



National Social Enterprise Strategy

Public Consultation Response

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Higher education plays a fundamental role in the building capacity and pathways for the development of an effective social enterprise ecosystem in Ireland.

Higher education institutions across Ireland offer accredited capacity building courses, provide infrastructure to nurture ideas, and attract investment for social enterprise start-ups. By default, higher education systems mainstream social enterprise, communicate, profile and develop the sector nationwide.

As a result of social enterprise featuring within higher education curricula, it raises awareness, offers students an opportunity to pursue careers and allows the option for student to apply learning to build their own social enterprise. This is supported by initiatives like Tangent Centre, Trinity College Dublin, UCD Innovation Academy, UCD. Full list of university social enterprise related courses available in APPENDIX 1.

This infrastructure also facilitates the use of research evidence to inform best practice in social enterprise. It builds pathways for students and staff, in cooperation with civic and civil society, to research, develop, seek investment for new start-up new social enterprises in their communities. It can also build understanding on how people can purchase goods and services from social enterprises, how people can pursue careers in the sector.

In 2018 Campus Engage facilitated a sectoral response to inform the new Social Enterprise Strategy - including experts and leader's input from across the IUA member institutions on fundamental role of higher education on raising awareness, stimulating social enterprise, building capacity and leadership.

The importance of embedding the role of higher education in developing the social enterprise system, from the early stages of school onwards was noted, in crucial to success, and realising public investment in this field. Visibility of social enterprise is increasingly part of the higher educational agenda in countries that have a developed sector. Scotland has identified the importance of education in its 10-year social enterprise strategy, which includes actions ranging from early learning through to third level. In addition, it notes the importance of building students potential career pathways in the field and ensuring professional recognition. A study by the British Council found that 150 (out of a total of 200) Higher Education Institutions surveyed in over 12 countries were collaborating with and engaging with social enterprises.¹

Mainstreaming social enterprise within curricula; and funding social innovation research and teaching staff continuous professional development type training need to be at the heart of any national strategy for Social Enterprise. While government can play a strong role in funding and supporting such initiatives, networks and support bodies within the sector must play a lead role in informing and operating programmes themselves, or by informing any national strategy implementation group.

In an Irish context, increasingly there is a move towards recognising the role of an intergovernmental approach to implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals

¹ <https://www.britishcouncil.org/society/social-enterprise/news-events/news-social-enterprise-and-higher-education>

and addressing societal challenges that Ireland faces today. Education, research and social enterprise and innovation is *the* vehicle to make this happen.

To recap, the level expertise and prevalence of social enterprise activity in the Irish higher education infrastructure make it fundamental that the sector is featured in any national Social Enterprise Strategy.

- Social enterprise and related topics of active citizenship, socially responsible businesses and sustainability are embedded across higher education curricula and social enterprise support systems in Ireland.
- The national strategy for research and innovation, Innovation 2020, calls upon in higher education researcher to work with civic and civil society to create new practice, policy, products for social enterprise.
- An increasing number of research and innovation funding calls, European Commission, H2020; Science Foundation Ireland, Future Innovators; Irish Research Council; and Health Research Board, are weighting research applications on realising research and innovation impact and set up of new businesses based on research outputs – including new social enterprise products and services informed by research.
- Increased higher education courses includes: social enterprise modules featuring in Business Schools and Engineering Schools (UCD); Kemmy Business School (UL), Social Enterprises and Community Development Practice (UCC); Social Inclusion Café (NUI Galway); Recent opening of the Social Innovation Centre and Tangent Centre in Trinity (TCD).
- Irish Universities Association Campus Engage “The Campus Engage initiative, led by all Irish universities and TU Dublin, supports a broad range of enhanced engagement practices between higher education institutions and society, including harnessing the research strengths of higher education institutions to address grand societal challenges, spanning a range of disciplinary fields”.
- Enactus initiative that enables third level students to create, and implement, social entrepreneurial projects which positively impact our local and global communities.

Name of third Level Course Module/ Course & Location with Institution	
Social Enterprise Development (Module)	Civic Engagement Office
Social Enterprise and Innovation in Practice (Module)	DCU Business School
Certificate in Social Enterprise (Undergraduate Certificate)	Adult and Community Education
Social Entrepreneurship (Undergraduate Module)	EDEN University Centre for Entrepreneurship, Design & Creativity
Social Entrepreneurship (Module)	Centre for Social Engagement
Social Innovation and Social Impact (Module)	Centre for Social Engagement
Business in Society (Module)	Centre for Social Engagement
Social Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation (Module)	Centre for Social Engagement
Course director MSc in Co-operative and Social Enterprise (Programme online)	Centre for Co-operative Studies
Social Enterprises and Community Development Practice (Cert/Dip)	Adult Continuing Education (ACE)
Business and Social Enterprise (Module)	UCD Smurfit Graduate Business School
Business & Society (Module)	UCD Smurfit Graduate Business School
Service Learning (Module) (Students complete a business project for a local charity or non-profit organisation)	UCD Smurfit Graduate Business School
Programme Director for the Masters in International Entrepreneurship Management	Kemmy Business School
Students Learning with Communities (Module)	DIT Access & Civic Engagement
Explore NUIG- innovation through student/ staff collaboration	Explore NUIG