



SUMMARY OF GREEN PAPER ON THE ORGANISATION OF DIT – FOR CONSULTATION

New challenges and new opportunities

The Green Paper on the Organisation of DIT, of which this is a summary, aims to provide a vision of how our academic and support activities might be organised in the future.

The existing structures of DIT have served the institute well over the years. We now need to introduce changes so as to respond to new challenges and avail of new opportunities.

Why do we need to change our structures?

New needs ... new programmes

As the pool of traditional students decreases and competition increases, DIT must respond to the needs of different prospective students. We need to offer:

- programmes that are, and remain, relevant
- new core modular programmes (disciplinary, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary) that are career-oriented, and flexible in scope and pace

The boundaries between many academic disciplines are being redrawn as new activities emerge. Many of these are in areas where we can make national and international impact, but they often tend to run across our existing faculty boundaries.

Streamlining our organisation

Our current organisation appears to inhibit the implementation of new programme structures.

The number of levels through which some decisions have to pass leads to both delay and inflexibility. Academic colleagues spend too much time doing administrative tasks that could be handled more appropriately by others. Too much management time is spent dealing with subsidiary issues. As a result, our entrepreneurial flair is lessened.

Strengthening new areas, using resources efficiently

DIT has been a strong provider of careers and skills courses. We now need to strengthen areas such as research, postgraduate provision, lifelong learning, flexibility and entrepreneurial support. To do this, while maintaining our current strengths and expanding our resource base, we must have coherent strategies to ensure that we use resources more efficiently.

Creating academic and administrative coherence

We have to strike a balance between fulfilling our mission and being viable financially. That requires coherent academic provision and DIT-wide oversight of finance and resources.

Externally, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) demands coherent strategies. We have to compete in international markets for both students and research funds and seek philanthropic support in a coordinated way.

DIT has diverse, sometimes cumbersome arrangements in some aspects of student recruitment, admissions, examinations and quality assurance. Streamlining these systems requires a clear, DIT-wide operational responsibility.

New opportunities

Moving to a single new campus gives us great opportunities to develop synergies across disciplines. It means we can optimise the use of physical resources (teaching spaces, performance and display venues, laboratories, workshops and office accommodation).

We need new organisational structures to achieve these aims in a collegial, coherent and efficient manner. We need a strong, unified overview of all our learning resources and clear strategies to develop them and ensure they operate effectively.

What organisational changes are proposed?

Key changes

The key changes envisaged are:

1. Faculty-based collegial academic processes to be distinguished clearly from management. This will ensure:
 - a clear and distinct path for each
 - strong, collegiate academic processes that maximise communication across cognate areas
 - clear responsibilities (through Programmes Management Offices) for taught programmes, research, resource planning and delivery
2. Faculties to have overlapping constituent schools to ensure strong communication and collaboration across disciplines that are cognate or serve the same sector.
3. School line-management to be organised through one of three Programme Management Offices, each led by a vice-president/director.
4. Vice-presidents to have an institute-wide remit, with responsibilities for administrative support and for acting swiftly to avail of new opportunities.
5. Each school to be the key component in internal processes and external presentations/descriptions of our provision.

The Faculties

In essence, it is proposed that DIT be reorganised around schools. These schools would be:

- clustered in three Academic Programme areas
- strengthened by more effective cross-cutting supports and resource responsibilities
- grouped under the leadership of three academic vice-presidents with clear responsibilities for taught programmes, research, resource planning and delivery
- supported by institute-wide functions, each led by a vice-president

There has been justified concern about the possible loss of identity of existing faculties that have established a strong degree of interdisciplinary collaboration and external recognition. There may also be concern that certain disciplines with intrinsic faculty status might lose standing in the eyes of the external community.

However, the overlapping membership of constituent schools will enable us to:

- harness both traditional and new, cross-college disciplinary perspectives, initiatives and advocacies
- retain existing strengths, including the positive features of the current faculty structures
- minimize any disruption arising from restructuring
- strengthen teaching resources that share modules
- avoid fragmentation and duplication

The addition of a Faculty of ICT recognises both the importance of this sector to the Irish economy and the strength of DIT's provision in this area.

Each faculty board will be chaired by a head of school; will report to Academic Council and be supported clerically by the Office of the Vice-President and Director for Academic Administration and Academic Awards.

Academic leadership

Management will work within a matrix structure. Three Programmes Management Offices (PMO) will be led by the Vice-President and Director (Business and Commerce), Vice-President and Director (Science and Technology) and Vice-President and Director (Arts and Society).

These PMOs are the vertical element of a matrix line-management structure drawing on supporting services headed by vice-presidents/directors on the other side of the matrix.

The role of each PMO will be to lead the development of interdisciplinary curricula, support academic research and pedagogical innovation, foster cooperation (both internally and externally), offer interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programme provision and avoid unnecessary duplication.

Each PMO will play a key role in resource planning, the specification of physical facilities and recruiting and developing staff. The new structure will ensure unified implementation of DIT-wide policies and procedures.

