



I r i s h   U n i v e r s i t i e s   A s s o c i a t i o n



# The Irish Universities Association

The Irish Universities Association (IUA) seeks to advance university education and research through the formulation and pursuit of collective policies and actions on behalf of the Irish universities

The Irish Universities Association is the representative body of the seven Irish universities. It is a non-profit making company with charitable status.

The seven universities represented through the Irish Universities Association are:

Dublin City University

NUI Galway

NUI Maynooth

Trinity College Dublin

University College Cork

University College Dublin

University of Limerick

The Irish Universities Association was known up to September 2005 as the Conference of Heads of Irish Universities (C.H.I.U.). Established by the universities in the early 1970's C.H.I.U was incorporated in 1997.

The IUA Council (board of directors) comprises the Heads of the seven Irish universities and is convened by an independent chair. The Presidency of the IUA rotates annually between the Council Members and is held for a calendar year.

In addition to the Council, the IUA has established groups of senior university officers. The four Standing IUA Groups are the Registrars' Group, the Chief Financial Officers' Group, the Secretaries' Group and the Vice Presidents/Deans of Research Group. The IUA groups meet regularly to develop and pursue actions and policies under specific thematic headings. Within the IUA framework a large number of other expert groups facilitate inter-university co-operation on important specialised areas.

The IUA office is situated on Merrion Square in Dublin. It is the central resource for developing policies and strategies for the Irish University sector and brings together key university figures to address important issues and challenges facing the universities. Major areas of attention include Strategic Development, Widening Participation, Research, University Finance, Teaching and Learning, Quality Assurance and Improvement.

The IUA office is also responsible for a number of specific operations; Irish Marie Curie Office, Researcher's Mobility Office Ireland and [expertiseireland.com](http://expertiseireland.com)

# Strategic Development

*Examining and developing sectoral strategies on issues, challenges and opportunities facing Irish Universities.*

The strategic development of the Irish University Sector will continue to be the key concern of the IUA.

The IUA is engaged in ongoing consultations with Government Ministers, Departments and Agencies on the strategic development of the University Sector in Ireland. The aim of the IUA is to secure the levels of investment required for the University Sector to play to its full potential the key role required of it for Ireland to achieve and sustain a knowledge society.

In 2001 the Conference of Heads of Irish Universities (forerunner of the IUA) jointly published with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) "The University Challenged: A review of International Trends & Issues with Particular Reference to Ireland" prepared by Professor Malcolm Skilbeck. The review, as intended acted as a stimulus for wide discussion and debate on the strategic development of the University Sector.

In response to the issues raised, the Department of Education and Science in 2003 invited the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and development (OECD) to undertake a review of Irish higher education to evaluate the performance of the sector and recommend how it can better meet Ireland's strategic objectives for the sector.

The IUA strongly supports the OECD recommendations for the development of a coherent and co-ordinated higher education system. The Universities are committed to engaging in greatly increased levels of inter-institutional collaboration with a view to creating the specialisation and excellence required to provide quality education and research to the highest international standards.



*“The challenges of maintaining quality, responsiveness and competitiveness in higher education are a major priority against the background of unprecedented levels of expansion, change and diversification in the sector in Ireland.”*

*OECD Review Of Higher Education In Ireland  
Terms Of Reference*

**Michael McGrath**  
Director



# Widening Participation

*Aiming to achieve equity of access for learners of all backgrounds, identities and abilities.*

Widening participation has been a priority for universities, both individually and collectively, in recent years. Entry to Irish universities has been traditionally dominated by school leavers who have completed the Leaving Certificate examination. Entry is decided on an open, transparent and competitive basis through the Central Applications Office [CAO] which was established and is governed by the universities.


Universities have made significant strides in providing programmes aimed at achieving equity of access for learners of all backgrounds, identities and abilities. University Access Officers co-operate as an IUA group in co-ordinating actions and in developing best practice in achieving this goal, and have established a direct applications process for students on such access programmes, linked to designated disadvantaged schools.

