue have returned. This social partnership approach seems to be re-emerging.

If possible, please share more information about the social guarantee system for academic staff: what is the state's responsibility and what is the responsibility of institutions? How does the pension system function?

The pension scheme for the education sector is the superannuation scheme. There are several different types of pension schemes in operation.

In terms of staff salaries: the government provides funding to the institutes which, in turn, pay staff as public sector workers.

The union has negotiated benefits and legal entitlements for its members. For example, regarding casualization (part-time employment), the EU adopted the Part-time Employees Act (2001) to protect part-time employees. However, the union negotiated better terms for its members (per the union) in terms of fixed-term contracts of indefinite duration through a multi-year campaign against precarious employment. Eventually, the union achieved an agreement with the government to enhance members' terms regarding contracts of indefinite duration. For example, under the EU legislation, a fixed-term contract for four years transitioned to a fifth year for a permanent contract. Under the Union's agreement with the Irish government, members are required to work for two years to obtain a fixed-term contract.

Do academics in Ireland have an obligatory retirement age? And if not, is there an exit from an academic career at a certain age?

The social contract entitles individuals to different types of paid leave. Factors which determine one's (defined benefit) pension are service years and the final salary (on the last day of work). The most generous scheme includes exactly half of one's salary (until death) and a lump sum.

Under the older system (pre-2004 system), individuals could retire at 60 or 65, with whatever they've accumulated. Now, there is also a new choice of remaining employed until age 70 (adding to their benefits) Individuals who are working under the post-2004 system, they can remain until age 65 (or whatever the government determines under a new retirement age that is currently being debated).

Are there emeritus positions at the state level or the institutional level? And what are the criteria?

Emeritus positions are not paid positions and it isn't automatically bestowed on staff. Individuals must apply if there is an emeritus position available. Often emeritus staff are individuals who have worked at the respective institution and have retired. It allows for holders of this title to remain engaged with the university or institute.