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DIT Set to Become Largest College in State

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DIT set to become largest college in State

Sean Flynn

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The Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) is set to become the largest third-level institution in the State with more than 23,000 students, according to a new Bill due before the Dáil within weeks.

The Bill provides for an ambitious €750 million regeneration of the 70-acre Grangegorman site bordering Phibsboro, Broadstone and Manor Street in north Dublin.

According to the proposed legislation, the current cap on numbers at DIT will be lifted. It is planned that the number of full-time courses will be increased by 35 per cent.

The student composition will comprise 13,5000 full-time students, 7,000 part-time students and 3,000 apprentices, a total of 23,500. This means that DIT will overtake UCD as the largest educational facility in the State.

The Bill which establishes the new Grangegorman Development Agency says the complex will act as a catalyst for development in an area which urgently requires regeneration.

The creation of the huge campus will finally give a home to DIT, which provides courses from 37 different premises across the city. Some of these include well-known landmarks such as the colleges in Kevin Street, Bolton Street, Rathmines and Cathal Brugha Street. Some 25 of these premises are owned by DIT and these will be sold to help fund the new campus.

Students will be relocated to Grangegorman in the 2007-2010 period. It is expected that the development will be completed in 2014.

The area around Grangegorman will become a special development zone. According to sources, the Government is also considering a "radical shake-up" of the transport infrastructure in the area as part of the plan. There has been preliminary consideration of plans to locate a Metro stop near Broadstone to service the campus.

The development agency will include 11 members nominated by the Minister for Education, two nominated by the Minister for Health, at least one from the Eastern Regional Health Authority and the Northern Area Health Board, one member nominated by the city manager and one member nominated by DIT.

The Bill proposes that the Grangegorman hospital site, St Brendan's, will remain but the agency will decide on the future of more than 30 other buildings on the site.

Sources say the agency will be "particularly sensitive" to local needs in an area which is densely populated.

The Bill says the campus will provide education and social benefits for the entire region. It will also allow DIT to create a stronger identity in the key area of scientific research. It will also allow the college to foster closer links with business.

Sources says there is little alternative to the proposed site.

The renovation and upgrading of existing premises at Bolton Street and Cathal Brugha Street would cost over €100 million, according to some estimates.

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