

**C.H.I.U. Review [02/4] for C.H.I.U. Meetings
on 14th October, 2002 in University of Limerick**

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1. Research

1.1. ICSTI Commission

Professor John Hegarty has been appointed to the ICSTI Commission on a framework for an overarching national policy for RTD. C.H.I.U. made a formal submission to the ICSTI Commission on 25th September, 2002 which was circulated to Plenary Members on 26th September. The Commission is being supported by Technopolis and Forfás is providing the secretariat. CHI.U. participated in a workshop on Thursday 26 September along with all of the organisations that made written submissions.

The VP's/Deans of Research (VPDOR Group) have been invited to meet the Standing Committee (Merrion Group) to discuss issues of coherence between the funding agencies.

1.2. Science Foundation Ireland

SFI have recently announced a new group of funded researchers totalling to an investment of €2m over the next five years. Of the 27 proposals that were submitted to the CSET programme a total of 11 were invited to make a full submission for the deadline of 1st October.

The VPDOR Group will meet with Dr. Bill Harris on 10th October to review existing schemes and discuss future directions of SFI.

C.H.I.U. has recommended to SFI to make the current Terms and Conditions apply retrospectively to all funded schemes. In particular this will rectify the situation where programmes funded in the first round received indirect costs of 15% on salaries as opposed to new schemes with overheads of 30% of total costs.

1.3. HEA – PRTL I

The Head of PRTL I in the HEA, Dr. Eucharía Meehan, participated in the last VPDOR Group meeting on 11th July. The issue of Cycle 3 capital was discussed in detail. As a consequence C.H.I.U. wrote to the HEA requesting clarification that the funds will be available in 2003. The matter was pursued by C.H.I.U. Council at meetings with HEA/DES on 18th July, 2002 and with Minister Dempsey on 23rd September, 2002.

There is £10m sterling available for cross border research projects under a North/South scheme. However the Department of Education and Science has not yet indicated when this will be formally announced as a Call for Proposals.

1.4. Funding of Indirect Costs for Research

The Steering Group on Research Overheads last met on 2nd September to consider the 4th Draft Report. It has been accepted by all agencies and government departments that indirect costs must be paid in order to sustain the ongoing investments in research. The

US model, with some modifications, has been accepted as the appropriate one for Ireland. The Group will meet again on 16th October and the final report is expected in November.

1.5. *Enterprise Ireland*

Despite various representations, the Terms and Conditions of the Advanced Technologies Research Programme have changed little from last year. The ILO group are concerned with certain elements and these have been partially addressed in a letter from Enterprise Ireland.

1.6. *Irish Research Council for Science Engineering and Technology (IRCSET)*

A consultative workshop on the future of the Basic Research Grants scheme was held by IRCSET/EI on 23rd September. This is part of a welcome trend among the agencies to involve the universities in strategy and planning.

1.7. *Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS)*

Dr. Conor O'Carroll has been appointed a member of the Humanities Council.

1.8. *All Island Research Portal (AIRP)*

InterTrade Ireland has agreed to fund the development of an All Island Research Portal. As agreed by C.H.I.U. Council this will be done through C.H.I.U. with Prof. Conor Long (DCU) acting as project director. The launch date of the portal is set for April 2003. Letters addressed to University Heads informing them of developments were issued on 24th July and 26th September, 2002.

1.9. *EU Sixth Framework Programme*

The Sixth Framework Programme had its Irish launch on 12th July in Dublin Castle. There was a large number of representatives from the European Commission in attendance and over 450 participants. The programme will be formally launched by the Commission in Brussels on 11-13th November. First Calls for Proposals are expected at the end of November. The government has set a target of €190m for Ireland in this 4 year programme.

Conor O'Carroll has been appointed by the Office of Science and Technology (DETE) as national delegate to the Marie Curie Programme. An information event on the Marie Curie schemes organised by C.H.I.U. and Enterprise Ireland on 11th September attracted over 150 participants, mainly from the universities.

