

**C.H.I.U. Review [05/2] for C.H.I.U. Meetings
in NUIM on 4th April, 2005.**

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1. Research

1.1. Office of the Chief Science Advisor to Government

1.1.1. SWOT Analysis

The CSA has recently carried out a SWOT analysis focusing on science, technology and innovation aspects of Ireland's progression towards a knowledge based economy. The universities were well represented on the four SWOT teams. The final outcome of this analysis will be presented to the Cabinet Subcommittee on Science and Technology in mid year.

1.2. Science Foundation Ireland

1.2.1. AMS

The SFI team responsible for AMS (Awards Management System) joined the recent meeting of the VP/Deans of Research to discuss the latest version of their proposed electronic proposal submission system. The presentation on this version of AMS was well received and the universities are eager to test the new system.

1.2.2. Research Frontiers Programme (RFP) 2006

During the same meeting another SFI group responsible for RFP discussed proposed changes to the programme for 2006. These were principally the eligibility conditions for candidates and the timeline for submitting proposals. Eligibility was one of the biggest issues last year when the Call was announced. Basically the objective of SFI is to fund independent researchers as opposed to postdoctoral researchers who are still in training. It was agreed to retain the current eligibility conditions. SFI is proposing a slight moving up of the deadlines with a submission of pre-proposals in Sept 2005; there was general agreement with the changes.

1.2.3. Fixed Term Work Act

SFI has written to all of the universities concerning the applicability of the Fixed Term Work Act to SFI funded researchers and has also received legal opinion regarding same.

1.3. Research Strategy – Upcoming C.H.I.U. Conference – “Building Research Careers – the Postdoctoral Experience” 4th - 5th May 2005.

The second in a series of C.H.I.U. conferences on research careers, this event will explore the role and status of the postdoctoral researcher, and the current strengths and weaknesses operating at the postdoctoral level.

1.4. European Research Policy

1.4.1. Researchers Charter and Code of Conduct for Recruitment

The European Commission, with the Steering Group on Mobility, has drawn up a charter for researchers and how they are recruited. This objective is to raise the career of researcher at a European level and have it considered like other professions. C.H.I.U. was engaged extensively and intensively in this process through consultation with national stakeholders in the universities, government agencies and other representative organisations (IBEC etc).

1.4.2. Year of Researcher 2005 & Marie Curie Week

C.H.I.U. has been invited by the European Commission, on behalf of Ireland, to host the closing event of the European Year of the Research, as well as to co-ordinate the Marie Curie Week, both events to be held in Ireland. The former initiative will be launched in June during the Luxembourg Presidency and will close here in November. The events will promote the research profession and its importance for society and the economy of Europe. In offering C.H.I.U. these prestigious roles, the EC has given us the opportunity to showcase the world-class research being carried out in Irish universities, to promote ourselves internationally and to grow awareness in the Irish public of the research mission of the universities. C.H.I.U. will receive a grant from the EC to manage and co-ordinate these initiatives and fund a number of events.

1.5. EU Sixth Framework Programme

1.5.1. Human Resources & Mobility Programme – Marie Curie

The first half of FP6 has seen Ireland attracting over €26 million from the Marie Curie Programme. Overall, the FP6 success for Ireland is worryingly low, at around €100million. The Marie Curie figure represents huge success in the programme, and C.H.I.U.'s role in supporting applicants has been clearly recognised by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment as being instrumental in this achievement. In one scheme alone (Transfer of Knowledge) Ireland attracted over €9 million - 20% of the available EU budget. C.H.I.U. has successfully promoted industrial involvement in Marie Curie, with €5.75 million of the Irish total going directly to companies.

1.6. EU Seventh Framework Programme

The Irish position paper has been published. While commenting on all areas the Irish position focuses on;

- **Trans-national collaborative research** must remain as the core component of the Seventh Framework Programme.
- Increased emphasis must be placed on developing **human resources** and making Europe a more attractive place for researchers to work in and to develop their careers.
- It needs to be made more user-friendly and attractive to **industrial participation, especially by SME's.**

C.H.I.U. was intensively involved in shaping this position and in particular ensuring the prominence of research careers in the final proposal.

