

June 2021



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Education and Training
Boards Ireland

*Boird Oideachais agus
Oiliúna Éireann*



The General Scheme of the Higher Education Authority Bill, 2021

Submission to the Joint Committee on Education,
Further and Higher Education, Research,
Innovation and Science

Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) submission to the to the Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science on the General Scheme of the Higher Education Authority Bill, 2021

June 2021

1. Introduction

Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) welcomes the invitation by the Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to contribute to the Committee's pre-legislative scrutiny of the General Scheme of the Higher Education Authority Bill, 2021.

Education and Training Boards (ETBs), statutorily established on 1 July 2013, have responsibility for education and training, youth work and a range of other statutory functions. ETBs manage and operate community national schools, second-level schools, further education colleges, and a range of adult and further education centres delivering education and training programmes.

2. Background and context

ETBI is the representative association of the 16 ETBs consisting of the Chief Executives Forum, Directors of Further Education and Training Forum, Directors of Schools Forum, Director of Organisation, Support and Development Forum and their respective networks and groups. As a sector we have over 32,000 staff, are responsible for 27 Community National Schools, 246 Post-Primary Schools with over 110,000 students. ETB Post-Primary Schools are the largest provider of education through the medium of Irish with 47 schools (Scoilanna Gaeltachta, Gaelcholáistí, Aonaid lán-Ghaeilge). ETBs deliver Further Education and Training to 200,000+ unique FET learners each year across over 200 FET colleges/Training Centres and play a central role in the delivery of apprenticeships and traineeships in partnership with employers.

The establishment of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science brings together the further and higher and further education sectors. Education and Training Boards play a central role in the planning and delivery of further education and training, and in developing pathways between further and higher education.

The ETBI General Secretary wrote to the Minister on behalf of the ETBI Board on the 12th of October 2020, requesting an amendment to Section 12(j) Technological Universities Act 2018 to increase the number of ETB nominees onto each Technological University's Governing Body from one to three.

3. Current issues

Head 20 Co-operation with An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh Agus Scileanna

Section (2) (e) refers to national-level development, monitoring, review and management of the apprenticeship system. ETBs currently carry out this function on behalf of SOLAS for apprenticeship monitoring, review and management. There has been no consultation with ETBI/ETBs on the proposed legislative changes or on the proposed changes to these functions. ETBs are a key strategic partner with SOLAS in supporting the apprenticeship system, working closely with employers, industry bodies, apprentices, consortia and education and training providers.

Head 90 Amendment of Section 12 (Membership of governing body of technological university)

The explanatory note states that this head provides for an updated framework for governing bodies of Technological Universities by reducing the size of governing body membership and changing the composition of the governing body to ensure best practices around technological university governance. The amendment to Section 12 applies membership principles rather than being prescriptive as to the makeup of the governing body. The reduction in size of the governing bodies had already been catered for in Section 12 of the Technological Universities Act 2018.

The amendment allowing for the appointment of all external members using a skills-based competency framework while progressive and welcomed, is less clear about the makeup of external membership. In the proposed amendment the number of members that may be appointed by the Minister and the governing body is not defined. This is a concern for our members as in the previous legalisation, ETBs had one nominee which was felt to be inadequate due to the geographical reach of the Technological Universities, potentially spanning several ETB regions. While the membership principles do not preclude the nomination of one or more ETB members, there is no requirement to have an ETB nominee either.

4. Recommendations

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ETBI would welcome engagement and consultation on any proposed changes to the monitoring, review and management of the apprenticeship system. Drafts of these agreements should be provided to ETBI for dissemination to ETBs to review therefore ensuring involvement of all central stakeholders in meeting the future needs of apprenticeship within the functions of the bodies. This will also provide clarity to all stakeholders on their roles.

Head 90 Amendment of Section 12 (Membership of governing body of technological university)

The amendment to Section 12 should be reconsidered to ensure appropriate ETB membership on the governing body of Technical Universities. This would provide greater clarity on the future of the tertiary education system with appropriate representation and contributions for the ETB sector.

5. Conclusion

Education and Training Boards Ireland would like to thank the Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science for considering this contribution to the Committee's pre-legislative scrutiny of the General Scheme of the Higher Education Authority Bill, 2021.



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