1.10. *European Research Area (ERA)*

As part of developing the ERA the Commission intends to fund a network of mobility centres around Europe whose role will be to advise researchers from abroad on all practical issues relating to their move to Ireland (visa, work permit, social welfare, taxation, housing, language courses etc). In support of this service the Commission will fund a web portal to provide easy access to all relevant online information. C.H.I.U. Council decided that C.H.I.U. should seek to be recognised as the mobility centre (bridgehead) for Ireland and the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment (DETE) has indicated agreement.

1.11. VAT on Research - Implementation of VAT Legislation

The primary list of funding bodies has been completed. Contracts continue to be reviewed on an ad hoc basis as required by the universities and where these are common to a number of universities, they will be added to the list.

1.12. Apportionment of Overheads for Recovery of VAT

In September, C.H.I.U. advisors met with Revenue in TCD to review in detail the proposed formula for recovery of VAT on research overheads. Revenue accepts the validity of the approach taken and have agreed in principle that a percentage of academics' time can be incorporated into the recovery formula. It is hoped that the approval process will be expedited in quarter four.

1.13. VAT Guide on Implementation

The guide will be completed once the above matters have been clarified.

2. Meetings with HEA / DES

2.1. DES/HEA Meeting

C.H.I.U. delegation comprising Council, UCFOG and Registrars' Group representatives met with the Chairman and Executive of the HEA and DES officials on 18th July, 2002 to discuss a range of issues. Updates on the issues raised are covered under relevant headings in the Review. UCFOG followed up on a number of matters raised in a further meeting with HEA Executive on 19th September, 2002.

2.2. Meeting with Minister for Education and Science

A delegation from the C.H.I.U. Council met with Minister Noel Dempsey, TD and his officials on 23rd September, 2002. The discussion was informal and covered a range of issues. The Minister said that he wished to work in partnership with the universities and undertook to have regular meetings with C.H.I.U. as part of an ongoing dialogue.

3. University Funding

3.1. Recurrent Funding

UCFOG submitted the Recurrent Funding Analysis 2003 to the HEA which had been revised to take account of exceptional increases in non-pay costs arising from higher electricity and insurance costs. It is now estimated that total costs in 2003 will increase by 6.4% (excluding benchmarking and the cost of increased benefits for part-time staff). The submission stated that a state grant increase of at least 7.3% will be required in 2003.

PRSI: Following discussions with the HEA, a submission was made by C.H.I.U. on 7th August, seeking funding in respect of additional costs (circa €6.5m) borne by the universities since 1995 when Class A PRSI rates were introduced for all new staff.

Insurance: A submission was made to the HEA in March 2002 setting out the significant cost increases faced by the sector and requesting additional funding. Further detail has been sought by the HEA and a final submission is being prepared as a matter of urgency.

3.2. *Unit Cost Returns*

The Working Group on Unit Costs has issued a draft report which examined and categorised student data in detail and assessed it against the designations used within the HEA's unit cost model. The report has raised a number of concerns in the context of the model's role in funding allocations and these will be raised with the HEA at a future meeting.

3.3. *ESF-aided Undergraduate Skills – Expenditure Returns*

Reporting methodology for the above, agreed between the universities, HEA and DES earlier in 2002 was not accepted by the EU Commission. The EU's approach is considered to be unworkable by UCFOG. The implications are such that ESF funding may not be available to the Government for participation the programmes. UCFOG representatives have offered to meet with DES/EU representatives to discuss the matter.

3.4. *Nursing*

A productive meeting between the C.H.I.U. Taskforce on Nursing and the Department of Health and Children was held on 23rd September. The key issue addressed was agreement by DoHC to engage with the universities on funding for staff surpluses arising from transfers from the health service. DoHC is to confirm arrangements for capital drawdowns and to consider funding for a staff travel budget.

3.5. *Tuition Fees*

3.5.1. *2001/2002 Increase*

At the meeting on 18th July 2002 between C.H.I.U., DES and HEA, C.H.I.U. was advised that an increase of 6% had been approved for 2002/03 without consultation with the universities. An increase in student charges from €396 to €670 had been approved by the Minister – 6% of the increase accrues to the universities, the balance represents “savings” to the Exchequer. There are financial and accounting issues to be addressed as the core grant starting in 2002, is to be reduced by c. €15m extra generated by the increase.