1.7. *Irish Researcher Mobility Centre and Web Portal and the USA*

C.H.I.U. promoted Irish Universities as a location for research at the American Association for the Advancement of Science [AAAS] Conference in February representing *the Irish Researcher Mobility Hub and Expertise Ireland*. Both portals complemented each other in providing information, assistance and expertise on research opportunities in Ireland. This was an excellent opportunity for marketing Ireland as job market for researchers, and revealed a considerable number of possible opportunities for US/Ireland collaborations. The Expertise Ireland web portal was used to identify Irish researchers and the Mobility Office acted as a facilitator for researchers moving to Ireland. Both portals were presented at the Washington D.C. Chapter of BioLink USA-Ireland, which included representatives from The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), various academic institutions such as Georgetown University School of Medicine, and employees from research centres. The Exhibition stand received huge interest from visitors wishing to relocate to Ireland or move back to Ireland to continue a career in Research. Expertise Ireland provided the knowledge, expertise and collaboration opportunities. The Mobility Hub provided the advice, assistance and information for moving to Ireland.

Visits to all Universities are underway to present and provide training on the Researcher Mobility Service and researchcareersireland.com portal, targeting all faculty, administration, researchers and students. A Training Seminar will be held in the spring for all Network members with a focus on Work Permits and Visa's and will be presented by the hubs Visa and Work Permit Contacts.

Upcoming Portal Developments:

The Integration of Research Job opportunities which will allow Network Members, specifically Universities and research organisations across Ireland to upload job opportunities and remove when positions have been filled on the Irish mobility portal is being progressed. These opportunities will automatically be sent to ERACAREERS Research job opportunities Portal <http://europa.eu.int/eracareers>

1.8. *expertiseireland.com update*

The number of profiles being contributed from the institutions has exceeded 3,300. This is broken down into the following contributions:

Institute	No. Profiles*	(Oct 04)
Dublin City University	403	385
Dublin Institute of Technology	573	568
National University of Ireland, Galway	88	72
National University of Ireland, Maynooth	74	74
Queen's University Belfast	405	406
University College Cork	254	230
University College Dublin	578	578
University of Dublin, TCD	238	46
University of Limerick	178	146
University of Ulster	510	529

** No. of profiles as of 8th March, 2005*

The Institutes of Technology will be contributing expert profiles from May 2005.

The latest addition to the portal is the Technology Transfer Licensing Opportunities which will promote the technologies available for licensing within the third level sector. All institutions contributing to the portal have been contacted regarding contributions to this section. To date, only two institutions are contributing 12 opportunities, namely, University College Dublin and the Dublin Institute of Technology.

The plan to include commercial expertise is well underway. The initial part to contact a minimum of 1,000 commercial enterprises interested in having their expertise displayed on the portal, has already been achieved. This has been done in conjunction with Invest NI, who contacted their client companies with the information. When the database is ready to have the information published in June 2005, the goal is to have at least 100 companies represented.

2. **University Funding**

2.1. *Current Funding 2005*

C.H.I.U. wrote to the HEA on 2nd February, 2005 stating that as a result of the cumulative effective cut-backs in grants to the universities, the majority of universities were anticipating significant deficits for 2005. The deficits arose in the context of a real increase in the recurrent grant for 2005 of approximately 2.9% which is significantly less than the 9.25% increase sought by the sector. The impacts of the Fixed Term Work Act 2003 and significant pension funding issues were also stressed. An urgent meeting was sought with the HEA and a C.H.I.U. Working Group met with representatives from the HEA and DES on 17 February to raise these issues.

The Chief Finance Officers Group is also currently reviewing the increase in tuition fees required in light of the above funding issues.

2.2. Capital Funding

The DES and the HEA have prepared a document on “*Devolved Control and Accountability Procedures*” which has been circulated by C.H.I.U. to the universities for comment. A new devolved scheme for capital projects is proposed with the objective of speeding up approvals and avoiding the necessity of the Departments of Finance, and Education and Science to examine individual spending programmes.

2.3. Funding Model

The HEA has been developing its proposals for a new funding model in the light of the views and recommendations of the OECD Report and feedback from the HEA seminar on the topic held in October 2004. The HEA has been invited to make a presentation on developments at the Plenary meeting on 4th April, 2005.

The importance of the funding model to the future development of the Higher education sector was emphasised at the Higher Education Colloquium held on 14th February, 2005 (see para.4.1).

2.4. Pension Issues

2.4.1. Sectoral Approach

A C.H.I.U. note of 14th March, 2005 to university officers drew attention to the need for concerted sectoral action on a number of important pension-related issues. Strategic pension issues facing universities will be discussed at the Plenary on 4th April, 2005.

2.5. Fixed Term Work Act

A C.H.I.U. working group was established to address funding and implementation issues arising in respect of the Protection of Employees (Fixed Term Work) Act 2003. The estimated costs for the sector for all contract staff (including contract research staff) for the period from 1 July 2003 to 31 December 2004 amounted to approximately €1.5 million. The issue of funding for the costs associated with the implementation of the Act was discussed at a meeting with HEA and DES.

