

# DELIVERING FOR IRELAND

## THE IMPACT OF IRISH UNIVERSITIES

DRIVING RESEARCH & INNOVATION

NET GAINS TO EXCHEQUER

SUPPORTING JOBS & THE LOCAL ECONOMY

LIFETIME EARNINGS PREMIUM

INCREASING EXPORT EARNINGS

MAJOR SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT

**eni** | **IRISH  
UNIVERSITIES**  
ASSOCIATION



## A COMPELLING CASE FOR INVESTMENT

Irish people have an inherent understanding of the value of education. Even in times of great hardship and depression, families have made sacrifices to ensure that their children get the best possible education so as to tilt the odds of success in life in their favour. A few generations past, the goal for many was a Primary Cert. The Donogh O'Malley-inspired thrust of the 1960's raised the bar to secondary level and Leaving Cert for the majority. In these days of the fast-moving knowledge economy, third level education is now within the ambition and reach of nearly 60% of students leaving school. And, so it should be.

Universities are at the centre of the education revolution that has transformed Irish society. We develop the talent that is so much in demand for the growing knowledge economy and for wider society.

Our campuses are centres of creativity, research and innovation. We support communities as local employers and we nurture culture, heritage and sport in those communities.

Surprisingly though, the actual benefits that universities contribute to the economy and to Irish society have not been measured accurately or comprehensively to date. That is why the Irish Universities Association commissioned Indecon Economic Consultants to carry out an independent, robust assessment of the impact of its seven member universities. The results, summarised in this supplement, confirm some of our intuitive expectations regarding benefits. They also, however, include some surprises.

The €8.9 billion overall annual contribution by universities to the economy, including a €1.5 billion contribution from research and innovation, is new, and highly significant, information, especially when one considers that this is almost 9 times the annual state investment in the sector! Likewise, the substantial benefits of university campuses as engines of economic activity, supporting 22,000 jobs, are important, especially in a regional context.

For the first time in Ireland, the Indecon Report provides a precise estimate of the net benefits to graduates themselves. Reassuringly, this net personal benefit to Irish university graduates is greater than benefits calculated, using a similar measurement, for graduates from the elite Russell Group universities in the UK.

But the real surprise comes in the Indecon analysis of the Exchequer benefits. The report concludes that the Exchequer makes a direct and substantial gain from its investment in Irish universities. In other words, the State returns a profit on the money it invests in producing university graduates.

Based on conservative government-approved guidelines, the Indecon study shows that the Exchequer makes a €1.6 billion net gain, in real money terms, from a single year's cohort of university graduates, based on the current day value of their lifetime earnings. That's after all costs and net tax take to the State arising from the higher incomes that graduates earn is taken into account.

So, what does this tell us? We know that universities, as not-for-profit institutions, exist for the public good. Our role is to produce excellent graduates across all disciplines and to undertake leading-edge research that advances society and fuels innovation. But the Indecon report shows that universities not only do that, but they also yield a financial profit for the State.

Indecon's findings underpin why our graduates are consistently cited as a key reason for Ireland's success in growing indigenous companies and in attracting foreign direct investment. Crucially, their findings on the cash payback from university education for both the individual graduate and for the Exchequer provides an even more compelling proposition for the role of universities.

Three years ago, the Cassells report, Investing in National Ambition, set out a clear rationale and strategy for the future funding of higher education. Since then, the Government and the broader political community have been unable to agree and deliver a sustainable core-funding solution.

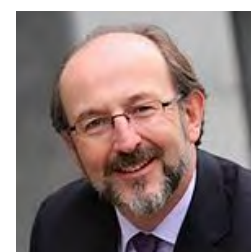
Universities and the third level education system in general have suffered from a decade of funding decline. Funding for higher education did turn a corner in the last two years with an increased budgetary allocation. However, although those increases are welcome, they are a long way from addressing the major funding deficit, especially in the context of the increasing numbers of students coming into the system.

On a like-for-like basis, core State funding per student to third level is now just over €5,000 compared with €9,000 a decade ago. We have seen a 50% increase in student enrolments since 2000 with an even greater demographic bubble coming our way in the years ahead, which will place an intolerable strain on the already under-resourced system.

This Indecon report provides a clear rationale for a substantial increase in State investment in universities and higher education. It shows clearly that more State investment in university education isn't just the right thing to do, it's the profitable thing to do!

