



South East Technological University Strategic Plan 2023-2028

Key Strategic Issues

South East Technological University is currently engaged in the development of its first Strategic Plan. This plan will direct the activities of the university in the coming period and will help define, develop and strengthen the university as a key change agent for the South East region and as a significant new presence in the Irish higher education landscape. SETU has committed to engaging in a deep, detailed consultation in support of its planning and, to that end, offers this document as a means to highlight key issues for the university. We welcome comments from individuals, organisations, representative groups, state agencies and others on all aspects of future university activity; the questions below are not understood to be exhaustive but we hope offer some prompts to assist in making that valued contribution.

Vision and Mission

The creation of Technological Universities (TUs) in Ireland from existing Institutes of Technology was first mooted in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (January 2011) as both a consolidation and evolution of existing institutions that would preserve the diversity of educational provision in the Irish landscape while allowing for greater institutional impact and growth. The legal basis for the creation of TUs followed in the form of the Technological Universities Act 2018. The Act describes in very broad terms the key attributes and functions of the university (see Appendix 1 below). The Department of Education and Skills established the Technological University Research Network (TURN) in 2019 “to examine and report on how TUs could most effectively achieve their sectoral and national objectives and the supports that would be required for them to do this”. The report of TURN (October 2019) highlights the “rootedness in regional and local communities and economies” of Irish TUs, and points to the potential for TUs “to add substantial value to Government human capital and global innovation policies and strategies.” TURN notes that the TUs represent “a substantial enhancement to the overall capacity and potential of the Irish HE system.” As such, TUs involve a significant “step change” in institutional performance, capacity, range of activity, connectedness and impact.

In making its application for technological university designation in 2021, SETU set out its vision and mission, arrived at through a process of consultation within the organisation and with external partners. The vision and mission also reflects the ambitions for the organisation established in legislation and further conceptualised and developed by TURN. The vision of the organisation is that

South East Technological University will be a leading European Technological University recognised for regional connectedness and global impact with a student-centred philosophy transforming lives and achieving excellence through collaborative approaches

In support of that vision, SETU describes its mission in a series of commitments. These are to:

1. Provide a **broad range of learning opportunities at levels 6-10** of the National Framework Qualifications (NFQ) informed by regional and national needs and exhibiting distinctiveness through an interdisciplinary approach.
2. Deliver a strongly **student centred experience**, which focuses on equality of opportunity in relation to diversity and inclusion.
3. Develop and implement **smart specialisation strategies that closely align research centres of excellence with regional and national priorities** and the goals of international research and innovation programmes.
4. Create and optimise a **multi-campus learning environment**, with a presence in the major regional population centres, delivering a quality student experience aligned to guiding values and principles.
5. **Educate and prepare graduates** to the highest level who are work-ready, lifelong learners with an international outlook and the skillset necessary to navigate the global workplace.
6. Prioritise the **co-creation** of knowledge; recognising the strength of partnership working and putting in place mechanisms to support stakeholder engagement.
7. Optimise the use of **technology** in redefining the student experience, increasing accessibility and generating and disseminating knowledge to provide regional, national and international impact.
8. Commit to **driving regional growth** and prosperity through creating an organisation of international reputation that provides recognised expertise and learning to meet the needs of society and industry at regional and national level.
9. Embed opportunities for international academic/research experiences for students and staff to develop **global citizenship** and highlight SETU as a destination of choice for international staff/students.
10. Cultivate the personal and professional goals and aspirations of our students and staff through the provision of a **working environment that supports creativity and collaboration** and provides opportunities for professional development.

Together these vision and mission statements describe the “step change” from the Institutes of Technology to the new technological university that aligns closely with the expectations of the SETU community as well as many regional, national and international stakeholders.

The vision and mission will inform the development of the university’s strategic plan. The starting point for the body of questions and considerations below is the “step change” described in our vision and mission and required by government and the region’s communities.

How to Make a Submission

You may make a submission by email to strategy@setu.ie or through the SETU website (<https://www.setu.ie/strategic-plan-2023-2028>). Note that SETU does not accept anonymous contributions to this consultation. It is our intention to publish all submissions.

Enhanced Scale

We anticipate SETU will have an enhanced impact on the South East region in the first instance through the considerably increased scale of operations, especially through a significant increase in student enrolment. In scaling up quality higher education provision in the South East SETU aims

- to increase the level of educational attainment amongst the regional population,
- to address the outward migration of talent from the region due to the unavailability of certain disciplines and university-type activity, and
- to increase the flow of students into the region, particularly international postgraduate students

The increased scale of operations will be facilitated by the multi-campus nature of SETU.