The Group also met with the Standing Committee of Research Funders to discuss the funding and implementation issues in respect of contract research staff. It was agreed that C.H.I.U. would write to the chair of the standing committee outlining the sector’s proposed approach to the implementation of the Act in respect of contract research staff. We await a formal response to the letter.

Having obtained legal opinion in respect of the Act, SFI has written to all of the universities concerning the applicability of the Fixed Term Work Act to SFI funded researchers. As a result of the legal opinion received SFI may insist that SFI researchers are not covered by the Act. This is likely to have implications for all contract research staff [see para.1.2.3. above].

C.H.I.U. is to seek legal advice in respect of the implementation of the Act as a matter of urgency.

2.6. *Tax Relief Schemes*

The Minister for Finance, Mr. Brian Cowen TD has launched a public consultation process on tax incentive reliefs and exemptions. C.H.I.U. in consultation with PriceWaterhouse Coopers, has made a submission on behalf of the sector to the Minister in respect of the *Relief for Rented Residential Accommodation for Third Level Students* (Section 50) and *Relief for Investment in Third Level Educational Buildings* (Section 843). An extension of the closing date for completion of construction work has been sought in respect of Section 50 Relief. An extension to the closing date has also been sought in respect of Section 843 Relief as well as a request to extend the remit of the relief to include capital refurbishment projects.

The DES has also issued draft 'Revised Guidelines on Residential Developments for Third Level Students'.

2.7. *Nursing – Transfer of Midwifery and Sick Children’s Education to Third Level*

Following the negotiations in respect of the transfer of Midwifery and Sick Children’s education to third level the Tánaiste informed the Irish Nurses Organisation (INO) in February that she would approve the changeover to the Midwifery and Sick Children’s undergraduate degrees from September 2006. The INO were keen that the changeover would be effective from September 2005 and requested that the Tánaiste would reconsider her decision. The issue of long stay patients in nursing homes has subsequently arisen and no decision has since been communicated to C.H.I.U. A formal response from the Department of Health and Children in relation to the transfer is awaited, however, it appears unlikely at this stage that the transfer will occur in September 2005.

3. *DES/HEA Issues*

3.1. *DES Secretary General*

Ms. Brigid McManus was appointed Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science with effect from 31st January, 2005. Ms. McManus had been serving as Assistant Secretary General in the Department of Finance.

3.2. *HEA Chairman*

The Minister for Education and Science announced on 9th March, 2005 that Mr. Michael Kelly, retiring Secretary General of the Department of Health and Children, had been appointed as the new Chairman of the HEA, and that appointment would be for two years. The decision to appoint Mr. Kelly runs counter to the OECD recommendation to have the position filled by open competition and an earlier statement by the Minister that the position would be part-time. The appointment and the reasons given in support of the appointment have been widely criticised in the media and have led to the resignation of a member of the Authority.

3.3. *Code of Practice for the Governance of Third Level Institutions*

DES is seeking final views on the draft Code of Practice for the Governance of Third Level Institutions. This has been circulated to the Chief Finance Officers and Secretaries Groups. Final comments or observations are required as a matter of urgency but university officers have taken the view that the proposal has to be put before governing authorities before responses can be provided.

3.4. *Staff Statistics*

Total staff FTE's at 31 December 2004, as returned to the HEA by universities, indicated that staff FTE's increased by 499.9 (5.7%) since 31 December 2002. The HEA has raised concerns in relation to such increases, particularly in the context of required cut backs across the public sector of approximately 5,000. The HEA has indicated that the perception in the DES and DOF is that such increases are undermining claims that the sector is significantly underfunded.

C.H.I.U. has argued that such increases need to be considered in the context of new programmes introduced over the period, particularly Nursing and Therapies, increases in student numbers and necessary increases to meet compliance and other requirements such as internal audit, freedom of information, equality etc. In addition a significant proportion of the increase was due to funded or self financed activities. Accordingly an exercise was undertaken to identify the actual change in 'core funded' staff over the period. This review indicated that core staff numbers actually declined by approximately 137 FTE's over the period.

3.5. *Revised Superannuation Arrangements*

The HEA has circulated the current "Model Scheme Employee Superannuation" approved by the Department of Finance. It takes account of some changes introduced in 2004 including the retirement age. The Department has indicated that it is prepared to request Ministerial sanction for amendments to existing schemes based on the attached model. The Department has pointed out that there were a number of changes which have not yet been incorporated into the model scheme as the relevant circulars have not yet been issued in the Civil Service – these changes include the new integration system, pro-rata pensions for part-time employees and the revised rules on allowances (providing for the best three years of the last ten years). The Department has, however, pointed out that these changes represent an improvement on the existing provisions and that sanction can be issued on an administrative basis pending the schemes being amended at a later date.