3.5.2. *Abolition of Free Fees*

The Minister for Education and Science has publicly raised the issue of the government continuing to pay tuition fees for first-time undergraduate third level students. His views have stoked political controversy. The question of payment of tuition fees merits serious consideration as it involves a complex set of issues. The Minister for Education and Science indicated that he was having the question investigated by his Department and said that he would welcome the views of the universities. It is an important matter on which C.H.I.U. should formulate a considered view.

3.6. *Capital Funding*

3.6.1. *PRTL – Deficits on Capital Funding for Cycles 1 and 2*

The issue was discussed at the C.H.I.U. meeting with the HEA and DES on 18th July and DES advised that it would be pursued with the Minister in early Autumn. This was confirmed at a meeting between representatives of C.H.I.U. Council and the Minister for Education and Science Mr. Noel Dempsey on 23rd September 2002, where the Minister acknowledged the urgency of dealing with the matter.

3.6.2. *Investment in Infrastructure*

At the meeting with HEA/DES on 18th July, the Programme for Government was discussed in the context of a funding allocation for renewal of campus infrastructure and DES accepted that a transparent mechanism should be used for applications/allocations. There was discussion on the suitability of using a model of agreed priority projects (which has been done at second level).

3.7. *Recurrent Funding Model Review – UCFOG/HEA*

A joint UCFOG/HEA Group is to be established to review the recurrent funding model. HEA proposals were presented to the Authority Finance Committee and have been provided to UCFOG for consideration.

4. HEA Issues

4.1 *C&AG – Audit of Compliance with State Body Code of Practice on Governance*

The C.H.I.U./HEA meeting on 18th July, discussed Section 4 of the C&AG's letter of 9th April which assumed that the revised Code of Practice for Governance of State Bodies applied to universities. The HEA undertook to review the universities' analysis of the Code prepared in the context of the Universities Act and the C.H.I.U./HEA Governance Report. It was agreed that a final sectoral response would be made to the C&AG following further consideration and consultation with the HEA.

4.2. *Harmonisation of Financial Statements*

The Working Group on Harmonisation has completed draft harmonised financial statements currently under review by external auditors PWC, prior to submission to the HEA and subsequently the C&AG.

On 23rd August, the C&AG issued a letter setting out detailed revision to the Basis of Audit Opinion report which would be used for the 2001 audit drawing attention to matters of concern. The letter made no reference to the C&AG's involvement and buy-in to the original harmonisation process. UCFOG were extremely concerned that the revisions would seriously undermine the financial statements and would not be representative of the significant amendments now proposed. UCFOG met with the HEA on 19th September and subsequently with the C&AG on 23rd September. A joint meeting with the HEA and C&AG will take place on 11th October. It is expected and recommended that a full set of consolidated financial statements will be implemented for the 2002/03 financial year.

4.3. *Agreed Framework for Departures from Approved Levels of Remuneration – Universities' Act Section 25(5)*

At a meeting on 18th July, 2002 the HEA representatives said that they were anxious to make progress on the review of the Agreed Framework and were awaiting the views of the universities. It is suggested that a small group comprising one representative from UCFOG, Registrars, Secretaries, and Human Resource Officers Groups and C.H.I.U. Director be set up to formulate a sectoral position and enter discussions with the HEA.

4.4. *HEA Review of Universities' Statements on Equality*

The HEA has been considering the submissions from the universities and is proposing to arrange for site visits as part of their review. It is suggested that the Registrars' Group seek a meeting with the HEA to discuss its plans for the next phase of the review.

4.5. *Completion Rates*

The HEA Executive and their consultants have carried out a review of universities current retention policies and programmes. In the light of that review and in consultation with the Retention Officers Network, the consultants have prepared a draft Questionnaire for issue to the universities. It is hoped to finalise the draft for issue shortly. The intention is to survey around 3000 first year students, to survey two courses per university and to ensure an even spread of the survey across disciplines. The HEA are in ongoing consultation with the Retention Network to discuss issues relating to the detail of the survey, procedures for the administration of the survey and a procedure to allow some correlation between the results of the survey and subsequent participation during first year.

