

**“GREEN PAPER”**

**ON THE**

**ORGANISATION OF DIT**

**APRIL 2008**

# Summary

## Our Mission and the Challenges Inherent in it

Meeting student demand requires the continuing enhancement of the relevance of all programmes and a commitment to offering new career-oriented core disciplinary, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary modular programmes with flexible scopes and paces. An effective organisational structure should (amongst other outcomes) facilitate the effective identification and fostering of diverse and innovative new programme developments from disciplinary, sectoral and student aspiration perspectives.

Over the next ten years the Institute will occupy a single location with much greater opportunities that need to be grasped for unlocking synergies across disciplines. Organisational structures should facilitate this in as collegial, coherent, effective and efficient manner as possible. The move to a single new campus will mean a true optimisation of the use of physical resources will be possible, particularly the provision of uniformly excellent teaching spaces, performance and display venues, laboratories, workshops and office accommodation. To do this successfully requires a strong unified view of the totality of learning resources and clear strategies for their development and for ensuring their operational effectiveness. Priority needs to be given to the development, continuous improvement and augmentation of a well-resourced student-centred learning and extra-curricular environment that provides students with an excellent education and opportunities for personal growth through cultural, representational, recreational and leisure activities.

## Why Change?

Existing arrangements, which in many ways reflect the predecessor colleges and hence the proud history of DIT, served the Institute well. Now, in a different time, there are many new pressures and requirements for which DIT must be organised to provide:

- Learning and academic disciplines now need to be less distinct from each other, and not in perceived separated silos as they have tended to be; for example, civil engineering needs links to architecture, architecture to art and design, computing provision has to be coherent across science, engineering, media arts and business, and business learning has to be closely aligned to hospitality management; this does not mean that one should be subsumed into the other, but rather that they should be capable of serving different needs across DIT.
- A defining characteristic of the most successful academic institutions of the future will be their ability to achieve linkages and connections between

all their goals and activities, and not just depth in each isolated specific area.

- The resources available have to 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; lack of consistency in different areas has been an issue raised frequently in Governing Body discussions.
- The student experience in different parts of DIT has varied, depending on the facilities and services locally available; overarching supports, both academic and practical, have been inadequate to offset this unevenness.
- The delivery of better, higher quality student learning and experiences will require more Institute-wide support to schools and more diverse and flexible programme areas.
- Our position under the aegis of HEA requires more systematic and efficient use of resources.

## **What is the nature of the change proposed?**

Collegial academic processes via Faculties are to be distinguished clearly from management. Faculties will have overlapping constituent Schools to ensure strong open communication across cognate areas of provision (either by discipline or by sector).

The essence of the managerial proposal is to reorganise DIT around Schools, clustered in three Academic Programme areas and underpinned with more effective cross-cutting supports and resource responsibilities. Schools will be grouped under the leadership of three Academic Vice-Presidents with clear responsibilities for taught programmes, research, resource planning and delivery. Support for Schools will be provided by Institute-wide functions, each led by a Vice-President.

## **What are the advantages of these changes?**

The new structures are intended to:

- enable speedy and flexible responses to new academic opportunities,
- foster the collegial development of cross-disciplinary activities,
- simplify both academic and administrative processes,
- be outward looking and truly entrepreneurial
- reduce academic administrative time,
- remove multiple record keeping,
- retain strong participation by all colleagues at all levels in the formulation of strategy and policy, and
- enable devolved and responsive decision-making.

## What criticisms might be made of changes?

One potential criticism might be that the changes strengthen central administration at the expense of teaching and academic activities. The intent is to strengthen (and render distinctively separate) collegial processes and to devolve responsibilities significantly to Schools. The proposals also devolve initiatives that to-date have been accomplished centrally. Crucial to these proposals is the concept of **common** rather than centralised processes. Tasks are best accomplished with a common DIT-wide approach either to (i) provide a better service to students (ii) ensure consistent policy and strategy development to enable the Institute through Governing Body to meet its responsibilities, (iii) ensure consistent liaison with external bodies such as the HEA, (iv) satisfy diverse external audit requirements, (v) meet statutory requirements and (vi) gain efficiency and cost-effectiveness via single processing.

Another criticism may be that the identity of existing Faculties could be lost. These proposals include all relevant disciplines in extended versions of existing Faculties and the creation of one additional Faculty. The proposed overlapping constituent memberships of Faculties will help to avoid arbitrary and invidious divisions that can lead to incoherent relationships between programmes that should form clear complementary provision to students.

It could also be suggested that the de-coupling of collegial processes (via Faculties) from managerial processes (via Programme Management Offices) is a recipe for anarchy: the latter could ensue unless; as is intended, clear decision-making responsibilities and processes are in place. These proposals for cross-cutting meetings could be seen as complex and unwieldy. However, only such dialogues will realise a rich diversity of new – and career-relevant – interdisciplinary programmes and specific proposals are made for reducing the overall number of meetings.