The HEA has been in touch with the Department of Finance in relation to the model scheme and provisions relating to early retirement and professional added years. However, the circulars dealing with the latter two issues have not yet been issued in the Civil Service.

As regards the Spouses and Children's Scheme, the HEA has been advised by the Department that this too may need to be amended to take account of changes affecting spouses and children's pensions. The Department is currently examining the feasibility of allowing nominations for spouses' pensions, allowing orphans to benefit twice where both parents are scheme members, removing the bar on paying pensions to spouses who cohabit or remarry, etc.

A working group is also considering allowing nominations for death gratuities and if any change is agreed there, it must be reflected in the main scheme.

4. OECD Report – Review of Higher Education in Ireland

4.1. DES Colloquium

DES confirmed by letter to C.H.I.U. dated 2nd February, 2005 that a second Colloquium would be held on 14th February, 2005. The reconvened Colloquium was stated to be the beginning of a series of focussed discussions on aspects of the OECD Report on Higher Education in Ireland and its implications for the development of a unified strategy for the future of the higher education sector. The agenda set for the meeting by DES comprised those aspects of the Report relating to the TEA, the strategic management of the higher education system and the management of the institutions, in essence the recommendations in Chapters 4, 5 and 8 of the OECD Report.

C.H.I.U. prepared a brief “*General Statement of Position*” for the Colloquium which was circulated in advance of the meeting. C.H.I.U. representatives were Dr. F. von Prondzynski, Dr. J. Hegarty, Dr. I. Ó Muricheartaigh, M. McGrath. Dr. Eddie Molloy acted as facilitator and Minister Hanafin and Ms. Brigid McManus, Secretary General, DES participated. From a C.H.I.U. point of view the Colloquium was unsatisfactory in that early discussion was dominated by the issue of transfer of the IOTs to the HEA/TEA and there was no focussed discussion on the need to articulate the national objectives for the higher education sector as a context for dialogue on recommendations relating to structure, management or funding of the sector.

It appears that the Colloquium format is unlikely to be used as a means of advancing consideration/implementation of the OECD Report recommendations. In this regard, the Minister brought a memorandum to government on the OECD Report on 22nd March, 2005. According to reports, the government has endorsed the OECD Report and the Minister is set to bring forward proposals in the Autumn.

4.2. Seanad Éireann Debate

Seanad Éireann debated the OECD Report on Higher Education in Ireland on 22nd February, 2005. The Minister made a statement to the Seanad to launch the debate and received strong support for saying “*that the reintroduction of fees has been clearly rejected by this Government and is off the agenda*”. While she stated that “*the need for greater investment and the challenge of identifying practical means for realising that remains very much on the agenda*”, she placed huge importance on the need for institutions to diversify their funding sources as an answer to the investment dilemma. This was fastened onto by the Senators as a type of magic solution without examining or discussing how diversifying funding sources could be expected to yield meaningful additional funding.

5. Access

5.1. National Access Office

The National Access Office has prioritised a number of action points within its national plan - “*Achieving Equity of Access to Higher Education*”. Arrangements have been made at her request for Dr. Trant, Head of the National Office, to discuss how progress might be made on the following matters with the Registrars Group on 4th April, 2005:-

- How best to evaluate existing access programmes for each of the four under-represented groups in higher education,
- Development of comprehensive access policies and targets within institutions,
- Collection of data on participation in higher education by under-represented groups,
- Linking financial resources to quantitative and qualitative indicators of progress.

The Registrars’ Group will also discuss the C.H.I.U. initiative on access with Dr. Trant. The National Office has published proceedings of its conference on “*Setting an Agenda for Action in Ireland*” held in December, 2004 [copy available on HEA website].

5.2. Participation Rates

The HEA published a report on 11th March, 2005 entitled “*A Review of Higher Education Participation in 2003*” commissioned from Fitzpatrick Associates and the ESRI. While the Report’s figures are based on all 36,346 new entrants to higher education in 2003, the findings on social background are based on a sample of 3,400 new entrants and tend to be regarded, therefore, as more indicative than definite, and final conclusions should await the full report according to the HEA. Findings of the Report include the following:-