1. What are the current barriers to educational attainment in the region?
2. What enhancements should be made to existing educational provision by the university to meet regional and national needs?
3. How best should the university encourage an inward flow of students to the region?
4. What opportunities are there in operating a multi-campus university across the region? How best might those opportunities be realised?
5. How do we enhance the university's proposition and offering in order to attract more students from the South East to study in the region?
6. How might the university's ambitions with regard to equality, diversity and inclusiveness be advanced?

Regional Transformation

The university will be a significant regional anchor institution and change agent. It will be

- an employer of scale with a direct economic impact consequent on the scale of the student and staff population,
- a cross-regional organisation with the capacity to bring coherence and co-ordination to regional activities;
- an instrument for enhancing the skills profile of the region and a contributor to overall regional human capital development;
- a magnet to bring international talent into the region.

7. How best can SETU help with the co-ordination of the South East regional "proposition"?
8. What kind of cross-regional activities will help SETU bring coherence to the region?
9. How best can SETU identify and contribute to addressing regional skills needs?
10. How can the economic impact of SETU be quantified and described in support of regional development?
11. How best can SETU facilitate staff and student mobility in support of its regional, national and international programme of engagement?
12. What does SETU need to do to become a magnet for international talent and investment?
13. How best can SETU support regional cultural activity?
14. What role has SETU in promoting sustainable development in the social sector and with social enterprise?
15. How does SETU best support the regional Gaeltacht and the Irish language?
16. How should SETU facilitate the development of the creative industries in the region?

Next Steps in Teaching, Learning and the Student Experience

In forming the new university at this point in time, SETU is cognisant of the ongoing need to ensure the relevance of the student experience in the light of technological change and rapidly changing employment patterns and career pathways. With the strong regional remit described above especially in mind, SETU will need to

- ensure access and flexibility in designing and delivering programmes;
- answer the particular skills and human capital development needs of regional society and the economy

17. What are the attributes that should distinguish an SETU graduate?
18. What is SETU's ambition with regard to the student experience?
19. What are the key considerations in developing the SETU programme portfolio given current regional need, future skills, the multi-campus nature of the organisation, and institutional capacity?
20. How does SETU ensure the continued relevance of its curriculum and programme portfolio?
21. How can SETU ensure that its offering is such that the university engages with learners throughout different career and life stages?
22. What do we understand by co-creation when it comes to the curriculum and how may this approach be developed over the course of the Plan? What models of partnership in programme design and delivery are necessary?
23. How best should SETU incorporate technology into its programmes, teaching and research?
24. How best can the curriculum and programme portfolio reflect SETU's responsibilities towards advancing sustainability and EDI, and to addressing the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure equality, diversity and inclusivity?
25. What are the key considerations in embedding entrepreneurship into the curriculum and into the university as a whole?
26. How should SETU support policy with regard to an integrated tertiary education system? How can SETU's develop and enhance its relationship with further education?

Elevated International Positioning

SETU's mission clearly seeks to position the university within not just a regional and national context but also within an international one. The university will build on many decades of international partnerships and activities in elevating its international positioning and, as a consequence, that of the region. The university will seek to create and sustain meaningful European and global partnerships that drive regional attractiveness to talent and investment

- through involvement in high-quality international teaching, research and professional networks
- through attracting international funding
- through enabling inward and outward international mobility for staff and students

27. What partnerships and networks should SETU involve itself in? How can these be identified and accessed?
28. What structures and processes are necessary to enable SETU to access greater international funding and support?
29. How best can student and staff mobility be facilitated and encouraged? How would a mobility programme support other strategic priorities for the university?
30. What are the key considerations in growing SETU's international recruitment?
31. How should SETU engage with international rankings?

Next Steps in Research

SETU will impact on the region not only through its enhanced scale but through increased high-quality research and innovation activity that is translated into economic activity. The new university will focus on

- increasing the knowledge capital of the region through enhancing the excellence of the research from within the academy;
- focusing the application of that knowledge to drive the social and economic development of the region in domains of regional specialism and high impact;
- providing high-end, high-impact, well-paid employment opportunities for graduates, post-graduates, researchers and technical professionals

32. In what domains should SETU concentrate its efforts, recognising that international-quality research activity can only be sustained in some areas?
33. What are the optimum structures and processes to convert research activity into impactful social and economic activity?
34. What are the challenges in developing and sustaining a high-performing ecosystem for researchers?
35. What kinds of partnerships would the university need to sustain that eco-system?
36. What range of employment opportunities in the research eco-system should the university ideally provide?
37. How best can the university's research effort contribute to advancing sustainability and addressing the Sustainable Development Goals?
38. What are the key considerations in embedding innovation and entrepreneurship into the university's research effort?