There is widespread acceptance of the fact that the current levels of investment in our third-level system are grossly inadequate. We have heard recent high-level pronouncements regarding some potential solutions being undesirable. As we have witnessed in other political contexts, stating what one doesn't want is easy. It carries no responsibility. Political leadership is needed to provide clarity on where the solution lies and clarity on how and when the solution will be delivered. And, it is absolutely clear that the State is central to whatever sustainable solution is determined.

Unless the Government and the broader political community are prepared to deliver a sustainable core funding solution, the opportunities afforded to today's students may be curtailed for many current and future primary and secondary students. As a society, we cannot let this happen.



**Professor Brian MacCraith**

President, Dublin City University  
Chair, Irish Universities Association

[www.saveourspark.ie/universities-impact](http://www.saveourspark.ie/universities-impact)

## WHY AN IMPACT STUDY?

Universities play a central role in the economic, social and cultural life of the nation. They feed the talent pipeline for the growing knowledge economy. They are centres of creativity and learning. They generate cutting-edge research and innovation. They nurture culture, heritage and sports. They support communities and are significant employers in their local economies.

The full impact of Irish universities on the economy and society as a whole has, however, never been measured before. Impact assessments have become widely used in most developed countries to provide an understanding of how universities contribute to the national economy and the social and cultural fabric of the country. They have become essential tools for policy makers to use when evaluating investment decisions on higher education. They also enable international comparisons of different university systems.

## WHO COMMISSIONED AND CARRIED OUT THE STUDY?

Indecon Research Economists (Indecon) were appointed by the Irish Universities Association to conduct the Impact Assessment of Irish Universities following a competitive tender process. Indecon is the largest independent economic research consultancy practice in Ireland and is part of the Indecon International Consultancy Group which includes the leading European consultancy, London Economics. In addition to numerous sectoral economic assessments in Ireland, Indecon has also carried out a number of impact assessments of university systems in the UK and elsewhere.

Indecon assembled a broad range of data from the universities themselves as well as from public bodies such as the Higher Education Authority, the Central Statistics Office, the Department of Education and Skills and others. Their detailed independent assessment was completed throughout much of 2018 and the early part of 2019. All findings and conclusions in the report are entirely attributed to Indecon.

## WHAT'S COVERED?

This publication outlines the key findings of a rigorous socio-economic impact assessment of the university sector in Ireland by Indecon Research Economists. The Indecon assessment covers the combined impact of the seven Irish universities – Dublin City University, Maynooth University, NUI Galway, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, University College Dublin and University of Limerick.

The Impact Report, for the first time, provides measurements and insights on the collective contribution of the seven universities including:

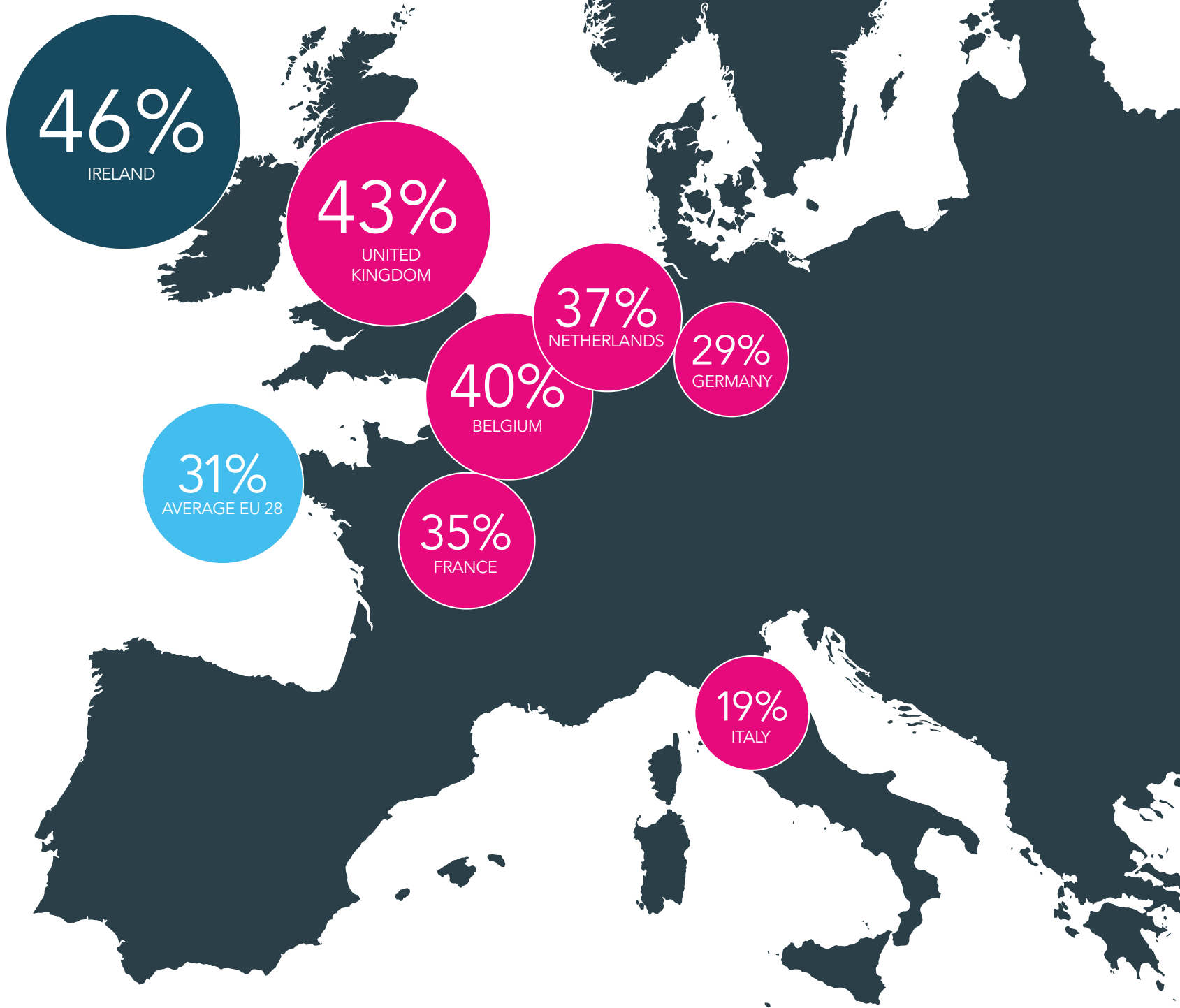
- The overall contribution of universities to the Irish economy;
- The direct impact of university expenditure on the economy;
- The indirect and induced impacts of university expenditure;
- The contribution of universities to research and innovation;
- The export earnings of Irish universities through international students;
- The total impact of universities on lifetime earnings of graduates and the associated exchequer benefits;
- The employment and local economic dividend of universities;
- The wider social and cultural contribution of universities.



# LEADERS IN EUROPE

## Ireland is the EU's most highly educated Member State.

The educational attainment of Ireland's population is now well ahead of the EU average. Based on Eurostat data for 2017, 46% of 25 to 64 year-olds in Ireland have a third level qualification as against the EU average of 31%. This is cited as one of the key reasons for our success in continuing to attract foreign direct investment and for the growth in the knowledge economy.



| Source: Indecon analysis of Eurostat data.



**78,000**  
STUDENTS ENROLLED  
IN **2000**

**120,000**  
STUDENTS ENROLLED  
IN **2017**

**?**  
STUDENTS ENROLLED  
IN **2029**

OVER **50%**  
INCREASE IN IRISH UNIVERSITY  
ENROLMENTS SINCE THE YEAR  
2000 ...AND GROWING

Ireland has moved towards becoming a more highly skilled and educated population in recent decades. In 2000 less than 78,000 students were enrolled, compared to over 120,000 by 2017. This reflects both a growth in the university aged cohort and a shift to more highly skilled employment. Some sectors of the Irish economy now have over 65% graduate employment. The importance of higher education is evident in the high value-added sectors of the Irish economy such as information and communication, professional, scientific and technical activities.



## IMPACT OF IRISH UNIVERSITIES ON RESEARCH

Irish universities are major drivers of research and innovation in Ireland. Their cumulative expenditure of €632 million in 2017 spans the full range of research fields including engineering and technology, natural sciences, medical and health sciences, social sciences, agriculture and food and humanities.

Irish universities account for 20% of total annual national expenditure on R&D and represent 83% of all R&D expenditure in the higher education sector. Irish universities accounted for 50% of total funding raised by Irish enterprises and institutions under the EU's Horizon 2020 programme between 2015 and 2017.

The spillover impact of university-based research on the wider economy adds a further €373 million benefit to the economy. Spillovers are enabled through direct R&D collaborations between the universities and firms, the publication and dissemination of research findings, or through universities' graduates who enter into the labour market.