- Participation in higher education in Ireland has passed the 50% mark for the first time,
- In the period 1998-2003, the admission rate (i.e. new entrants to higher education as a percentage of 17-19 year olds) grew from 44% in 1998 to 54% in 2003, an increase of 10 percentage points,
- Between 1998 and 2003 all 26 counties experienced an increase in their admission rates to higher education, i.e. in all counties the number of new entrants to higher education as a percentage of 17-19 year olds increased,
- 20 of the 26 counties had admission rates to higher education equal to or greater than the national average of 54%,
- The counties with the highest rates of admission were Leitrim (75%), Longford (67%), Clare (66%), Kerry (66%), Mayo (65%), Galway (64%),
- The situation in Dublin shows that the admission rate has risen by 5 percentage points to 45% over the period with increases in 17 of the City’s 21 postal districts, with
 - Dublin 11 (Finglas-Ballymun) up 13 percentage points to 27%,
 - Dublin 12 (Crumlin-Kimmage) up 12 percentage points to 32%,
 - Dublin 24 (Tallaght-Firhouse) up 10 percentage points to 36%
- Women formed the majority of new entrants to universities (58%) and Colleges of Education (86%), while men were in the majority in Institutes of Technology (56%) and other Colleges (54%),

Social background of new entrants: While figures above are based on all 36,346 new entrants to higher education in 2003, the findings on social background are based on an achieved sample of 3,400 new entrants. These findings are therefore, according to the HEA, more indicative than definitive. Key findings are:-

- The general trend of enhanced equality of access since 1980 has been maintained,
- In particular, the participation rate of some of the lower groups, particularly skilled manual, semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, and other non-manual workers appears to have increased substantially,
- The participation rate for other groups, higher professionals, lower professionals, employers and managers and salaried and intermediate non-manual employees appear to have declined somewhat. The changes in participation rates are reflecting the increasing shares of these groups in the population age group,
- In general, the report finds that the share of new entrants from nearly all categories has remained relatively constant.

The report is available on the HEA website.

5.3. *Students with Disabilities*

Minister Hanafin launched a learning resource pack for her third level academic staff entitled *Creating an Accessible Curriculum* on 7th March, 2004. The aim of the pack is to provide staff with insights and information to assist them in understanding and supporting the range of needs of students with disabilities. The pack was produced as a partnership project between UCC, DIT and AHEAD.

6. *Third Level Enrolment Projections*

DES has been preparing projections of third level, full-time enrolment for more than a year at this stage. Even though the HEA provided their own projections of enrolment to the OECD Review Team it is not clear whether the DES provided the OECD Team with its estimated projections. The OECD Report refers to HEA projections on increased age participation rate of 66% by 2015 and also states – “*that in spite of the downward economic trend, student numbers may continue to rise though at a slower rate than in the past*”.

For informed planning and implementation action on the OECD Report, it is essential that the best information possible be available on student enrolment projections and the assumptions underlying them. In this regard, DES projections have not yet been published even though the Irish Independent reported on them in some detail on 4th February, 2005.

The projected full-time enrolments at third level are in Table 1.3 [page 9] with explanation provided on page 8, and at Section 2.5 [pages 17-23]. The table shows increases in enrolments of 9% from 2001/02 to 2004/05 and projects increases in enrolments of 20% or 11.5% (depending on assumptions) from the current academic year to 2010/11. There is a brief commentary on key policy issues for third level in Section 9.

7. International Developments

7.1. Bologna Conferences/Seminars

7.1.1. DES National Conference

The DES held a national conference on Bologna Process entitled “*From Ireland to Bergen – What the Bologna Process means for Irish Higher Education Institutions*”. Minister Hanafin opened the Conference and presentations were made on behalf of NQAI, C.H.I.U. USI, CODIT and HETAC. The participants found the presentation made by Sean Ó Foghlú, entitled “*Demythologising the Bologna Cycles*” to be particularly helpful. Dr. Pádraig Walsh, C.H.I.U. nominated Bologna promoter, made a presentation on behalf of C.H.I.U.

7.1.2. Doctoral Programmes for the European Knowledge Society

At their Berlin meeting in September 2003, European Ministers called for increased mobility at the doctoral and postdoctoral levels and encouraged institutions to increase their co-operation in doctoral studies and the training of young researchers. Taking up this challenge a Bologna Seminar “*Doctoral Programmes for the European Knowledge Society*” took place in Salzburg from 3-5 February 2005 organised by EUA, the Austrian Ministry of Education, Science and Culture as well as the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. A large number of participants from all over Europe and the USA (more than 300 persons in total) was a clear sign of the importance of the topic for both governments and universities. The main objective of the seminar was to discuss various aspects of doctoral programmes as the third cycle in the Bologna process, to reach a set of conclusions, identify key challenges and make recommendations for action to be undertaken in the period 2005-2007. It was agreed that the third cycle differs from the first and second cycles and needs more flexibility in structure and organisation. Diversity in doctoral programmes was considered a strength that needs to be protected if based on quality assessment. The next period 2005-2007 in the Bologna process should be devoted to discussions on doctoral programmes and taken as a priority for governments and universities.