4.6. *Implementation of Equality Directives 2000/43/EC and 2000/78/EC*

The HEA has informed C.H.I.U. that the implementation of the above equality directives will require amendments to the Employment Equality Act, 1998 which are of general relevance and interest to the Universities. The Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform has prepared a discussion paper for the purpose of facilitating a consultative process to inform the drafting of the amendments to the Act. The Directives have implementation dates of 19th July, 2003 and 2nd December, 2003 respectively. Views have been invited on areas outside of these for amendment concerning provisions relating to positive action and compensation for discrimination. Arrangements are being made to have copies circulated to relevant officers in the universities.

5. *Enrolments / Future Strategy*

5.1. *Strategic Planning Process*

A revised draft vision and mission statement was circulated to Plenary members for comments and a number of responses were received which were referred to the consultants. The Minister for Education and Science has been made aware of the strategic planning processes being undertaken by the universities and institutes of technology.

5.2. *Policy Issues – Views of HEA Chairman*

Dr. Don Thornhill, Chairman, HEA, addressed the IMHE General Conference 2002 at the OECD in Paris in September 2002. The title of his address was “*Incentives and Accountability: Instruments of Change in Higher Education – national policy instruments and institutional behaviour, an Irish case study*”. Dr. Thornhill outlined challenges facing the Irish higher education system, gave an overview of the PRTLII, discussed the issue of Accountability and Autonomy and gave views on criteria for the design of systems for public funding of third level institutions.

5.3. *Enrolments*

Significant drops in numbers of students applying for computer courses caused problems for universities. This led to different actions being taken by universities varying from accepting all qualified applicants and advertising vacant places to imposing a points level above minimum entry requirements thus reducing the number of places on courses. In the case of the latter action, the Minister expressed concern at his meeting with C.H.I.U. on 23rd September, 2002 that students were entitled to appropriate prior notification of conditions of entry to courses as is done in the case of CAO changes.

5.4. Access

The Third Level Access Group have prepared a booklet “*Access made Accessible*”, a guide to the Access Initiatives of Third Level Institutions which target students from lower socio-economic groups. It covers the initiatives of the seven universities and most of the institutes of technology.

C.H.I.U. pressed the Minister for Education and Science at a meeting on 23rd September, 2002 to deal with the recommendations of the McNamara Report as a matter of urgency and in particular the National Office for Equality of Access to Higher Education. He undertook to make decisions on the recommendations in a matter of weeks.

5.5. Lifelong Learning

There has been no response to the submission of the final report of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning. One of the issues addressed in the report is the issue of “free fees” for part-time students. The debate about the reintroduction of third level fees for full-time students has dramatically changed the climate for consideration of the recommendations of the Task Force.

5.6. Skills

The HEA wrote to the universities and other third level institutions on 6th August, 2002 inviting proposals in line with recommendations of the Expert Skills Group Third Report concerning investment in IT skills over five years. The letter sought proposals under four measures as follows:-

- Measure 1 – Part-time education and company upskilling,
- Measure 2 – Increased provision of postgraduate conversion courses,
- Measure 3 – Improved completion rates in IT-related areas,
- Measure 4 – Equipment renewal and the development of state-of-the-art facilities for third level education in IT-related courses

Responses from the universities relating to Measure 4 are being reviewed by the HEA at present. Mr. Pat O’Connor (ex. IBM) has been appointed as Head of Project in the HEA.

5.7. Foreign Students

The HEA has engaged consultants to undertake a study on foreign students. The First Secretary of the Chinese Embassy, Mr. Jincheng Kang, has been invited to address the Plenary on 14th October, 2002 on the question of the recruitment of Chinese students by Irish universities.

The Minister for Education and Science and his Chinese counterpart signed a bilateral agreement in February 2001. The agreement covers Student Exchanges, Joint Research Language Studies, Exchange of Information and Exploring Mechanisms for mutual recognition of Degrees and Qualifications. The agreement has yet to be processed through formal Government and Oireachtas approval mechanisms.