That, combined with indirect and induced effects of €526 million, brings the total research impact to the economy of €1,531 million.



€1,531  
MILLION

TOTAL RESEARCH IMPACT  
TO THE ECONOMY

€632 MILLION DIRECT RESEARCH EXPENDITURE

€373 MILLION SPILLOVER RESEARCH IMPACT

€526 MILLION INDIRECT AND INDUCED RESEARCH IMPACT

RESEARCH  
AND INNOVATION

# IMPACT ON INNOVATION, ENTERPRISE AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

The impact of university R&D on innovation in Irish enterprise is also very substantial. This encompasses patents, research agreements and collaborations with enterprise, licences, options and assignments, invention disclosures, spin-outs and incubator companies.

Through its university graduates, Ireland’s educated workforce has been widely cited as a key reason for Ireland’s success in continuing to attract foreign direct investment and in supporting indigenous enterprises. In the 2018 IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook, Ireland was ranked 9th in the world in terms of the ability of university education to meet the needs of a competitive economy.



611  
PATENT FAMILIES  
OWNED BY  
UNIVERSITIES



In 2017 there were:



584

RESEARCH AGREEMENTS  
AND ENTERPRISE  
COLLABORATIONS



119

LICENCES,  
OPTIONS AND  
ASSIGNMENTS



93

ACTIVE  
SPIN-OUTS



188

INCUBATOR  
COMPANIES AT  
UNIVERSITIES



# THE IMPACT OF UNIVERSITY ON GRADUATE LIFETIME EARNINGS

Educating students to the highest possible standards of excellence is at the heart of the university mission. Equipping students with the education and skills to succeed in their careers and in life is a core objective. The Indecon analysis has found that university graduates with an undergraduate degree have a 95% probability of employment. This rises to 96% for those with a Master's degree and 97% for those with a PhD.

Indecon economic modelling has found that third level graduates have an earnings premium of 38% to 43% over those with no formal education/primary education.

Indecon also carried out a detailed statistical analysis of the net lifetime earnings gain for university graduates. This, the first ever such analysis to be done in Ireland, shows the net income premium for graduates in today's money terms.

The average lifetime net premium for an undergraduate degree holder is €106,000 compared to a UK premium of £88,000 for graduates from the prestigious Russell Group Universities. This figure is net of the costs incurred by students in obtaining their degrees as well as the costs of income foregone while attending university and all taxes and charges.

The net lifetime earnings gain for Master's Degree holders rises to €146,000 in today's money terms. The net lifetime earnings gain for PhD graduates rises by a further €116,000 on top of the undergraduate earnings premium totalling €222,000.

On the basis of these figures, the total lifetime income benefits, expressed in current money terms, for the cohort of students who entered university in 2017-18 is €2,566 million. These estimates are based on a conservative modelling approach including a 4% discount rate in accordance with the latest Staff Paper on appraisal parameters published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

## Net earnings gain compared to those with no third level education:





# UNIVERSITY GRADUATE RETURNS TO THE IRISH EXCHEQUER

University graduates also contribute directly to the Exchequer in the form of higher personal taxes arising from their earnings premium. Indecon has calculated the additional taxes paid by graduates over their lifetime and deducted the costs incurred by the Exchequer in providing university education. The analysis shows a net gain to the Exchequer of €62,000 on average. This can rise to €126,000 for PhD holders. In other words, the results indicate that there is a net Exchequer benefit associated with supporting university graduate education in Ireland.



Combining the Exchequer gain for the full cohort of students who entered university in 2017-18 yields a cumulative Exchequer gain of €1,606 million over the lifetime of those students in today's money terms.



This analysis which shows a substantial yield to the Exchequer, takes full account of tax receipts from these individuals had they not attended university and is a realistic estimate of the actual net benefit of these graduates to the Exchequer.



# IMPACT OF UNIVERSITY EXPENDITURE AND EMPLOYMENT ON WIDER ECONOMY

## Direct Impact

The seven universities covered by this study employed a total of 15,724 full-time equivalents (FTEs) in 2017. In addition, Indecon estimates that a further 6,077 FTEs are accounted for through indirect and induced employment. This brings the total employment benefit from Irish universities to 21,801 FTEs.

## Indirect and Induced Impact

Universities also contribute to the wider economy through other forms of expenditure. This includes indirect or knock-on business activity arising from university expenditure as well as the induced effects such as additional impact of household consumption.

Cumulatively, this amounts to an impact of €3.96 billion.