7.1.3. Bologna Seminar on Social Dimension of European Higher Education Area

This Bologna Seminar, held at the Sorbonne in Paris from 27-28 February 2005, focused on the social dimension of the European higher education area as well as the attractiveness and competitiveness of this area in light of the Lisbon agenda. The seminar discussed how these two guidelines might co-exist, contradict one another, and/or depend on each other. The conclusions and recommendations of the Seminar suggest that the Bologna process needs to increase and strengthen its focus on the social dimension; it must become a priority as it is a necessary precondition for sustainable development under the Lisbon strategy lines. The social dimension is a shared undertaking and therefore the public responsibility for, as well as of, higher education and research is evermore important. Presentations, conclusions and recommendations are available on the Bologna process website [www.bolognabergen2005.no/].

7.2. *Bologna - EHEA and QA*

In the Berlin Communiqué of 19th September, 2003 the European Ministers of the signatory states invited the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (EHQA) ‘through its members, in co-operation with the EUA, EURASHE, and ESIB’, to develop ‘an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance’ and to ‘explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies, and to report back through the Bologna Follow-up Group to Ministers in 2005’. The Ministers also asked ENQA to take due account ‘of the expertise of other quality assurance associations and networks’.

In response to this request, a report has been prepared with the approval of all the organisations mentioned in the Communiqué, including the EUA. The report entitled “*Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*”, is directed at the European Ministers of Education but has already been circulated to state bodies and other agencies with an interest in quality assurance in higher education. The report is being seen as a first step on the road to the establishment of a widely shared set of underpinning values, expectations and good practice in relation to quality and its assurance, by institutions and agencies across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The report consists of four chapters – (1) context, aims and principles, (2) standards and guidelines for quality assurance, (3) a peer review system for quality assurance agencies, and (4) future perspectives and challenges. It states that the main results and recommendations are:-

- There will be European standards for internal and external quality assurance, for external quality assurance agencies,
- European quality assurance agencies will be expected to submit themselves to a cyclical review within five years,
- There will be an emphasis on subsidiarity, with reviews being undertaken nationally where possible,
- A European register of quality assurance agencies will be produced,
- A European Register Committee will act as gatekeeper for the inclusion of agencies in the register,
- A European Consultative Forum for Quality Assurance in Higher Education will be established.

When the recommendations are implemented:-

- The consistency of quality assurance across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) will be improved by the use of agreed standards and guidelines,
- Higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies across the EHEA will be able to use common reference points for quality assurance,
- The register will make it easier to identify professional and credible agencies,
- Procedures for the recognition of qualifications will be strengthened,
- The credibility of the work of quality assurance agencies will be enhanced,

- The exchange of viewpoints and experiences amongst agencies and other key stakeholders (including higher education institutions, students and labour market representatives) will be enhanced through the work to the European Consultative Forum for Quality Assurance in Higher Education,
- The mutual trust among institutions and agencies will grow.
- The move toward mutual recognition will be assisted.

The report is likely to be adopted by the Ministers meeting in Bergen.

7.3. *Bologna/EHEA and Framework for Qualifications*

As part of the Bologna Process the NQAI has been heavily engaged at a European level in preparing a report entitled “*A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*”. The report concerns the elaboration of qualifications frameworks as called for by Ministers in the Berlin Communiqué; it makes recommendations and proposals for an overarching *Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area [EHEA]*, and offers advice on good practice in the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks for higher education qualifications.

The report includes six chapters that cover:-

1. The context – higher education qualifications in Europe
2. National framework of qualifications in higher education
3. The framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area
4. Linking frameworks of qualifications in higher education
5. Frameworks for higher education and for other educational areas
6. Conclusions

The report has been published [http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050218_QF_EHEA.pdf] and is referred to in the draft Bergen Communiqué and will be adopted by the European Ministers.

7.4. *Bologna Process Stocktaking*

The Working Group preparing for the Bergen Meeting of Ministers has developed criteria for measuring progress on the three Bologna action lines: Quality Assurance, Two-Cycle Degree System, and Recognition of Degrees and Periods of Study. Criteria and values have been provisionally assigned to Ireland on which views and comments have been sought by DES.

7.5. *Bergen Communiqué*

A draft Communiqué is being prepared for the Bologna Ministers for Education next meeting in Bergen. Irish inputs to the drafting are being made through DES.

7.6. *EUA*

7.6.1. *EUA Convention*

Professor Georg Winckler, Rector of the University of Vienna, will be elected new president of the EUA at the EUA General Assembly held in conjunction with the third EUA Convention in Glasgow on 31st March, 2005. The final report from outgoing President, Professor Eric Froment, sets out the achievements of the EUA over the last four years.