The numbers of mature students at Irish universities are likewise low by OECD standards.

The universities recognise that increasing higher educational opportunities for such students is an essential step towards creating and sustaining a knowledge society, and policies are being developed and implemented to promote this.

Developing flexible provision of courses in response to this increasingly diverse range of students has been identified as a key strategic issue for the university sector. This is being addressed through the ongoing introduction of modularisation and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System across all Irish universities. Greater use of new technologies and e-learning is also being encouraged.

In 2004 the IUA developed a proposal to provide a nationwide open and transparent application/entry process for disadvantaged students from all post-primary schools, by creating an additional 5% of places across the seven universities. This quota would be available



through the CAO application process. Implementation will require increased State funding which is being sought.

Through the IUA, the universities are represented on the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland [NQAI] and its various working groups, and are full partners in the development and implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications. This framework is central in helping to put in place transparent procedures for access, progression and transfer across the Irish education sector. The importance of the National Framework of Qualifications to the university sector is set out in the IUA publication “The Universities and the National Framework of Qualifications”.

# Research

## *Developing and sustaining a dynamic research environment in the Irish universities.*

The IUA Research Office was established in 2001. The role of the Office is to develop a strong national research policy that will improve and increase access to research funding and to make research careers more attractive. The IUA Research Office supports researchers in academia and industry directly through its dedicated offices; the Marie Curie National Contact Point and the Researcher's Mobility Office Ireland.

The IUA is now fully accepted as an essential stakeholder in the development of national R&D policy. We work on a daily basis with all of the key government departments especially the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment (DETE) and funding agencies involved in education and research. The Office worked closely with the DETE to produce the report, Building Ireland's Knowledge Economy – the Irish Action Plan for Promoting Investment in R&D to 2010; this will form the basis for the next R&D National Plan.

The IUA Research Office with DETE represents Ireland at the European Commission on research policy, developing research careers and on research funding (Marie Curie Programme). The IUA had a major role in shaping the European Researchers Charter. This is now viewed across Europe as the basis for best practice in the recruitment and treatment of researchers; an essential part of establishing research as a career. The Office has provided key input to the EU Third Country Directive that will significantly reduce the barriers for non EU researchers to come and work in Europe. Through its support the Office has helped researchers in Ireland become the most successful in Europe at winning research contracts from the fiercely competitive Marie Curie Programme.

The IUA Research Office works with the universities through the Vice Presidents / Deans of Research, Research and Technology Transfer Officers. We have close links with the Institutes of Technology and other public education and research bodies. Dialogue with industry is through liaison with the Irish Business and Employers' Confederation.

*“Through our actions in supporting researchers in academia and industry the IUA has earned credibility in Ireland and Europe as an essential stakeholder for the development of research policy and research careers.”*



# Irish Marie Curie Office

*Supporting researchers and organisations to grow R&D capability through the Marie Curie Programme.*



The Irish Marie Curie Office acts as the National Contact Point for the Marie Curie Programme. The Human Resources and Mobility (Marie Curie) Programme is part of the European Commission's Framework Programme for funding research. The Marie Curie programme consists of a set of schemes focusing on the mobility of researchers for both academia and industry and is geared towards the development and transfer of research competencies, the consolidation and widening of researchers' career prospects and the promotion of excellence in European research.

The Irish Marie Curie Office in the IUA provides advice and support to researchers, research-active organisations and companies in submitting proposals and in managing their Marie Curie Contracts and Projects.

Ireland has been highly successful in drawing down funding from the Marie Curie Programme. The Irish Marie Curie Office in the IUA plays a leading role in ensuring success for Ireland in the programme, assisting researchers and organisations at all stages of the process.

Ireland, through the dedicated support of the Irish Marie Curie Office, has taken more than four times its expected income from the Marie Curie Programme. The support of the Office has stimulated Industry (Irish & Multinational) to seek funding from the Marie Curie Programme.

