Media   TU Dublin Grangegorman

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Rewind 2013: an Education Year that was Unlucky for Some

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STI on the march
The recalcitrant union kept itself in the headlines all year in a pitched battle with the

Government over Haddington Road. As the only public service union to remain outside the agreement, the union is about to ballot for the third time. Another "no" vote threatens to close a majority of second-level schools from January 17th. Younger teachers stand to lose most in pay terms if the union rejects Haddington Road again. In theory, job losses could be next.

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Bad faith

An INTO survey of primary teachers suggested a large degree of unwillingness to teach religion and a system-wide over-use of school time for sacramental preparation. In a period when the Minister is trying to put more emphasis on literacy and numeracy, the findings did not go down well.

3 **Big news for Limerick**
The European Investment Bank signed off on a €100 million loan to the University of Limerick to fund a city-centre student village as part of the university's €224 million capital development plan. The development will see new medical, pharmaceutical and engineering facilities and a new library.

Other players include Limerick City and County Council, which is looking to tie the development in with its own plans for the opera centre site. Limerick Institute of Technology and Mary Immaculate College may also have a footprint in the scheme.

Teachers are doing it for themselves
This year

saw the inaugural Electric Picnic for teachers, Féilte, the Festival of Education in Learning and Teaching Excellence. There was no inflatable chapel or silent disco, but the event marked a new era for teacher-led innovation as 400 attended this festival of ideas in Dublin. It was hugely oversubscribed and is expected to be even bigger next year

DIT on the move

The third-level college is physically moving to Grangegorman (stubborn petrol stations notwithstanding), but perhaps a more significant move this year for DIT was the appointment of Dr Tom Collins is as chairman of the DIT governing body. The move has been seen as a serious fillip to the institute's bid for technological university status.

Dr Collins is a colossus of Irish higher education. He is chairman of IT Blanchardstown and was previously the president of Dundalk Institute of Technology as well as interim president of NUI Maynooth.

With Collins at the helm, the process of steering DIT to technical university status should be all the

smoother.

Tripping up the points race
June saw the launch of a new scheme to ease the transition

for students from second level to higher and further education. Bringing in all the major stakeholders in the process, Minister for Education Ruairí Quinn's plan is to tackle some of the bottlenecks, backwash effects and banana skins that have become part and parcel of the points race.

Predictability in Leaving Cert exams is to be reviewed, in the first external examination of the Irish curriculum ever commissioned. The universities and institutes of technology have agreed in principle to reduce the amount of different degree level programmes on offer, to make choosing a third-level course a bit easier for students.

It's up to the academic councils to make it happen. The scheme is also intended to reduce the number of grading bands in the Leaving Cert, as it is believed that teachers feel compelled to teach to very confining marking schemes.

Rankings slide
Trinity College saw a 19-point slip in the Times Higher Education university rankings. Ireland now has no universit

y in the top 100 and while other universities in the country saw gains this year, the slip in Ireland's flagship university position was seen as a symbolically significant for a sector under pressure and subject to budget cuts and increases in student numbers.

8 Horizon 2020
Negotiated during the Irish presidency of the EU, Horizon 2020 has an increased budget of nearly 30 per cent for research and development in Europe, compared to its predecessor, the seventh Framework Programme for research and technological development (FP7). Ireland hit its target of €600 million from FP7. If we can do the same in this round we stand to win €1.25 billion

SEC mistakes
The State Examinations Commission (SEC) will be glad to see the back of 2013.

It had to issue an apology for the number of mistakes in this year's Leaving Certificate exams.

Private schools under pressure
Kilkenny College, one of the oldest private schools in the State, kicked off the year with the announcement that it is to enter the "free" education system. It's been described as a canary in the coalmine for a sector that is coming under increas

ed pressure, with rises in pupil-teacher ratios and parents struggling to cover rising fees.

Some of the 54 other fee-paying schools in the State were said to be in discussions with the Department of Education this year about joining the "free" system.

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