5.8. e-Learning

The HEA placed a PIN note in the European Journal on 2nd May, 2002 which stated:-

“The Minister for Education and Science proposes to allocate financial support to either a private or public body or combination of such bodies to provide an e-learning service in the in the further and higher education and training sectors in Ireland”.

The HEA is employing consultants in respect of the preparation and management of a procurement process for an e-Learning service in Ireland.

Under the Strategic Planning Process, C.H.I.U. has already established a Working Group on New Forms of Learning with E. O’Driscoll as Chair.

5.9. University Sector - PR

Based on information provided under FOI, a series of articles have been published in the press giving breakdowns of student entry data for each university by school. Comparisons are being made between the profiles of students for the different universities by school type emphasizing the numbers of students from fee paying institutes and schools. This has given rise to calls for revision of the CAO system and criticisms that universities have not done enough to enroll disadvantaged students. Another analysis purports to show that proximity to home is a major factor in students choosing a university. One Sunday newspaper presented a “league table” of Irish Universities based on a set of criteria of dubious value. This type of press coverage presents a challenge for the universities and the sector in that even though it may be based on fairly superficial analysis and research, it can influence perceptions of the sector held by the public, politicians and policy makers.

6. NQAI

6.1. National Framework of Qualifications

The work of the NQAI on a national framework of qualifications has been proceeding apace. This has involved consultation with interested parties including NQAI Executives meeting with C.H.I.U. Registrars on 16th June and 30th September, 2002. Ms. Geraldine O’Connor has represented the universities on an NQAI consultative group.

The NQAI Executive have developed a number of draft papers on framework development. The basis for the development work is in the NQAI document, “Policies and Criteria”, published in April (the yellow book). Subsequent documents reproduce sections of this as relevant. NQAI understandings of key concepts introduced in the policies and criteria, such as level, level indicator, award-type and award-type descriptor are explained in a glossary.

The NQAI has written to C.H.I.U. outlining its schedule for further progress and inviting the university sector to consider how the Authority might indicate the number and features of award-types which are to be made in future by the universities and the descriptors for these. This is an important issue as it is the award-type descriptors that will facilitate the inclusion of the awards of the universities in the national qualifications framework. The NQAI has sought an input by 29th November, 2002. This matter was

discussed by the Registrars' Group in its meeting with NQAI Executives on 30th September, 2002 and will be further considered by the Group.

6.2. *Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression*

The promotion and facilitation of access transfer and progression is regarded as an essential element in the development of the national framework of qualifications but is also a separate object of the NQAI in the 1999 Act. The general consensus from NQAI consultative process to date is that if the national qualifications framework is to have any real merit it must provide for meaningful procedures for access, transfer and progression. The NQAI has prepared a further draft document on "Policies and Procedures for the Promotion and Facilitation of Access, Transfer and Progression. The Authority has sought the views of stakeholders through their consultative group and in wider consultation. The NQAI has set up a Technical Advisory Group to assist it in considering the development of a system, or systems, of credit accumulation and transfer. Professor Don McQuillan is the C.H.I.U. nominee on the Group.

7. *Quality Assurance*

7.1. *IUQB*

Arrangements are progressing for the appointment of members of the Board of the IUQB. High profile international experts have agreed to serve on the Board, a prospective Chairman has been approached and contacts have been made with other relevant parties. Funding for a programme of activities of the IUQB is being sought, in conjunction with the universities, from the HEA.

7.2. *IUQSC Project*

The final draft of the document "*A Framework for Quality in Irish Universities: Meeting the Challenge of Change*" has been submitted to the University Heads for approval prior to publication.

7.3. *HEA Review of QA/QI Procedures*

Reports from the seven universities on their QA/QI procedures have been assembled by C.H.I.U. in one volume with a general introduction section and a final section from a sectoral viewpoint. The document has been submitted to the HEA.

The view has been put by C.H.I.U. to the HEA that on logistical grounds alone it would not be possible for them to adhere to their original time schedule for visits by a review team to the universities.