7.6.2. *First Joint Masters Programme Catalogue*

EUA launched an online European Joint Masters Programme Catalogue registration in January 2005 and has requested co-ordinators of existing programmes to contribute to this first public catalogue by entering basic programme and contact information. Based on lessons learned from EUA's Joint Masters Project and the continued interest in developing and sustaining joint Masters in Europe, the catalogue is intended to improve access to information about existing programmes for institutions and academics seeking partners, as well as for prospective students. The catalogue goes on the EUA website in April 2005, and coordinators are being strongly encouraged by the EUA to register their programme as soon as possible. Only one entry per network by the programme coordinator is requested.

7.7. *EU*

7.7.1. *Europass*

The European Commission, under the Luxembourg Presidency, officially launched the implementation of the Europass at a conference on 31 January - 1 February 2005 following its approval by the European Parliament and Council on 15 December 2004. The Europass is intended to help individuals have their skills and qualifications recognised and understood on the European level as well as promoting and facilitating mobility across borders. The Europass will consist of five documents in the context of lifelong learning: a formatted curricula vitae (CV), a language portfolio, mobility experience, a diploma supplement for higher education and a certificate supplement for vocational training. The implementation of the Europass represents a clear link to the Bologna Process as it includes the Diploma Supplement (DS) which all European higher education institutions are supposed to supply to students graduating from 2005 onwards. In addition, transparency in qualifications at European levels will also be of great importance in the context of the development of a European Qualifications Framework.

7.7.2. *EC Conferences*

The Directorate-General Education and Culture organised a conference in Brussels entitled "*Enabling European Higher Education to Make its Full Contribution to the Knowledge Economy and Society*" on 10 February 2005. It brought together governmental policy makers, higher education experts and representatives of European associations involved in higher education to discuss: the outcomes of current expert/research work related to higher education; the implications of higher education in the Lisbon Strategy; the priorities for future action at national and EU level; as well as providing a forum of exchange for policy makers and experts on the benefits of investment and change/reforms. A seminar, organised by the University Forum of the Directorate-General Research on "*Securing the future of Europe's Research*

Universities & Consolidating Europe's research base", was held in Brussels on 3rd March, 2005.

8. International Students/Relations

8.1. China

8.1.1. HEA Follow-up

As a follow-up to the Irish Trade Mission to China in January 2005 led by the Taoiseach, the Minister for Education and Science requested the HEA's support in canvassing a group of senior academics to explore further collaborative opportunities and making early arrangements for the further contacts with China that had been agreed. These include –

- A working group of senior Irish academics to be convened to explore practical steps for new collaborative initiatives with China. The proposed visit of a Chinese Working Group on the Mutual Recognition of Qualifications to Ireland in April might provide an early opportunity to promote whatever proposals emerge from the deliberations of this group,
- A series of joint workshops to be convened between leading Irish and Chinese researchers in their fields with a view to identifying collaborative research possibilities. HEA, to be asked to lead a visit of Irish researchers to China later this year to take this forward,
- The HEA to invite proposals for the establishment of an Institute of Chinese Studies in an Irish university. This is aimed at deepening understanding in Ireland of Chinese culture and language as part of wider efforts to promote mutual understanding and friendship between the two countries,
- The offer of three Government of Ireland post-graduate scholarships for Chinese students to come to Ireland to study. The fields of software, electronic engineering and hospitality studies have been identified as the areas of interest.

In response to the Minister's request for HEA assistance in inviting proposals for the establishment of an Institute of Chinese Studies, the HEA has indicated that –

- it would enter into discussion with the Chinese Embassy to explore their views on the role and function of such an Institute,
- it was pressing UCC and UCD for information on their joint proposal to establish an "institute-type faculty",
- in the event that the UCC/UCD proposal did not meet the objectives of an Institute, HEA advice would be to put a competitive process in place to select a proposal for setting up the Institute [HEA has clarified that a competitive process would be a prerequisite for the allocation of any additional state funding for an institute],
- collaboration between Irish universities could usefully be encouraged by making it a criterion for award of the Institute.

The HEA has undertaken to set up both a Steering Group and Technical Working Group to give further consideration of opportunities for collaboration with China and to consider a visit of

Irish researchers to China later this year. The particular focus of the Group will be to examine how the higher education sector might, as a whole, engage in collaboration with the Chinese sector, and to identify sectoral priorities above and beyond the plans of individual institutions.