As a result, these companies are now the top performers in the entire Framework Programme for Ireland, enabling them to expand their R&D capabilities.

*“Over the past year, due to our success in the Marie Curie Programme, we have recruited 5 researchers with experience in chemistry, automation, mathematics and fluid dynamics. In that short period of time we are seeing benefits flowing in terms of more in-depth analysis of key process areas but also in the training and transfer of knowledge to our technical staff. The IUA encouraged Aughinish to widen its vision of R&D. Their help and guidance helped us put together a focused proposal which pressed all the right buttons.”*

*Martin Fennell  
Aughinish Alumina*

*“We have been successful in two Marie Curie applications. Both of these have enabled us to recruit postdoctoral and more senior researchers which has, and will increasingly, help us to achieve our goal of a 'World Class Combustion Chemistry Centre'. Success in Marie Curie schemes is beneficial far beyond the purely financial; it validates your research group as one of the leaders in Europe and essentially puts you on the world map. The impact has been such that we are proceeding to the next stage and preparing to co-ordinate a multi-million Research Training Network application with the help of the IUA.”*

*Professor John M. Simmie  
National University of Ireland, Galway*



# The Researcher's Mobility Office Ireland and Portal



**researchcareersireland.com**

Researcher's Mobility Office Ireland

## Providing advice, information and support to researchers moving to or from Ireland

Part of the IUA, the Researcher's Mobility Office Ireland was established in 2004 to advise and support mobile researchers and their families on all aspects related to career, practical, legislative and cultural issues. Researchcareersireland.com is the key information instrument of the Irish mobility office which provides online comprehensive and up to date information for any researcher considering a move to Ireland.

The Office and Portal is a one-stop-shop for researchers seeking to advance their careers and personal development by moving to other countries and for organisations in search of the best European talent. The office is jointly funded by the EU Commission, the Irish Universities Association and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and is a member of ERA-MORE, the European network of mobility centres.

*Some of the services provided by the Researcher's Mobility Office Ireland:*

- To actively promote and provide information, advice and guidance on Researcher Mobility to: researchers, higher education institutes, research centres and organisations, multi-national companies and SME's.

- To investigate detailed queries relating to mobility issues with the relevant governmental agencies or specialists when it is deemed necessary.
- To advise government departments and agencies on issues impacting on the mobility of researchers and make recommendations for improvement.
- To assist and advise researchers and their families with information on moving to a new country.

The Researcher's Mobility Office Ireland is acting as an instrument of change. The office was central in ensuring the expansion of a fast track work permit process for universities to cover all third level institutions and industry for publicly funded researchers coming to Ireland. By removing obstacles to mobility, a greater number of non EU researchers and their families will be attracted to Ireland to work in our universities, institutes of technology and organisations.

*“Established in 2004, the Researcher’s Mobility Office & Portal is now recognised as a vital service for researchers moving to and leaving Ireland.”*

Jennifer Cleary  
National Co-ordinator



# University Finance

Increasing the levels of investment is key to the successful operation and development of a world class university system in Ireland.

Ireland's investment in its education system as a whole is lower than the OECD average. The IUA continues to support the universities in pursuing increases in the levels of capital and recurrent investment in the sector.

One of the major challenges that face the University sector is the reliance on State funding. Approximately 85% of university income comes from the state through recurrent and capital grant funding and through the Exchequer funding of student fees. This leaves the universities with limited ability to significantly increase their income in a meaningful way. In addition there is not yet a significant culture of private support for the university system in Ireland. Consequently the level of State funding provided is critical to the successful development of a world class university system.

Universities have a responsibility to operate and develop within the financial resources available to them. State funding carries with it certain responsibilities in terms of accountability and value for money. University Chief Finance Officers play a key role in ensuring that universities operate within the resources available and in ensuring appropriate accountability and propriety in all financial matters. Through the IUA, the University Chief Finance Officers Group meet regularly to address key finance and funding related issues for the University Sector.

