



thea

TECHNOLOGICAL HIGHER  
EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

## Technological Higher Education Association: Roles and Ways of Working

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Academic Career Framework for Latvia – Virtual Visit to Ireland 21 January  
2021

# Part I

- Role of THEA in the Irish higher education system
  - Ways of working with policy makers
- Views on how the systems is steered and lessons learned



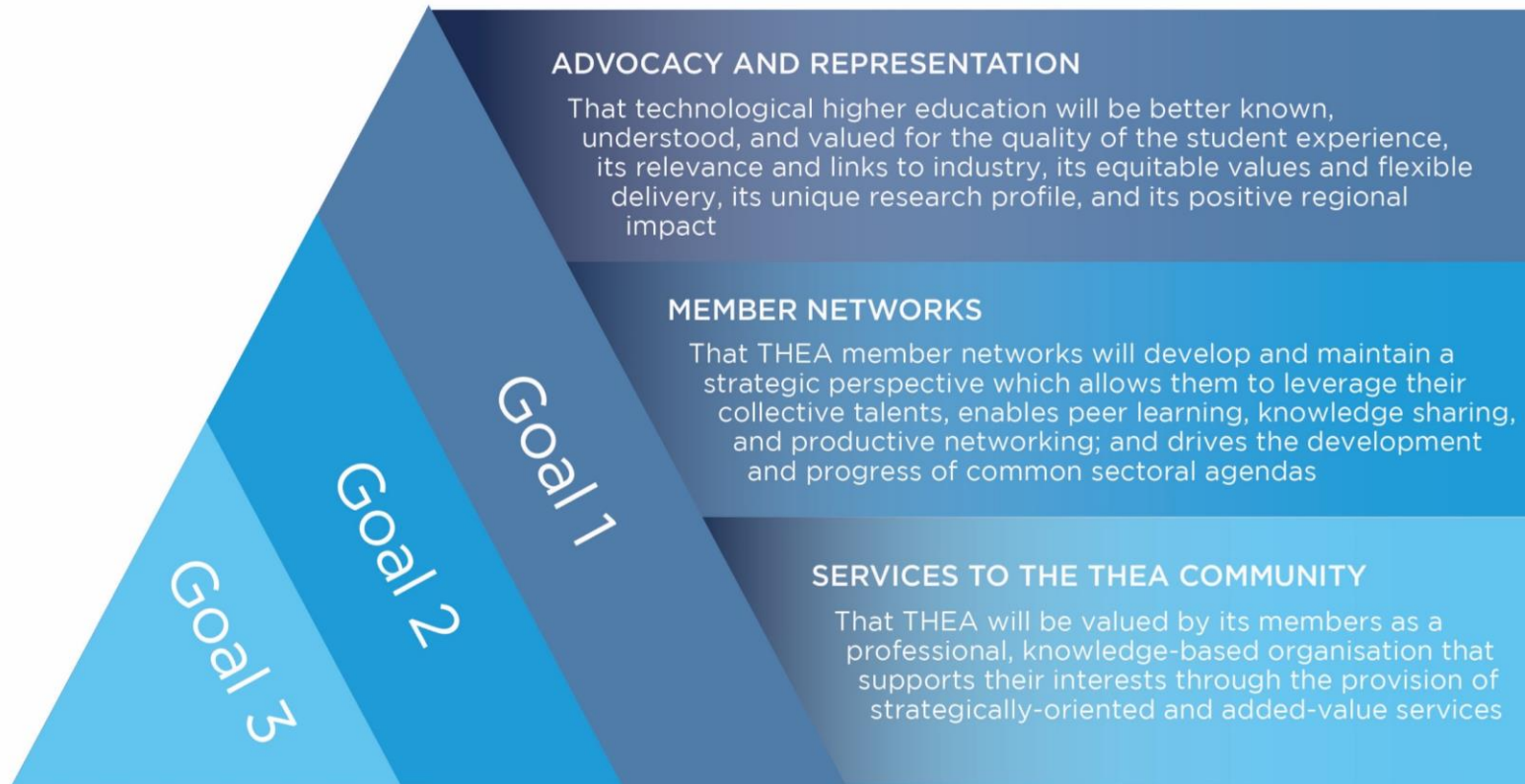
## THEA'S MISSION

To increase awareness and understanding of the unique attributes of technological higher education in order to influence policy on behalf of our members

