

**Technological University of the South East**  
**Project Steering Group**  
**Terms of Reference and Operational Structure**

**1. BACKGROUND**

On the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017 the Governing Body Chairs and Presidents of the two South East Institutes of Technology at Carlow and Waterford formally agreed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on behalf of the Governing Bodies and Executives of the two institutions, which established the context and framework for collaboration and co-operation towards the development and delivery of a connected and embedded unitary multi-campus Technological University of the South East (TUSE) of international standing.

This MOU takes cognisance of the objectives of the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* and builds upon the following:

- The joint submission by the Parties to the HEA in 2012 setting out their strategic intentions and approved by the Minister for Education and Skills in 2013;
- *Process and Criteria for Technological University Designation (2012)*;
- *Technological Universities Bill (2015)*;
- *Engagement and Consultation Process on a Technological University for the South-East (Kelly, 2015)*;
- *Programme for a Partnership Government 2016*;
- Funding support received by the Parties under the *HEA's Scheme to Provide Support for the Restructuring of the Higher Education Landscape*.

Further context is provided by Government approval on the 17<sup>th</sup> July 2017 to the drafting of insertions and amendments to the 2015 Bill following the *May 2017 Agreement on Technological Universities* agreed by the DES (Department of Education of Ireland), THEA (Technological Higher Education Association) of Ireland and TUI (Teachers Union of Ireland).

Through the adoption of this MOU, the Governing Bodies of both Institutes have provided for the appointment of an Independent Chair and a joint Project Steering Group to ensure a strong and durable foundation to drive the TUSE project in a unified manner while embracing external stakeholders and demonstrating high level of transparency and commitment from the institutions.

**2. ROLE OF THE TUSE PROJECT STEERING GROUP**

On behalf of the Governing Bodies of the South East Institutes of Technology, the TUSE Project Steering Group will provide the oversight, direction and expertise necessary to drive the TUSE project to a successful outcome within the framework provided by the *2017 MOU – Towards a Technological University of the South East*.

### **3. ROLE OF THE STEERING GROUP CHAIR**

On behalf of the Governing Bodies of the South East Institutes of Technology, the Chair will provide strong leadership, impetus and guidance to empower and facilitate the TUSE Project Steering Group in fulfilling its role and meeting its outcomes and key targets within the framework provided by the *2017 MOU – Towards a Technological University of the South East*.

### **4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STEERING GROUP MEMBERS**

On behalf of the Governing Bodies of the South East Institutes of Technology, the TUSE Project Steering Group members will have the following general responsibilities:

- Understand the goals, objectives, and desired outcomes of the project;
- Understand and represent the interests of project stakeholders;
- Take a genuine interest in the project's outcomes and overall success;
- Act on opportunities to communicate positively about the project;
- Ensure that the project is making sensible financial decisions – especially in procurement and in responding to issues, risks and project adjustments;
- Ensure that the project is aligned with organisational strategy as well as policies and directions across government as a whole;
- Actively participate in meetings through attendance, discussion, and review of minutes, papers and other Steering Group documents;
- Support open discussion and debate, and encourage fellow Steering Group members to voice their insights.

On behalf of the Governing Bodies of the South East Institutes of Technology, the TUSE Project Steering Group members will have the following specific responsibilities:

- Develop an effective project plan and structure to deliver a multi-campus Technological University of the South East;
- Advise a subgroup of the two executives led by the Presidents, on the development of a joint values, vision strategy and mission for the Technological University of the South East;
- Identify the requirement for, establish, and provide strategic direction for various task groups or project teams, receive reports from these groups and teams and make recommendations relating to their work;
- Oversee the compilation of a joint data set for the two parties to establish current relevant trajectories and identify developmental targets. The developmental targets will be informed by international benchmarks associated with performance as a university as well as by the published criteria for Technological University designation;
- Articulate a rationale informed by independent assessment of the likely economic and social impact of the Technological University;

- Identify and plan for the human, physical and financial resource requirements necessary to achieve a Technological University. This will include risk analysis and mitigation across all areas including teaching, research, engagement and professional supports;
- Develop a strategic HR plan identifying the key skill sets required to support the implementation of the plan;
- Oversee the ‘Higher Education in the South-East, collaborative project’ initiative;
- Oversee the drafting of the business plan for the multi-campus Technological University of the South East;
- Develop a comprehensive communication strategy prioritising internal stakeholders and engaging with external and in particular regional stakeholders;
- Report, through the Chair, to a group comprising of Presidents and Governing Body Chairs of both Institutes;
- Liaise regularly, through the Chair, with the Presidents of both Institutes in order to provide the necessary impetus and guidance in order to fulfil its role and meet its outcomes and key targets;
- Advise on, establish and agree TUSE positions on policy and responses to reports of policy makers and policy bodies (e.g. members of Cabinet, Government Departments, the HEA, QQI) and other relevant bodies and organisations;
- Oversee the application process for Technological University designation;
- Provide financial oversight of all aspects of the spend associated with the TUSE project.