21,801  
FULL-TIME  
EQUIVALENT JOBS  
SUPPORTED

€3.96  
BILLION\*

TOTAL IMPACT OF  
UNIVERSITY EXPENDITURE  
ON IRISH ECONOMY

€2,160 MILLION DIRECT

€1,170 MILLION  
INDUCED

€626 MILLION  
INDIRECT

\* Includes research expenditure and impacts which are treated separately from the €2,802 million figure on the back page infographic.



IMPACT ON  
EMPLOYMENT

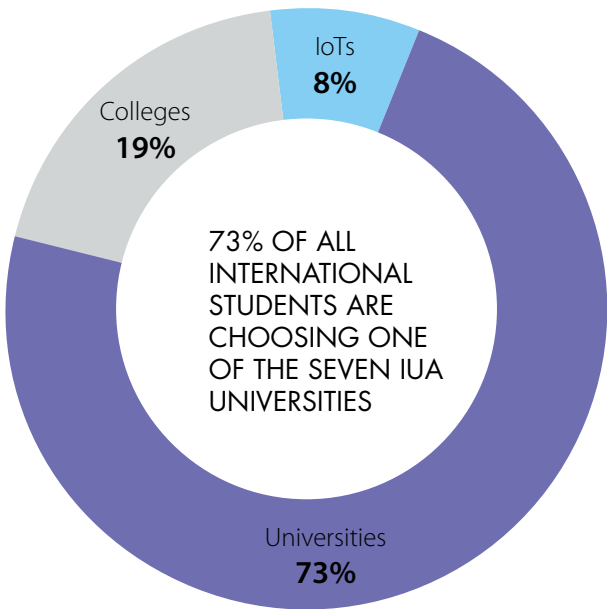
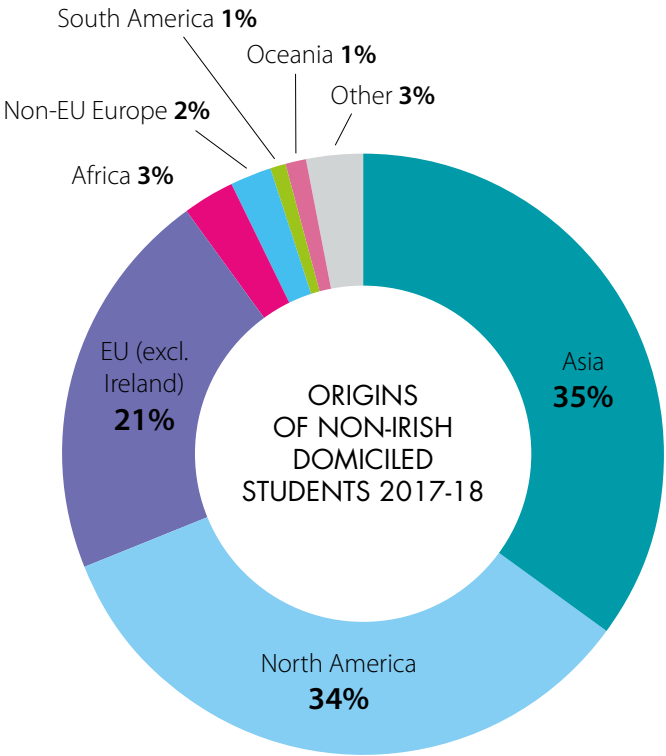


# ECONOMIC IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Universities have attracted increasing numbers of international students in recent years with more than 100 countries represented across the seven universities. Apart from the fees generated from these students, they also bring spending power to the local economy and are, in effect, regarded as export earnings for Ireland.

Irish universities represent the largest destination for international students in Ireland, accounting for 73% of all international students studying in Ireland.

Indecon has estimated the net benefit to the Irish economy arising from the international student cohort. The analysis deducts the costs to the Exchequer and accounts for the varying fee levels between EU and non-EU students.



ESTIMATED TOTAL ANNUAL EXPORT INCOME GENERATED FOR THE IRISH ECONOMY FROM INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

€386 MILLION



IN 2017-18 THERE WERE

16,701

FULL-TIME NON-IRISH STUDENTS LIVING IN IRELAND

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



# THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPACTS OF IRISH UNIVERSITIES

The significant role of the seven IUA universities in Irish social and cultural life should not be underplayed. They are deeply embedded in the communities in which they are located with socio-cultural activities spanning tourism, sport, music and entertainment, arts and culture.