7.4. *QA International*

The growing emphasis of quality assurance in the Bologna process at a European level is a matter that requires careful monitoring in the light of possible implications for the Irish university QA/QI system. Please see reference to quality assurance under Para. 8(d) below and in particular the views of VSNU, the Dutch Universities' Rectors Conference. The HEA has drawn C.H.I.U. attention to a forthcoming ENQA/VSNU workshop on 25-26 November, 2002 in The Hague targeted at "experienced staff members of QA agencies". While the title of the Workshop "*How to Cope with Methodological Problems in Quality Assessments*" sounds rather technical, the programme covers broad policy issues. The workshop is likely to inform ENQA policy and its contribution to the

Bologna process. It is important that the IUQB has a presence at such events to represent the Irish university QA/QI system.

8. International

8.1. EUA

EUA Council meeting was held in Zurich on 9/10 October in conjunction with an EUA/Swiss Confederation Conference entitled “Credit Transfer and Accreditation: The Challenge for Institutions and Students”. The Conference was organised as part of the official Bologna Process programme and was attended for C.H.I.U. by Professor Don McQuillan.

The EUA, as part of its Thema series, recently published the document “*Strategic Management and Universities’ Institutional Development*”. Copies are being made available by C.H.I.U. to Plenary Members.

8.2. Higher Education Developments in European Countries

The EUA has circulated brief reports on Higher Education Developments in a number of European countries. Issues that figure prominently in the reports are Bologna Process, Quality Assurance, University Reform, University Autonomy, University Funding and University Legislation.

8.3. Bologna

As noted from points 8.1 and 8.2 above, the Bologna Process continues to build momentum at a European level and a national level across Europe. The Irish Government has not shown concern to provide leadership in identifying or addressing implications of the Bologna Process for the Irish Higher Education System. A parallel “Bruges Initiative” for vocational education and training is now up and running and the NQAI have been given a co-ordination role in examining the implications for Ireland and for developing a position. In response to C.H.I.U. questioning its role in relation to Bologna, DES is aiming to convene a meeting on Bologna in advance of the Berlin Ministers’ meeting 2003.

Conference on the Bologna Process – The Quality Assurance office of UCD is holding a conference in the Shelbourne Hotel on 22nd November, 2002 entitled “*Bologna, Accreditation and the Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Process in Ireland*”. The speakers are: Dr. Andree Sursock, Deputy Secretary General of the European University Association; Dr. Charles Cook, Director, New England Commission on Higher Education; Sir David Smith, former Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Edinburgh University; Dr. Pdraig Walsh, Quality Officer, DCU. Dr. Eric Froment, President of EUA hopes to be in attendance. Formal invitations will be sent to Presidents/Provosts, Registrars/Senior Lecturers and senior university staff in due course.

8.4. GATS

As reported in previous C.H.I.U. Reviews higher education is one of the subjects being considered in the current round of GATS negotiations. This is a matter that has exercised universities and their representative bodies across Europe. C.H.I.U. has kept DES and HEA informed of EUA position on the negotiations including the Joint Declaration (September 2002) signed by EUA with the American Council on Education and the

Association of Canadian Colleges and Universities, which pointed to the need for greater transparency and open dialogue. At the request of the EUA, C.H.I.U. asked DES/HEA to bring to the government's attention EUA concern over the lack of transparency in this phase of the GATS round, in marked contrast with negotiations involving other service sectors where providers are consulted, and to the following statements:

“The higher education sector in Europe is working diligently to address recognition issues and views the Lisbon Convention as a key mechanism, but one which would need to be ratified by all governments. In addition, several projects will be launched in September 2002 to address transnational issues of quality.

...Given that the GATS aims to speed up the process of globalisation, some attention must be paid to the impact that this may have during the challenging phase of implementing the Bologna Declaration. The Bologna process has already improved inter-university co-operation and fair competition under the aegis of governments. Globalisation and strong encouragement of market forces in higher education may lead to undue stress on competition among universities, thus undermining the Prague Communiqué which stated that higher education should be considered a public good. It is essential to consider to what extent such developments might threaten the implementation of the Bologna Declaration as well as the role of governments and the provision of public funding for higher education”.