## **5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STEERING GROUP CHAIR**

On behalf of the Governing Bodies of the South East Institutes of Technology, the Chair will:

- Chair meetings of the TUSE Project Steering Group;
- Oversee the preparation of agendas, documentation, reports, etc. in advance of Steering Group Meeting;
- Ensure that agreed actions from Project Steering Group meetings are followed up;
- Oversee the work of various working groups or project teams established by the TUSE Project Steering Group;
- Advocate and/or represent the interests and agreed position of the TUSE Project Steering Group, including at meetings (either individually or as a member of a broader TUSE group) with policy makers and policy bodies (e.g. members of Cabinet, Government Departments, the HEA, QQI) and other relevant bodies and organisations;
- Liaise with other HEIs consortia project chairs (or equivalent), to present the agreed position of the TUSE, share learning and develop common positions with a view to promoting the interests of the TUSE nationally and internationally;
- Support and promote the contribution of the TUSE to regional development through meetings and other interactions with HEIs, national and local government, regional fora,

Enterprise Ireland/IDA, enterprise organisations/groups and community and sporting groups.

The appointment of the Chair will be approved by the Governing Bodies of both Institutes.

The Chair will report to a group comprising of Governing Body Chairs and Presidents of both Institutes.

In the event of a vacancy in this key role, meetings of the Project Steering Group may be co-chaired by the Chairs of the Governing Body of the two Institutes.

## **6. GENERAL**

### **6.1 Membership**

The membership of the Steering Group is as follows:

- Independent Chairperson (1 in total)
- Chairs of the Governing Bodies of each Institute (2 in total)
- Presidents of each Institute (2 in total)
- 2 Governing Body Members from each Institute nominated by the Governing Body of the respective Institutes (4 in total)
- 2 Senior Executive Representatives from each Institute nominated by the Chair and President of the respective Institutes (4 in total)
- 2 International Experts with experience in Higher Education and specifically in HEI mergers and University designation processes (2).
- Professional external support will be engaged where required to assist in project and change management

All appointments will be made on the basis of competence for the role, enthusiasm for the project and willingness to make the considerable time commitment involved.

The Chair, International Members and Professional External Members will have the full approval of both Institutes. Their engagement will be subject to compliance with all public sector guidelines and rules.

Other members (Governing Body and Senior Executive Representatives) of the Project Steering Group are a matter for the individual Institutes. Institutes may rotate the Senior Executive Representatives attending Group meetings as the project requires. This decision will reside with the President of the Institute.

The Chair will be of a calibre to command the respect of both Institutes and, within a process to be recommended by the Steering Group and modified / approved by the Governing Body of both Institutes, will have the authority to push issues of contention to conclusion.

Project Managers, Learners, Academic and / or Professional Leads, as well as other staff of both Institutes and / or jointly engaged professional service providers, may be invited to attend and contribute to Steering Group meetings as required.

Membership of the Steering Group is open to review; the first review to take place following two meetings of the Group or within six months of the first meeting of the Group.

## 6.2 Quorum and Decision-making

### 6.2.1 Quorum

A minimum number of **8** Steering Group members are required for decision-making purposes. The quorum must include a minimum number of **4** from the Governing Body/Executive Management membership from each Institute.

### 6.2.2 Decision-making Process

The process by which the Steering Group will use to make decisions will be agreed at the inaugural meeting. Options for consideration include:

- Unanimity
- Majority: a course of action requires support from more than 50% members who attend the meeting if there is quorum.
- 2/3 Majority: a course of action requires support from 2/3 of the members who attend the meeting if there is quorum.
- Consensus: a majority approve a given course of action, but that the minority agrees to go along with the course of action, potentially with some modifications.

### 6.2.3 Frequency of Meetings

There will be quarterly meetings of the Steering Group, ideally aligned with key project plan milestones.

### 6.2.4 Agenda, Minutes, and Decision Papers

All documentation will be sent to members three to five business days in advance of a Steering Group meeting. This will include the following:

- Agenda for upcoming meeting.
- Minutes of previous meeting.
- A progress report for the project.
- Decision papers.
- Any other documents/information to be considered at the meeting.

### 6.2.5 Proxies

Members of the Steering Group may not nominate others to attend meetings on their behalf.

### 6.2.6 Reporting arrangements and authority

The TUSE Project Steering Group shall report, through the Chair, to an oversight group comprising of Presidents and Governing Body Chairs of both Institutes, at regular intervals on all matters arising from these Terms of Reference.

The oversight group comprising of Presidents and Governing Body Chairs of both Institutes will continue to hold executive and operational responsibility for all aspects of the realisation of the TUSE project.

### 6.2.7 Duration of the TUSE Steering Group

The TUSE Steering Group has been established jointly by the Institute of Technology Carlow and Waterford Institute of Technology under the *2017 MOU – Towards a Technological University for the South East*. The duration of the MOU is three years from the date of sign-off (12<sup>th</sup> October 2017 to 12th October 2020), although provision is made for extension of the MOU for a further period if agreed by the two Institutes.

The TUSE Steering Group will have completed its work upon the successful creation of a unitary multi-campus Technological University of the South East (TUSE). The terms of reference are therefore subject to review at this point should this be achieved prior to the expiration of the 2017 MOU between the two Institutes.