## THEA functions & activities



## High level goals 2018-2023





# Working with Policy Makers

- Collaboration a mainstay of the system; key Government Departments and their agencies recognize value of consultation
- Also generally recognize THEA as the authoritative voice of technological higher education
- THEA works particularly closely with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, and the Department of Education and Skills, and their respective agencies
  - HEA, SOLAS, QQI, NCCA, SFI
- Wide ranging engagement on every aspect of policy development and implementation concerning the HE and THE sectors
  - funding, governance and quality
  - system reconfiguration
  - aspects of teaching and learning, including digital and online learning policy supports
  - research, development, innovation and engagement
  - internationalization of Irish higher education
  - apprenticeship development (and more besides)

# Example: The TURN Report

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- The Technological Universities Network conceived and established jointly by Department of Education and Skills and THEA
- Purpose:
  - to solidify political support for Technological University (TU) concept
  - to secure necessary development funding for TU consortia working towards designation and those newly designated
- Resulting Report highlighted pivotal role of TUs in achieving the Government's national strategic policies as set out in Project Ireland 2040, Future Jobs Ireland and Horizon Europe
- Made the case for significant investment and necessary policy reform under three thematic areas:
  - Integrated multi-campus digital infrastructure
  - Research capacity building
  - Policy realignment and funding of TUs
- Budget 2020 announcement of a €90 million TU Transformation Fund a direct outcome of THEA collaboration with policy makers

Technological Universities

## CONNECTEDNESS & COLLABORATION through CONNECTIVITY

Report of the Technological Universities Research  
Network to the Department of Education and Skills

October 2019

# Part II

- Recruitment of academic staff and staff development
  - Salaries and Promotion
- Teaching and Research Careers



# Evolution of Technological Higher Education Sector

- Roots of Institutes of Technology and Technological Universities traceable to the Irish second level vocational education system of the early 1970s
- Steady evolutionary change marked by key legislation: RTC Act 1992, Institutes of Technology Act 2006, TU Act 2018, QQI Amendment Act 2019
- All IoTs are designated awarding bodies to masters level (Level 9)
- Technological universities awarding bodies to doctoral level (Level 10)
- Marked growth and development of sector over 50 years – sector accounts for some 40% of total HE enrolments

# Historical Legacy

- Structure of staff contracts the main residual element of sector's school-VET origins
- Essentially, an hours-based teaching contract – typically 18 hours teaching
- For other, HE related activities, including research, workarounds have had to be found, including
  - Buying out hours
  - Research-only contracts
- Reform of contract is arguably the final major requirement in turning IoTs/TUs into fully autonomous university institutions that engage
  - in the full range of activities associated with universities
  - and at the expected/required depth

# General Features of The Current System

- Recruitment undertaken locally by institutions within the context of a national Employment Control Framework (ECF)
- Pay and Staff Grades determined centrally by Government, and informed historically by benchmarking
- Staff development is supported at institutional level where staff are encouraged to manage their own career development
- National initiatives also a key element of staff development e.g. National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning

# TURN Report

- TURN report made a number of recommendations relevant to the staff contract issue
  - The need to invest in research capacity building around mutually supporting research and teaching;
  - The need to implement a TU appropriate career structure
- It signalled, in particular, a move towards output work allocation approaches based on professional, autonomous and self-directed working patterns
- Not prescriptive on the 'how' of transformation

# Transformation Process

- Transformation process only beginning now – not ideal, given that most TUs will be established before an appropriate contract has been developed
- Will require considerable leadership and engagement from all the key players to achieve the desired outcome of a new and appropriate contract that is informed by the mission of TUs rather than custom and practice
- First step – a discussion paper produced by Professor Tom Collins – currently being considered by stakeholders
- Complicated by very recent formation of new government Department (DFHERIS ) – will take time for new Department to assume staff external relations function and build expertise



# Issues for Clarification in the Institutions

- What is the academic year – i.e. number of weeks to be allocated within a work allocation model and where is this signed off centrally?
  - institution level or sub institution level?
- What is the duration of the week- i.e. number of hours to be allocated
- Other than teaching hours during these weeks – what other tasks can be allocated?
- How much preparation time should be allocated per teaching contact hour and on what basis is this determined
- What weighting if any is given to student numbers; level of study on the Qualifications framework and stage of study

# Key Areas for Discussion in Developing a New Staff Contract

- Nature and extent of the Academic Year
- Career Paths and Work Allocation Models
- The case for Units rather than Hours
- The needs and potential of early career staff
- Work Allocation Models – A social process or a technical process?

Thank You!

