**Media release**

**13 February 2018**

**DIT HOTHOUSE LAUNCH OPEN LABS**

**A CUTTING-EDGE R&D FACILITY FOR SMALL BUSINESSES AND STARTUPS**

* **Open Labs by DIT Hothouse established to address the financial and technical barriers facing smaller businesses when participating in early-stage research**
* **Open Labs will provide SMEs with funding guidance and access to over 600 DIT researchers and experts working in five critical high-tech sectors - Product Prototyping, Virtual Reality, Internet of Things, Data Analysis for Business and Innovative Surface Coatings**

Tomorrow may be a day for lovers, but small businesses across the Greater Dublin Region could meet their perfect match through a pioneering new SME programme launched by DIT Hothouse this week. Open Labs by DIT Hothouse aims to remove the barriers facing SMEs and startups in participating in early-stage research and innovation by providing access to over 600 DIT researchers and facilities in five critical high-tech sectors - Product Prototyping, Virtual Reality, Internet of Things, Data Analysis for Business and Innovative Surface Coatings.

DIT Hothouse is well-known in enterprise and innovation circles for hugely successful companies, such as [Kastus](http://www.kastus.com/), which arose from the commercialisation of intellectual property created by DIT researchers. However, Open Labs is a new initiative which **Paul Maguire, Senior Innovation Portfolio Manager in DIT Hothouse** believes will foster greater collaboration between DIT researchers and SMEs. “Early stage research is often high risk and requires significant investment meaning many small businesses are effectively restrained from developing product ideas. Open Labs by DIT Hothouse will allow a company to develop a product idea using DIT researcher expertise, labs and equipment essentially creating an external R&D wing for the company.”

The Open Labs process is designed to be business-friendly, with a team of DIT researchers working to complete an R&D project in a mutually agreed timespan. Maguire explains, “Open Labs will support a business through each product development phase from writing the technical brief, outlining what research skills and lab equipment are required, evaluating funding options, and finally the timely delivery of the product to suit business needs.”

One feature of the Open Labs offering that is particularly attractive to SMEs is the expert funding advice that Paul and his team can provide. “Our team will work closely with each Open Labs partner to determine which funding option is suitable - state, private or collaborative options. For example, a smaller project may be well suited to an Innovation Voucher from Enterprise Ireland which will fund product development up to €5,000 allowing the company to retain any intellectual property. Other options include a mix of state and private funding such as the InterTradeIreland FUSION programme or an Enterprise Ireland Innovation Partnership with DIT. Moreover, once the funding option is agreed upon, we will support the business through each step of the funding application process.”

**Professor Brian O’Neill, Director of Research, Enterprise and Innovation Services at DIT**, says the founding of Open Labs by DIT Hothouse is a hugely significant opportunity for SMEs, DIT and the economic development of Dublin and surrounding areas. “Open Labs will not only allow an SME to explore or expand its R&D activity, but it will also demonstrate the talent and real world problem-solving skills of DIT researchers working across the Institute. Open Labs will maximise DIT research capabilities in important high-tech sectors, which are key to establishing Ireland as a Global Innovation Leader while creating high-value jobs and delivering pioneering products of enduring societal impact.”

Businesses can register their interest with Open Labs by DIT Hothouse by visiting - <http://dit.ie/hothouse/openlabs/>.

**-ENDS-**

**For more information, please contact:**

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**Notes to editor:**

**Spokespeople Paul Maguire, Senior Innovation Portfolio Manager at DIT Hothouse and David Gardiner, Business Executive with DIT Hothouse are available for interview.**

**Repro photographs will be available without charge from Jason Clarke Photography from approximately 12 pm - info@jasonclarkephotography.ie**

[**Open Labs**](http://dit.ie/hothouse/openlabs/)

Open Labs by DIT Hothouse is Dublin Institute of Technology's market-focused new initiative, which aims to lower the barriers for industry engagement in research and development, thereby opening up the world-leading facilities and expertise to companies. During our initial launch, Open Labs by DIT Hothouse will be targeting interested parties in Product Prototyping, Virtual Reality/ Augmented Reality, Internet of Things, Data Analysis for Business & Artificial Intelligence and Innovative Surface Coatings. For more visit - <http://www.dit.ie/hothouse/openlabs/>

[**DIT Hothouse**](http://www.dit.ie/hothouse/)

DIT Hothouse is the award-winning Innovation and Knowledge Transfer Office at Dublin Institute of Technology, responsible for the commercialisation of intellectual property arising from DIT research. DIT Hothouse is the hub of innovation and technology transfer activities in DIT, the place where business meets innovation. For more visit - <http://www.dit.ie/hothouse/>

[**Dublin Institute of Technology**](http://www.dit.ie/)

At Dublin Institute of Technology, innovation is our tradition, and we have produced generations of leaders in a range of fields from business; law; tourism & hospitality; the creative & visual arts to engineering & the built environment. Our lively City-Centre campuses, including our new research and innovation hub at Grangegorman, are home to more than 20,000 students from Ireland and abroad, creating a culturally diverse and stimulating learning and research environment.

DIT will soon join forces with IT Tallaght and IT Blanchardstown to form a Technological University catering for the Greater Dublin Region and beyond. Three physical campuses and a fourth digital campus will create an incomparable institution of higher learning offering wide-ranging opportunities to many more generations of leaders in the years to come. [www.dit.ie](http://www.dit.ie)