Good-bye to the Celtic Tiger?
Higher Education in Ireland 2009

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Higher Education at a Time of Crisis: Challenges and Opportunities
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Changing HE Context

- GDP to decline by 9.8% 2009 and could fall by 14%;
- Government borrowing likely to rise to 11.5% GDP 2009 and 13.6% in 2010;
- Unemployment expected to rise to 12.2% 2009 and 15% in 2010;
- Inflation expected to fall to -1.3% in 2009;
- Recovery slow in 2010 +.
- HE trying to operate in a continually changing and challenging financial and uncertain budgetary environment.
Impact on DIT

- **Budget Changes**
  - Reduction of ~€16m since 2008
  - Effective reduction of 10% of total budget
    - absorption of nationally agreed pay increases
    - increasing reliance on student numbers/capitation
  - Further reductions (~3%) in 2010 expected

- **Moratorium**
  - Embargo on appointments
  - Curtailment of all contract positions
  - Decisions now being taken by Department of Finance

- **Reduced funding for research**
  - Research funding agencies and programmes (SFI, IRCSET, TSRI, EI)
Main Impact (1)

- Re-structuring organisation
  - Consolidation and collaboration – between/within HEIs
  - Reduction in number of faculties/schools to increase efficiencies
- Sharing resources
  - Procurement, HR, Research Administration/Technology Transfer
- Academic Programmes
  - Review programmes
  - Reduction in programme/module choice
  - Close programmes
  - Rising undergraduate/postgraduate student demand
Main Impact (2)

- Research
  - Shift focus to EU and industry-funded opportunities
  - Performance measurement: Assessment, evaluation, benchmarking
  - Review overheads – full cost recovery
  - Restrictions on contracts/secondments affecting research

- Facilities
  - Reduction in capital budget and building maintenance
  - Reduced access to buildings
  - Reduced administration support

- Student Services
  - Reduced access to libraries
  - Reduction in student counselling service
Main Impact (3)

- **Human Resources**
  - Restriction on all appointments and contracts
  - Impact on secondments and promotions
  - Pay budget to stay at least 3% less than 4th Q 2008
  - Embargo on all administration posts, including admissions, academic registrar, counselling
  - Restrictions on overtime

- **Finances**
  - Reviewing all costs and budgets
  - Restrictions on travel, hospitality, contracts, consultancy, etc.
  - Postgraduate fees under review
  - Student stipends reviewed downwards
  - Salaries under review
Challenges for HEIs

- Great difficulty operating in uncertain environment;
- Restructuring within tight/unrealistic timeframe;
- Reduced funding at time of increasing competition (talent, research, int’l students, investment) globally;
- Re-focus on EU funding – but need to re-learn how;
- Conservative/restrictive academic traditions & practices;
- Need to maintain/grow student numbers with reduced resources;
- Ability to respond to government initiatives for unemployed via graduate internships, entrepreneurship training, etc. with reduced resources;
- New pedagogical models to take account of reduced funding, more ‘savvy’ students, etc.;
- Poor level of internationalisation.
Implications (1)

- Bringing Irish HE into line with ‘modernisation’ agenda albeit within tighter timeframe and less auspicious conditions:
  - New thinking pushed out by focus on short-termism;

- Stronger focus on strategic priorities, mission and differentiation aligned to fields of expertise and competence;

- Growing recognition of attributes/benefits of working together as an HE system:
  - Inter-institutional collaboration, mergers, rationalisation
Implications (2)

- Focus on internationalisation to diversify income
- Greater attention on assessment, international benchmarking, value-for-money;
- Changes in work practices and career structures with emphasis on performance management and greater productivity.
Regional/City Region Responses

- Growing realisation of need to strengthen city-region capacity.
- Dublin as national gateway:
  - Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance
  - Dublin Creative Alliance
- International Recruitment
- Sharing modules across PhD programmes
- Common Access programme
- Grangegorman Campus – joint venture between DIT, Dublin City Council and Health Service Executive.