Culturally, universities provide support and creative skills for the wider community. The majority of people in arts-related occupations have a degree or higher including over 80% of authors, writers and translators.

The university experience has a powerful and life-lasting impact on graduates well beyond their academic qualification. A survey of alumni by Indecon that attracted 6,600 respondents showed the vast majority saying that university had a very positive or positive impact on a range of social, cultural and economic outcomes.

75%+ OF ALUMNI SAY UNIVERSITY HAD A VERY POSITIVE OR POSITIVE IMPACT ON:



FACILITATING  
SOCIAL MOBILITY



PROVIDING SKILLS  
FOR CREATIVE  
ACTIVITIES



INCREASING  
LOCAL SPEND



DEVELOPING  
CULTURAL  
ACTIVITIES

MORE THAN  
**2**  
MILLION  
VISITORS

ATTENDED EVENTS OR  
ATTRactions LOCATED  
IN OR RUN BY IRISH  
UNIVERSITIES IN 2017





# THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPACTS OF IRISH UNIVERSITIES

University students are actively engaged in a variety of volunteering activities. Over 17,500 students from the 2017-18 academic year engaged in volunteering representing a value of €28.4 million.\*



3 MILLION  
VOLUNTEER HOURS  
WITH ESTIMATED  
VALUE OF  
**€28.4 MILLION**

**25%**  
OF NEW UNIVERSITY  
ENTRANTS IN 2017-18  
CAME FROM PRIORITY  
ACCESS SCHEMES

Irish universities play an important role in supporting social mobility and access to higher education. Across the seven university campuses, the student body is increasingly reflective of our diverse society by supporting social mobility and access to higher education for those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and for those with disabilities.

The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) and Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) have successfully promoted access to education nationally. Between 2015-2017 over 15,600 students accepted an offer through either DARE or HEAR.



\*Based on formally recorded hours on StudentVolunteer.ie and estimates from the CSO and other data. It is likely that the actual level of voluntary activities is higher but not formally recorded.

# EMPLOYERS AND UNION LEADERS JOIN STUDENTS IN CALL FOR MORE STATE FUNDING



Irish universities focus on preparing students for rewarding careers in a fast and ever-changing world, while also contributing to a dynamic economy and sustainable society. This has been acknowledged by the Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings, where Ireland ranked second in the recent global review. This highlights the potential of the Irish universities to address grand challenges and societal issues, despite the constrained funding environment. If properly resourced, the system will help to underpin Ireland's position as an open, globally-orientated, frontier economy.

Universities are also directly stimulating innovation in the Irish enterprise base and supporting enterprise growth. The acid test for an innovation ecosystem is demonstrated by a strong performance in knowledge diffusion and industry collaboration. Irish universities are performing well here, with over 611 active patents and over 584 research agreements and enterprise collaborations. This suggests the system's potential if Ireland committed to reaching government targets for R&D and innovation investment.

The Irish university is a highly valuable asset in Ireland's social and economic system. This asset, sweated and starved of investment and support, is at serious risk of depreciation and burnout. In 2019, almost four years after the publication of the recommendations of the Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education, we are still waiting for Government to agree a long term, sustainable funding approach for higher education. Given demographic pressures, this requirement is becoming more urgent.

It is unacceptable the system is being starved of resources at a time of unprecedented levels of business investment and economic activity. Irish business is playing its part and has increased its contribution through recent increases in the national training levy. In addition, Ibec have recommended to ring-fence a portion of corporate tax receipts for higher education provision.

The failure to protect this national asset has widened the gap between Irish universities and its international counterparts, damaged our international reputation to attract research and business investment and is silently eroding our competitive edge. As witnessed in the ongoing

slide in overall international rankings in contrast to competitor economies. It is an invisible crisis and the time for inaction has long passed.

Irish universities must continue to support people to realise their true potential, to encourage and support them to learn and relearn, be curious and to add value. Failure to invest now will place an entire generation of students and the future of the country at a serious disadvantage.



**Danny McCoy**  
CEO of Ibec



Ireland, with its strong FDI base and its position at the heart of the Transatlantic Economy, is at the forefront of a Fourth Industrial Revolution. Developments in genetics, 3D printing, artificial intelligence and nanotechnology are transforming how we live now, and how we will interact with the world for decades to come. The American Chamber supports the Government's ambition to make the Irish education and training system the best in Europe by 2026. And if Ireland can succeed, it will 'future proof' our workforce for a changing business environment and a global future.