The Association of Dutch Universities [VSNU] is the latest to examine the issue. The VSNU's understanding is that *“higher education services supplied by public and private actors on a non-commercial basis are excluded from the GATS”* The Dutch Universities argue for the development of *“a system of mutual recognition of quality assurance authorities (meta accreditation) at a European scale in order to develop an international validation of evaluation and accreditation procedures”*. VSNU recommends that further commitments under the GATS in the area of higher education can only be made under the following conditions –

- *that commitments do not compromise the provision of public funding for higher education,*
- *that the creation of a level playing field on the global higher education market is further explored and stimulated,*
- *that the international dimension of quality assurance and accreditation is further developed.*

The recommendations in relation to quality assurance at a European level is in tune with trends developing within the Bologna Process where ENQA is an influential player.

8.5. EU Developments

The European Commission has prepared a proposal for a programme with the overall aim of contributing to quality education in the European Union in particular by fostering co-operation with third countries. The specific objectives of the programme are summarised as follows:-

- the emergence of a distinctly European offer in higher education which would be attractive both within the European Union and beyond its borders,
- a higher profile for, visibility of and accessibility to European education,

- a greater world-wide interest in and more concrete possibilities for acquiring European qualifications and/or experience among highly-qualified graduates and scholars from all over the world,
- more structured co-operation between European Community and third country institutions and greater outgoing European Union mobility as part of European study programmes,

The Commission's intention is that the EU, through calls for proposals launched in the framework of the programme, would provide financial support for:-

- European Union Masters Courses (selected for a five year period, subject to a light-weight annual renewal procedure based on progress reporting), involving at least three higher education institutions from three different Member States and leading to double/multiple degrees,
- scholarships for third country graduate students selected to enroll for a full study period (on average fifteen months) in European Union Masters Courses,
- scholarships for third country visiting scholars for teaching and scholarly assignments (average three months) connected with European Union Masters Courses,
- partnership (up to three years) between European Union Masters Courses and third country higher education universities, including European Union student and staff outgoing mobility,
- studies, conferences, seminars, publications, joint development of marketing actions, joint development of web-based and other tools to support international education and student mobility.

The proposal was discussed at an Education Committee meeting in Brussels on 2nd October, 2002.

9. External Relations

9.1. Australian Vice-Chancellors

At the invitation of the AVCC a delegation of C.H.I.U. Council will visit the AVCC and a number of Australian universities at the end of October/start November. The delegation which will be lead by C.H.I.U. Chairman, Dr. A. Cosgrove, will include Dr. W.J. Smyth, Dr. G. Wrixon, Dr. I. Ó Muircheartaigh, Dr. R. Downer and M. McGrath. It is planned to sign an agreement on co-operation in higher education with the AVCC.

9.2. Swedish Visit

The Swedish Rectors Conference (SUHE) has asked C.H.I.U. to co-ordinate arrangements for a joint visit of the Conference and the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education. The visit will take place on 19-21 November and the SUHF has expressed interest in visiting universities in Dublin and Cork. It is hoped to provide an opportunity for available C.H.I.U. Council Members to meet the Swedish visitors and for discussion of university issues on the evening of 20th November.

9.3. ICTU

A draft proposal for an ICTU/C.H.I.U. Conference on labour market issues has been drawn up by Dr. Colm Harmon, UCD and Dr. Donal O'Neill, NUIM. The proposal has

been sent to ICTU and a meeting is being organised between the local organisers, C.H.I.U. and ICTU with a view to progressing the proposal.

9.4. *IBEC/C.H.I.U. Joint Council*

Arising from Council discussions, IBEC has sought a meeting with the Minister for Education and Science with a view to impressing on him the need for his department to play a leadership role in making a case for maintaining state investment in higher education and research as a critical factor in driving economic growth and underpinning social development. The Council has established a working group on the combined issues of developing industry/university interaction and the role of universities in promoting regional development

9.5. *IDA*

C.H.I.U. has met and is liaising with IDA Executives dealing with higher education and research. They are convinced that investment in higher education and research is a priority strategy for future economic development and that DES must see itself and be regarded by other Government Departments and agencies as a key player in economic development. The current thinking of the IDA is captured in the statement of the IDA Chairman in the IDA Annual Report.