Enablers

It is clear that the "step change" in institutional performance required of the university and expected by its own community and by the region will need to be enabled both by internal reform and external support. Amongst the enablers for the enhancements hinted at above will be

- Technological resources
- Capital resources
- Staff development
- Financial resources
- Structures and process guaranteeing quality

39. What should SETU's ambition be for its staff?
40. What is required for SETU to be an exemplary employer?
41. What priorities should SETU have in terms of staff development, given the priorities indicated in the paragraphs above?
42. How should SETU approach diversifying its income streams? What short-term actions should SETU take to develop new income streams?
43. How should the university involve graduates and alumni more in the university and draw on their support for its development?
44. What short, medium and long-term measures should SETU take to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the use of institutional resources?
45. What should be the key considerations in determining the university's capital investment plan?
46. How should the university best assure the quality of its operations and the effectiveness of its management and governance, as well as the quality of its teaching and research?

Appendix 1: Functions of the Technological University as set out in the Technological Universities Act, 2018.

9. (1) The functions of a technological university, having particular regard to the needs of the region in which the campuses of the technological university are located, shall be to—
- (a) provide teaching and facilitate learning that—
 - (i) is informed by research, and
 - (ii) promotes excellence at all levels of higher education within the Framework,
 - (b) provide programmes of education and training that reflect the needs of individuals, business, enterprise, the professions, the community, local interests and other stakeholders in the region in which the campuses of the technological university are located and facilitate learning by flexible means,
 - (c) provide for the broad education, intellectual and personal development of students, for the purpose of enabling them, as graduates, to excel in their chosen careers and to contribute responsibly to social, civic and economic life in innovative and adaptable ways,
 - (d) provide opportunities for staff and students—
 - (i) of the technological university to teach, learn or conduct research at institutions that provide higher education outside the State, or to obtain relevant work experience outside the State, and
 - (ii) of institutions that provide higher education outside the State to teach, learn or conduct research at the technological university,
 - (e) collaborate with institutions that provide higher education inside and outside the State, including on joint research projects and provision of programmes of education and training,
 - (f) support a body of research that includes research relevant at regional, national and international levels and pursue excellence in the conduct of that research,
 - (g) support entrepreneurship, enterprise development and innovation in business, enterprise and the professions through teaching and the conduct of research and through effective transfer to those and other sectors of knowledge arising from that research,
 - (h) collaborate with business, enterprise, the professions, the community, local interests and related stakeholders in the region in which the campuses of the technological university are located—
 - (i) to promote the involvement of those stakeholders in the design and delivery of programmes of education and training, and
 - (ii) to ensure that, in so far as possible, innovation activity and research undertaken by the technological university reflects the needs of those stakeholders,
 - (i) support the development of a skilled labour force including, where appropriate, engaging in the education and training of apprentices in accordance with policy relating to that education and training for the time being communicated to the technological university by An tÚdarás, the Government or any Minister of the Government,
 - (j) support the mobility of staff and students of the technological university into and out of the labour force through collaboration with business, enterprise, the professions and related stakeholders in the region in which the campuses of the technological university are located,
 - (k) serve the community and public interest by—
 - (i) developing and promoting strong social and cultural links, and links supporting creativity, between the technological university and the community in the region in which the campuses of the technological university are located,
 - (ii) supporting (without prejudice to the generality of *subsection (4)*) the delivery of policies or objectives of the Government or any Minister of the Government, for the time being communicated to the technological university by An tÚdarás, the Government or any Minister of the Government, in relation to development of business and enterprise at a local, regional or national level,
 - (iii) fostering close and effective relationships with—
 - (I) a statutory body whose functions relate to regional development in the region in which the campuses of the technological university are located,
 - (II) a local authority or local authorities in whose local authority area or areas the campuses of the technological university are located,
 - (III) the education and training board or boards in whose education and training board area or areas the campuses of the technological university are located,

- (IV) a provider of further education and training in the region in which the campuses of the technological university are located, and
 - (V) organisations representing the social, creative and cultural interests of the community in the region in which the campuses of the technological university are located,
- (iv) in so far as possible in the performance of its functions—
- (I) contributing to the promotion of the economic, cultural, social, scientific and technological development of the State,
 - (II) respecting the diversity of values, beliefs and traditions in Irish society,
 - (III) promoting critical and free enquiry, informed intellectual discourse and public debate within the technological university and in wider society, and
 - (IV) promoting an entrepreneurial ethos,
- (l) promote access to the technological university and the education it provides, by economically or socially disadvantaged persons, by persons who have a disability and by persons from sections of society in the region in which the campuses of the technological university are located who are significantly under-represented in its student body,
- (m) undertake assessment of students, and award degrees and other qualifications,
- (n) make best use of its expertise and resources, whether or not on a commercial basis, for the purposes of its functions under this Act,
- (o) provide directly, or in collaboration with other providers of programmes of education and training, facilities for all levels of higher education within the Framework, including technological and professional education, and for research,
- (p) collaborate with persons or bodies inside and outside the State for the purpose of its functions under this Act, and
- (q) promote the attainment of gender balance and equality of opportunity among the students and staff of the technological university.