The need for significantly increased levels of investment in the university sector has been highlighted in recent reviews undertaken by the OECD and the Royal Irish Academy if the State's ambitions for the sector are to be achieved.

The OECD report clearly indicates that Irish universities are under funded and that the level of increased investment required needs to be commensurate with internationally competitive standards of services and programmes.

*“...the extent to which the higher education system has become a crucial economic driver has become clearer and the need for increased investment to ensure that both Ireland and its tertiary education system is internationally competitive has become more pressing...”*

*Extract from the OECD review of  
Higher Education in Ireland.*

**Michael Casey**  
Assistant Director - Finance



# Teaching & Learning in the Irish Universities

*Formulating and promoting coherent policies to encourage innovation in teaching and learning across the university sector.*

The Irish universities are fully committed to the continuous improvement of teaching and learning, as one of their primary roles and responsibilities. The quality of teaching and student learning is regularly monitored as part of a rigorous quality assurance and improvement system. An independent expert review by the European University Association in 2004 praised this system and recommended improvements in the monitoring process, notably by ensuring more systematic student feedback, which are now being implemented.

The Irish government, along with 44 other national governments across Europe, has signed on to the Bologna Process, designed to lead to an open European Higher Education Area by 2010. The Irish universities are actively implementing the provisions of the Bologna Process across the range of teaching and learning activities. This includes encouraging increased mobility for Irish and other European students during their studies, and after graduation in the labour market. Systematic and coherent use of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement will facilitate these.

ECTS is helping focus attention on learning outcomes rather than on teaching inputs. This is having profound effects on the design and delivery of courses and programmes, including the greater use of modules.

The Diploma Supplement is an additional document accompanying each student's degree parchment describing the level, content and status of the studies completed, in order to facilitate the academic and professional recognition of each student's qualification. It is now being rolled out by universities across Europe, including in Ireland, for delivery to all students who graduate successfully.

As part of their contribution to the development of a knowledge society, the universities are preparing a coherent lifelong learning strategy to encourage students, graduates, employees and independent workers to update their skills and knowledge on a regular basis. The universities are likewise working to promote the use of new technologies in the teaching and learning process, including improved opportunities for e-learning.

The universities are full partners in the implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications, designed to promote coherence, comparability and transparency across the Irish education system. Policies and procedures have been put in place by the universities to improve participation for socio-economically disadvantaged, mature students and students with disabilities. These procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure their effectiveness. The universities are likewise working with the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland to improve student access, progression and transfer across the education sector.

These developments and other related issues are dealt with at a sectoral level by the IUA Group of Registrars and Vice-Presidents for Teaching and Learning. A number of other IUA representative groups have also been formed to address specific issues such as access, e-learning, internationalisation, lifelong learning and quality assurance, and report through the Registrars' Group.



# Quality Assurance & Improvement

*Developing and implementing initiatives for quality assurance and quality improvement within Irish Universities.*

The responsibilities of the universities for quality improvement and quality assurance are set out in the Universities Act (1997). Through the IUA the seven Irish universities have co-operated in developing their quality assurance systems as a unique national model appropriate to the needs of the Irish universities with wide international recognition.

As a result of this close co-operation between the universities, in 2003 the IUA published a “Framework for Quality in Irish Universities”. This reflects the universities’ commitment to collective action on quality assurance and improvement.

The IUA also facilitated the establishment of the Irish Universities Quality Board [IUQB] in 2003. IUQB – [www.iuqb.ie](http://www.iuqb.ie) – is now a distinct body with an independent Board. Its aim is to increase the level of inter-university co-operation in developing their quality assurance procedures and processes,

in line with best international systems. The IUQB also facilitates the conduct of reviews of the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures and their outcomes. The IUA co-operates with the IUQB in implementing its programme of sectoral quality improvement across a range of areas.