10. *CRI*

10.1. *Ferris Scholarships*

To honour a commitment made by CRI, C.H.I.U. has co-operated with the American promoters in facilitating arrangements for the placement of the first four Ferris Scholars in UCD, DCU, NUIG and QUB for the 2002/03 academic year.

10.2. *CRI Secretariat*

C.H.I.U. is operating as a secretariat for CRI and will facilitate involvement of the Northern Universities in the development of the All Island Research Portal. The arrangement will be kept under review by the C.H.I.U. Council in the light of North/South developments. In this regard, one of the stated purposes of the “Ireland as a Centre of Excellence in Third Level Education”, held in Armagh on 10/11 October, 2002 was to examine the potential of North/South co-operation to enhance higher education standards on the island.

11. *Work Permits/Visas*

C.H.I.U. delegation comprising C.H.I.U. Director, Dr. C. O’Carroll, Ms. R. McKenzie, UCD and Ms. P. Daly, TCD, met with Mr. Michael Cuniffe, Work Permits Division, DETE and Mr. Robin Foster, FÁS, to discuss the issues raised by C.H.I.U. in its letter to the Tánaiste on 11th March, 2002. The arguments made in favour of special treatment for academic teaching and research staff were repeated by C.H.I.U. representatives. DETE and FÁS officials accepted that current recruitment procedures for foreign workers were inappropriate for the filling of academic and research posts in universities. They said that they were willing to consider making an exception to current arrangements for academic/research posts in public universities if a clear and defensible rationale could be formulated. They asked C.H.I.U. to provide a description of the types of posts that might

be covered in such an arrangement which could be introduced as part of a current review of the system.

12. Copyright

The C.H.I.U. Copyright Working Group met on 9th September and 8th October, 2002. The Group identified a range of copyright/IPR issues that would impact on universities and agreed that the copyright licensing issue would be top of the Group's agenda with a view to formulating a sectoral position by end 2002.

13. Benchmarking Report

Both university management and staff unions alike are dissatisfied with the outcome of the Benchmarking process.

IFUT National Council described the report as -

- a shoddy and obscure piece of work lacking in transparency and accountability,
- grossly undervaluing university teachers,
- riddled with errors.

It decided unanimously to recommend to its members to reject the report in a ballot.

Issues of concern to the universities which were raised by C.H.I.U. at the meeting with the HEA on 18th July, 2002 included the following -

- i. low level of pay increases for university academic grades compared with general level of increases for other public service grades, e.g. Senior Lecturer (3%) v Principal Officer (11.7%) or Assistant Principal (13.8%),
- ii. by virtue of retaining their links with civil service grades, university administrative grades have gained substantial increases over and above increase to hitherto related academic grades,
- iii. low level of increases for university academic grades compared with similar level grades in Institutes of Technology, e.g. Statutory Lecturer (3%) v Senior Lecturer III [IOTs] (12%) and Senior Lecturer II [IOTs] (11%).
- iv. paradoxically greater value seems to have been placed by Benchmarking on contract teaching hours in the IOTs over university research when the government policy is to promote research,
- v. the negative impact that the Benchmarking report will have on morale of staff,
- vi. no rationale offered for grading IOTs posts over university posts effectively reversing the traditional relativities,
- vii. a general fundamental concern about the weighting or value attached in both the Buckley and Benchmarking exercises to academic/educational research enterprises and consequently to associated posts.
- viii. The measurement of jobsite by Benchmarking Body consultants is argued to be scientific and objective and to be equally applicable to jobs no matter what the sector. These claims are at least open to question.
- ix. There has also been the concern expressed that the Benchmarking exercise was influenced by political concerns or imperatives and also by sectors that could influence the process through working closely with the benchmarking body.