Universities are major hubs within the knowledge eco-system that have served us well as places for both talent and innovation to flourish – a fact reflected in the findings of this welcome Indecon report.

But the traditional campus setting is being augmented and enhanced by technology and this must be recognised. Education is becoming increasingly 'open-sourced', allowing larger numbers of students to access excellent teachers, education resources and curricula via web platforms.

That is why education and training sector reform should continue and accelerate if the system is to keep apace. The FDI sector is doing its part – through its strong contribution to the tax and employment base of the country. In addition, an ongoing contribution of employers includes the provision of undergraduate internships, post graduate/trainee work experience, research investment and programme review, participation on government authorities and skills fora,

consultancy investment as well as direct support (in cash and/or kind) for courses and curriculum development.

The American Chamber believes that a strategic decision on one of the recommended funding options outlined by the Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education in 2016 is required. Whichever funding regime is adopted it should: (1) provide a sustainable mechanism for funding 3rd level; (2) promote inclusiveness between social backgrounds; (3) be equitable regarding funding of full-time, part-time and postgraduate pathways to attainment.

The return on investment to those who achieve higher educational attainment is well documented. And, while greater productivity of third level institutions should contribute to the sectors future resourcing, the American Chamber supports a transparent and equitable financial participation of the learner in their further education. This should be modest and balance the recognition of the returns to students from learning without negatively impacting on desired participation rates which has been a strong enabler of Ireland's transformation into a modern, open economy.



**Mark Redmond**  
Chief Executive  
American Chamber of  
Commerce Ireland



On Thursday 4 April, I had the pleasure of attending the Irish Universities Association (IUA) launch of the Indecon report 'Delivering for Ireland: An Impact Assessment of Irish Universities', in the Convention Centre, Dublin. What we, the direct stakeholders had heard and seen that morning has been one of the best kept secrets in Ireland. That we have some of the most talented students and graduates from some of the finest universities anywhere in the world. Higher education benefits not only the student, but it also gives tangible returns to the exchequer and our society. The report's findings make this clear – over €100,000 in net lifetime gains for an individual with a degree, rising to over €220,000 for PhD holders, while the exchequer will gain approximately €1.6bn as a net return from the 2017/2018 university entrants alone. And that





is before the societal, civic and health benefits of higher education are considered.

It is important to note that this success has been delivered on a shoestring budget. In fact, exchequer funding per student has fallen by nearly half over the last decade to the point that the European University Association has described the higher education system in Ireland as a “system in danger”. The Chamber is proud to support the IUA’s ‘Save Our Spark’ campaign which highlights the challenge for the sector and we have ourselves prioritised the funding of higher education as one of our central policy platforms for the past two years as an essential ingredient in maximising the potential of the UK - Ireland higher education, research and industry partnership, in particular in the context of Brexit.

Concerns about the current trend in higher education funding have been expressed to the Chamber on both sides of the Irish Sea, not just in higher education but across the wider business spectrum. Consistent underfunding will not only impact on the quality of our higher education system, it will jeopardise the potential FDI draw to the country. What is needed now, to protect the recovery and sustain the economy into the future, is a bold and ambitious vision - a plan that would draw for inspiration on the First Programme for Economic Expansion of the 1960s which prioritised education to unlock future potential, the benefits of which we are living with today but that are under threat from consistent underfunding. The Ireland that we live in today owes much to the vision of the Programme’s authors, including the late Dr TK Whitaker.

The visionaries behind the programme realised that to invest in Ireland’s future, they had to invest in education. What held true then, holds true today. To secure our future economic success, we must act now!



**John McGrane**

Director General of the  
British Irish Chamber of  
Commerce



In 1965, the gates of third level remained firmly closed to most of the population, with just over one in ten managing to gain access. Today our participation rate stands at a remarkable 54%, well above the EU average of 40%. In the intervening

five decades, as the third level sector in parallel with the wider education system has literally thrown the gates wide open, so our economy and wider society has undergone a remarkable and corresponding transformation.

In decades past, raw materials extracted from the earth were the key drivers of economic growth and wealth creation. But knowledge has long since supplanted those base metals as the powerhouse of the modern economy and this new knowledge economy respects no borders or national boundaries. This has major implications for our education system and, in particular our university sector.

The sector has made an enormous and virtually immeasurable contribution to the development of our economy and society. This is particularly true in respect of the numbers employed directly, the key role it plays in direct and indirect job creation, in boosting earnings across the economy and in how it drives innovation and cutting-edge research. Less heralded but of greater long-term significance is the fact that education is the single most powerful antidote to deep rooted inequality.