Each of the three vice-presidents and directors will be the line-manager of a group of heads of school. They will ensure that goals and targets based on the DIT strategic plan are allocated to schools. Each group of schools will be supported by a Head of Learning Development.

The new arrangements are intended to make sure that organisational boundaries do not arbitrarily limit academic initiative and that all support services will operate in flexible, cross-boundary ways.

One of the key roles of each faculty is to enable existing strong relationships to continue to flourish across the scope of each PMO and to help new linkages to drive forward interdisciplinary initiatives.

The Schools

Each school makes distinct contributions to the mission of DIT but all schools must operate at a qualitatively equivalent level. Schools should carry out their academic operations with a high degree of delegated authority. Resource and budget allocations will go directly to each school.

Assistant heads of school will hold cross-school responsibilities and, if necessary, could also lead sub-units. Each academic colleague would be a full member of one school and (except for those in leadership roles outside the school) would report to the head of that school.

Some colleagues would be associate members of one or more schools, with the right to attend and participate in specific activities.

Organising research

The support structure for research has been reorganised recently and will remain largely unchanged.

Colleagues may be members of one or more research groups. All research groups will form part of a school. Some may also form part of DIT-wide research institutes. These institutes will be formed around common facilities or strong cross-institute research synergies.

All research student supervisors and research students will also be members of the institute-wide, 'virtual' Graduate Research School.

How decision-making will work

The school is the basic academic and operational unit of the institute. With responsibility devolving towards schools, each school is responsible for delivering school targets, and for the use of DIT resources.

Schools will adopt arrangements established DIT-wide to ensure that all colleagues can contribute to policy decision-making that affects them. School-wide meetings will be held twice each year and when any major strategic change is envisaged. Students will be represented at such meetings.

Schools must establish strong structures to exercise quality control over and monitor all aspects of teaching and learning for which they are responsible.

An assistant head of school will have responsibility for school-wide curriculum management and teaching quality; another assistant head of school could have day-to-day responsibility for a specific disciplinary sub-division of the school.

Each school will have a Board of Studies that lets academic colleagues and student representatives contribute formally to quality enhancement.

The heads of school, operating within devolved budgets, will be responsible for the strategic planning, leadership and delivery of teaching, assessment and research within their school.

Programmes Management Office Meetings (PMOM) will deal with staff, space and the non-pay budget. Each PMOM will:

- ensure that each school develops and reviews a strategy aligned to overall institute strategy
- provide support and ensure that schools meet their goals
- develop school operational plans for each academic year
- seek appropriate allocations of staff, space and non-pay budget resources to support the schools' operational plans and initiatives

(For further details on PMOMs, see Appendix 1.)

Rationalizing the committees

DIT has a large number of committees. The committee structure largely predated the institute's formal risk analysis. To reconcile this inconsistency, it is proposed to analyse the committees formally and ensure that each has unique responsibility for a particular set of issues, with clear reporting lines.

It is expected that this re-organisation will result in a substantial reduction in the number of committees.

Each remaining committee will have a specific role and annual set of tasks, set out in each annual Risks and Strategic Opportunities Action Plan.

The vice-presidents and directors

The three vice-presidents, covering Science & Technology, Business & Commerce, and Arts & Society. Each will be the line-manager of a group of heads of schools, an academic leader and a key member of the top management team. They will:

- have formal responsibilities for academic and staff recruitment and management
- establish common, DIT-wide processes for regular consultation with all colleagues in their constituent schools, their programme support team and student representatives
- work with the other vice-presidents/directors to devise and implement measures to ensure effective resource planning

(For details of the roles of the vice-presidents and directors, see Appendix 2.)

What concerns do the proposed changes raise?

Won't central administration be strengthened at the expense of teaching/academic activities?

In fact, the aim is to strengthen collegial processes and devolve responsibilities to schools. The concept of common rather than centralised processes is central to the proposals. A common, DIT-wide approach will help us to:

- provide a better service to students
- ensure consistent policy and strategy development
- ensure consistent liaison with external bodies such as the HEA
- satisfy diverse external audit requirements
- meet statutory requirements
- be more efficient and cost-effective by means of single processing

Don't these changes mean existing faculties could lose their identity and prestige?

The proposals include all relevant disciplines in extended versions of existing faculties and the creation of one additional faculty.

The proposed overlapping memberships of faculties will help us to harness both traditional and new, cross-disciplinary perspectives, initiatives and advocacies. We will avoid arbitrary, invidious divisions that can lead to incoherent relationships between programmes, but retain existing strengths.

De-coupling collegial processes (via faculties) from managerial processes (via Programme Management Offices) is a recipe for anarchy?

To avoid this, it is proposed to put in place clear decision-making responsibilities and processes. The dialogue enabled by cross-cutting meetings can lead to a rich diversity of new interdisciplinary programmes. Proposals exist to reduce the overall number of meetings.

Will there be a loss of promotion opportunities?

No – nor is it proposed to reduce staffing levels.

How were the proposals arrived at?

The Green Paper proposals were informed by:

- meetings to discuss linkages between schools
- the observations and written representations of colleagues
- operational experience
- discussions in the Management Forum
- reviews of DIT and its processes
- experience internationally

What are the next steps?