The European University Association – [www.eua.be](http://www.eua.be) – conducted a review of quality assurance in Irish Universities in 2004. The review confirmed that the quality assurance procedures in place in the Irish universities are robust and function well. It outlined a number of areas where improvements could be made, notably in using the outcomes of the quality review process for the ongoing strategic development of each institution and the sector. The recommendations arising from this review are being implemented at sectoral and individual university level.

The IUA is a member of the Irish Higher Education Quality network – [www.iheqn.ie](http://www.iheqn.ie) – which acts as a forum for discussion amongst the principal national stakeholders involved in the quality assurance of higher education and training in Ireland. The network acts as a forum for the dissemination of best practice in quality assurance amongst practitioners and policy makers involved in the Irish higher education and training sector.

*“The systematic organisation and promotion of quality assurance at the initiative of the universities themselves, is in the opinion of the EUA teams, unparalleled in any other country in Europe, or indeed in the United States or Canada.”*

*Extract from the European University Association -  
“Review of Quality Assurance in Irish Universities”  
April 2005*



# expertiseireland.com – the all island knowledge portal

*An advanced online portal containing information on academic expertise, funding, technology transfer licensing opportunities and commercial expertise.*



expertiseireland.com is owned by the Irish Universities Association and is funded by InterTradeIreland, the cross border Trade and Business Development Body. The portal contains information on more than 3,700 expert profiles outlining research interests, projects, publications, conferences, patents and consultancy history. In addition, innovative ideas produced in the third level sector and which are available for exploitation, are presented in the technology transfer licensing opportunities section.

The portal incorporates an up-to-date database, which provides registered users with information on relevant sources of funding on a local, national and European level. The commercial expertise on the island is also presented. Users also receive the

additional benefit of email alerts triggered by changes to targeted expert profiles or funding opportunities. The latest news section provides up-to-date information on issues relevant to R&D, education, finance, and funding. This section has already established a large database of archival material.

expertiseireland.com is driven by a powerful database which is directly populated from the knowledge management systems of the island's third level institutions. The portal has been primarily designed to facilitate the identification of expertise and to serve as the first point of contact between those who create new ideas and those who can exploit them. By providing a single access point, expertiseireland.com facilitates and encourages industry-academic linkages and

business-to-business connections. It creates enhanced collaborative opportunities and helps the business and academic communities to avail of the world-class expertise and intellectual capital on the island.

[www.expertiseireland.com](http://www.expertiseireland.com) provides an important online resource, of particular benefit to SME's, on funding information and the technologies available for licensing in third level institutions throughout the Island of Ireland.

**Conor Long**  
Project Director



**Celia Gallagher**  
Project Manager

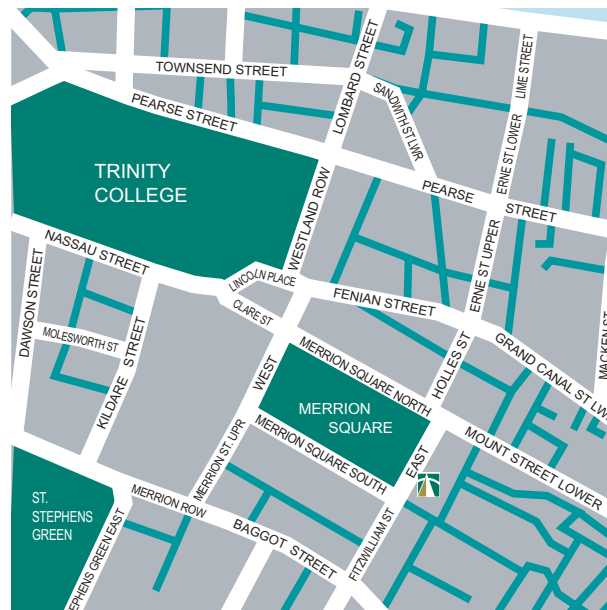


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## [www.iua.ie](http://www.iua.ie)

The IUA website offers a wide range of information pertaining to higher education in Ireland, background and recent documents, as well as regular news updates on IUA activities, events and conferences.



## Key Contacts:

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