

The National Strategy: Attaining the goals

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Context

- Severe economic strain
- Higher education and research key to national recovery
- Mission drift leading to homogeneity
- Perceived failure of the system to deliver on national objectives
- Demography and growing demand
- Funding
- Autonomy vs. regulation

Key objectives

- Improve the alignment of institutions' strategic plans and their overall performance with national priorities, within a framework of institutional autonomy and improved transparency of performance and accountability for funding.
- Develop a more coherent system of mission specific and diverse higher education institutions to deliver on stated national priorities.
- Institutional consolidation, collaboration, the creation of regional clusters of institutions and technological universities.

System Performance Framework National Priorities

- Economic renewal and development at national and regional levels
- Social cohesion, cultural development and equity at national and regional levels
- Public sector reform towards greater effectiveness and efficiency
- Restoration of Ireland's international reputation.

System Performance Framework Strategic Dialogue Process

- Government set out a System Performance Framework - seven national objectives for the higher education system.
- Each HEI proposes which of the national objectives it proposes to address based on the mission and current strengths of the institution
- HEI proposes target outputs and outcomes for each of the chosen objectives and metrics for assessment of performance against the chosen priorities – realistic but challenging
- Higher Education Authority (HEA) assesses HEI proposals with Irish and international peer reviewers and experts
- The HEA negotiates a formal three-year agreement with each HEI
- Performance is reviewed annually against agreed metrics set out in the agreement
- Up to 7% of funding contingent on performance – sufficient to encourage performance against agreement but not to undermine sustainability
- The HEA reports annually to the Minister on the performance of the system

Main Outcomes

- The implementation of a system of performance-based contracts tied to national social and economic objectives.
- The creation of technological universities, resulting in the reduction through merger of the 14 institutes of technology into 9 at present with plans well advanced to a further reduction to 2 by early 2022 – 5 technological universities.
- The consolidation of initial teacher education programmes from 19 providers to 6, all located, or very closely aligned, with a university.
- The Establishment of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning
- A teacher led network designed to inform, guide and support those interested in teaching and learning enhancement in Irish higher education.
- The development and implementation of a national student survey
- A structured PhD programme developed and implemented
- A programme of research prioritisation implemented

BUT NO SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MODEL DEVELOPED FOR THE SYSTEM