The sharp contrast between third level participation rates of 50 years ago and those of today highlights the transformation that has taken place in the intervening years and the creation of a more open, inclusive and equal society. The more equal a society the more prosperous and sustainable it is. In that context, the university sector has a vital role to play in helping to combat disadvantage and inherited privilege. But equality does not come cheap and requires investment.

It is the view of Congress that investing in education and in our universities is about investing in national ambition and greater opportunity for all, particularly given the determining role tertiary education plays in moulding life chances and outcomes.

Both the Cassells Report and recent Indecon study persuasively make the case for a properly and sustainably resourced university and third level sector. The most sustainable and equitable solution would be to move, over time, to funding the sector predominantly from the public purse.

This will help to ensure that it strives continually to achieve greater accessibility, inclusivity and affordability for students, while also promoting the highest standards of employment for staff and potential recruits.



**Patricia King**

General Secretary  
Irish Congress of Trade Unions

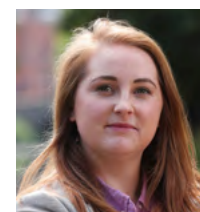


The students of Ireland need action on a sustainable funding model for education. It is made clear by the recent Indecon report, that the value our third level institutions have to both society and economy is imperative.

Yet the Cassells report, published in March 2016, has been deliberately ignored and neglected, and instead has been kicked to Europe. The maintenance of the so-called “free fees” scheme, which forces students to choose between staying in college and eating, is also not a viable option. We now have the second highest fees in Europe at €3,000 a year, coupled with the spiralling costs of accommodation across all urban centres, affecting students and their families. After Brexit (whenever that may manifest), we will be the highest fees for students accessing third level in Europe. Meanwhile, student grants have not been increased at all since 2012, which means they are nowhere near in line with the cost of living for struggling and particularly disadvantaged students - it is a disgrace, and it makes education elitist and inaccessible for so many.

The sector has faced a managed decline in state investment over time while the number of students in the system increased due to a demographic bulge. Our lecturers and institutional staff have done a noteworthy job of maintaining standards while our staff:student ratio has been driven up, resources have dipped, and they are living on increasingly precarious contracts of employment. It’s really not good enough. We believe that the future of Ireland as a researching, skills generating nation can be assured by a real and full-throated investment in higher education.

The history books of the future should cast 2019 as the year we decided to strike out as the skills and education capital of Europe. Investment of the proceeds of Ireland’s growth in education and skills would be a courageous and mature societal investment in sustainability, stability and a sound footing for the future of Ireland itself, and ensure education, which is a public good, is publicly funded.



**Siona Cahill**

President  
Union of Students in Ireland

# IRISH UNIVERSITIES IMPACT AT A GLANCE

# €8,891

## MILLION

CONTRIBUTED TO THE IRISH  
ECONOMY IN 2017-18



€1,606  
MILLION

NET LIFETIME GAIN TO EXCHEQUER  
FROM STUDENT COHORT THAT  
STARTED UNIVERSITY IN 2017-18



€386  
MILLION

EXPORT EARNINGS FROM  
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



€2,566  
MILLION

NET LIFETIME INCOME GAIN  
FOR STUDENT COHORT THAT  
STARTED UNIVERSITY IN 2017-18

€2,802  
MILLION

DIRECT, INDIRECT AND  
INDUCED NON-RESEARCH  
EXPENDITURE IN 2017



€1,531  
MILLION



ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION FROM  
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT  
IN UNIVERSITIES 2017-18

## NET LIFETIME EARNINGS GAIN V THOSE WITH NO THIRD LEVEL



€106,000



UNDERGRADUATE  
DEGREE HOLDER

NET LIFETIME EARNINGS GAIN



€146,000



MASTER'S  
DEGREE HOLDER

NET LIFETIME EARNINGS GAIN



€222,000



PHD HOLDER

NET LIFETIME EARNINGS GAIN



120,000

STUDENTS IN 2017



21,801

FULL-TIME JOBS  
SUPPORTED...

....INCLUDING 15,724 DIRECTLY EMPLOYED IN 2017



MORE THAN  
2 MILLION  
VISITORS

ATTENDED EVENTS OR ATTRACTIONS  
LOCATED IN OR RUN BY IRISH  
UNIVERSITIES IN 2017