We will need to make sure that the overall structures do not ossify any boundaries that will change over time. Mechanisms will be required to change the composition and internal structure in the light of experience or changing academic development. Similar issues would arise in relation to the structure of certain schools.

It may not be possible to move to the full structure in a single, radical step, but a timetable and appropriate arrangements will be set in place after extensive consultation and when the Governing Body agrees a final new structure.

The precise terminologies to be used are open to discussion; there is no fixed view as to the titles of posts, units or groupings.

A White Paper will be issued subsequently that will form the basis for implementation.

We welcome comments on the Green Paper via: direct email to change@dit.ie, Academic Council, open meetings or your trade union.

Appendix 1: Programmes Management Office Meetings (PMOM)

There will be two types of PMOM: strategic planning meetings and operational meetings. Each will have the following six standing sub-committees:

Staff Development
Research and Consultancy
Learning and Teaching

Marketing
Continuing Professional and Short-course Programmes
Health and Safety

An Operations Group (consisting of the President and vice-presidents/directors) will meet regularly to ensure coordinated and quick responses to short-term opportunities.

A Planning Group (with the same membership) will coordinate DIT-wide, medium-term strategic academic planning.

Appendix 2: Roles of the vice-presidents and directors

The Vice-President (Academic Administration and Academic Awards) will be responsible for:

- coordinating the implementation of common academic support procedures while retaining, and encouraging, curriculum flexibility
- marketing programmes
- coordinating second-level school liaison
- admissions and registration
- academic policy and academic quality assurance
- student records, timetabling support, awards and diploma supplements and graduations
- ensuring that administrative functions support academic provision effectively

The Vice-President (Research and Enterprise) will be responsible for:

- developing, promoting and securing resources for research, research students, technology transfer and entrepreneurial support
- ensuring that research performance is monitored and the results communicated
- engaging with research funding bodies
- co-ordinating cross-disciplinary bids for research funding
- overseeing research collaboration with partner institutions
- maximising the economic impact of our research

The Vice-President (Institutional Development) will have responsibility for:

- ensuring that funding and strategic development of DIT-wide activities is fostered, supported and managed
- co-ordinating the planning for all activities
- developing the Grangegorman campus
- strategic and operational planning
- corporate relations
- securing philanthropic donations
- Legal Affairs
- Governing Body Support

The Vice-President (Institutional Development) will thus act as Secretary to the Governing Body.

The Vice-President (Student Experience and Learning Environment) will be responsible for:

- Campus Life, Library Service and Learning Development
- ensuring that the institute is alert and responsive to student needs (as raised by students, external examiners, etc) and that actions required are carried through

The Vice-President (Access, Outreach and Ventures) will be responsible for:

- effective access for non-traditional students
- strong community links, relations and communication
- being the point-of-contact with the VEC further education providers
- clear progression routes from FE providers to DIT
- effective liaison with local bodies and groups

Other responsibilities are: developing and managing wholly-owned and joint ventures; co-ordinating activities that establish DIT as a nationally influential and globally respected institution; developing and managing our relationships in Dublin; and mobilising students and colleagues in community engagement.

Non-academic directors

Director (Finance and Resources)

The key role of this director will be to ensure that we have procedures that guarantee financial robustness and legal compliance. The director will also:

- seek to obtain the resources necessary to support the development of facilities and recommend the allocation of financial resources
- to approve all expenditures for which a general or specific allocation has been made
- handle funds and investments
- report on financial conditions and operations

Director (Human Resources)

This director will be responsible for developing and implementing human-resource strategy, policy and procedures. Operational responsibilities include recruitment, staffing allocation management, employee relations, industrial relations, staff development and health and safety.

PMOM members include the relevant vice-president, constituent heads of school, the relevant Head of Learning Development, Head of Research and the Programmes Office Administrator. Other colleagues will attend for identified agenda items and normally only to report on specific topics.

How will the organisational changes benefit us?

The new structures are intended to:

- enable speedy, flexible responses to new academic opportunities
- foster the collegial development of cross-disciplinary activities
- facilitate diverse, creative overlapping groupings of colleagues and resources working collegially to common goals
- provide a pro-active, coherent and effective support system
- simplify both academic and administrative processes
- be entrepreneurial and outward-looking
- reduce academic administrative time
- remove multiple record-keeping
- retain strong participation by all colleagues at all levels in forming strategy and policy
- enable devolved and responsive decision-making

SUMMARY: Why we need to change our structures

The main reasons why we need to reorganise are:

- The most successful academic institutions of the future will feature, not just depth in each specific area, but connections between all their goals and activities.
- We need an organisational structure that helps us to identify and foster diverse and innovative developments in our programmes.
- Resources must be organised to support learning in a coherent and consistent way across the whole of DIT, especially in preparation for the new campus in Grangegorman.
- To deliver better student learning and experiences will require more institute-wide support to schools and more diverse and flexible programme areas.
- Our position under the HEA means we must use resources more systematically and efficiently.