HEA has requested C.H.I.U. to nominate four/five representatives at senior officer (Registrar) level with strong internationalisation experience to the Steering Group. The Council of Directors is being requested to make similar nominations. The technical group will be a smaller group, with some members of the steering group, as well as representatives of the HEA and NQAI.

The Registrars' Group propose to meet on 4th April, 2005 with university international officers on international student issues arising from the recent DES Report and the China visit.

8.1.2. *China/Ireland Qualifications Mutual Recognition Agreement*

A meeting took place on 21st March, 2005 between a Chinese delegation and the Irish Implementation Group convened by NQAI with a view to progressing the joint governments' commitment to reaching an agreement on the Mutual recognition of qualifications. Dr. A. Halpin represented C.H.I.U. It is anticipated that an agreement should be finalised and an Irish visit to China was provisionally set for late June 2005 for the signing of the agreement.

8.1.3. *Overseas Chinese Student Numbers*

There has been a big drop (25% has been reported) in the numbers of overseas Chinese students enrolling in UK universities. Reasons advanced for the drop include:-

- media reports of decadent student life in Britain,
- Chinese labour market no longer puts a big premium on having a foreign degree: local work experience counts for more,
- Visas hassle,
- Strong sterling.

8.2. *USA*

Minister Hanafin met with representatives of third level institutions in Philadelphia on 14th March, 2005. The meeting was aimed at strengthening ties already made with Irish institutions.

Irish universities (North and South) will be participating in the NAFSA Fair/Exhibition in Seattle in early June, 2005 under the "Irish Universities" banner. They have agreed to join the Hobsons/NASFA online expo.

8.3. *Education Ireland Conference*

IEBI is organising an Education Ireland Conference to take place on 16th/17th May, 2005. The conference is being supported by DES and Enterprise Ireland. IEBI's motivation for arranging the conference is to develop consensus among the stakeholders in international education on developments leading to the establishment of a new statutory body, Education Ireland announced by Minister Hanafin last November. The new body is to oversee the promotion and

development of Ireland as an international centre of excellence in education and is to incorporate IEBI and ACELS. It is also to have responsibility for issuing and monitoring a Quality Mark which will cover academic and welfare standards which an international student can expect to experience in Ireland.

IEBI acknowledges that the university sector plays a very important role in relation to international students in Ireland, and is anxious that the University Heads would have an input into the conference. The draft programme for the conference has been framed so as to have a national or state response as well as institutional responses to the establishment of the new body. C.H.I.U. has been invited to nominate a speaker/contributor for the conference.

8.4. *Transnational Higher Education*

Transnational higher education has become an increasingly widespread over recent years. The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education has produced a briefing paper on issues arising from the increased higher education provision offered by one country in another (excluding provision where solely the student travels abroad). The briefing paper consists of two parts examining different regulatory models concerning imported higher education. Part 1 examines three models: no regulations, liberal and moderately liberal. Part 2 examines three further approaches: liberal moving towards more restrictive (e.g. Malaysia), restrictive moving towards more liberal (e.g. Japan), and very restrictive (e.g. South Africa, United Arab Emirates). It concludes with an analysis of all six regulatory models and emerging trends.

The report provides useful background information for consideration of any initiatives in this area of activity by Irish universities.

9. Quality Assurance

9.1. *EUA Review of QA Procedures.*

The EUA Review Teams have completed the Evaluation Reports on the seven universities and on the sector. The seven university reports were accepted formally by the IUQB at meetings held on the 15th February (TCD, NUI Galway and UL), 2nd March (UCC) and the 15th March (DCU, UCD and NUI Maynooth). The reports were forwarded immediately to the respective universities. In order to align the release of all responses and reports (university and sectoral) the universities were subsequently invited to respond to the reports by the 30th March 2005.

The IUQB have been invited by the HEA to draw up an action-orientated implementation plan in respect to the findings of the EUA sectoral report and the report of the High Level Reference Panel. The IUQB has also been invited by the HEA to provide a six-monthly update report on progress and development in this area.

9.2. *IUQB*

9.2.1. *Board Meeting*

The sixth meeting of the Board took place on 15th February 2005 in the C.H.I.U. Boardroom. The Strategic Plan of the IUQB was adopted by the Board. It was agreed that a modified version of the plan would be made available on the IUQB web site. It was acknowledged that

the plan would require periodic updating. The Board was informed that interviews for the vacant position of CEO had taken place on the 14th February and that the interview panel had reached a unanimous decision which was presented to the Board. The Board agreed with the proposed appointment and it was proposed that negotiations should proceed immediately.

Three of the EUA University Quality Reviews were formally accepted by the Board namely that of NUI Galway, the University of Limerick and TCD. A copy of the EUA Sectoral report was also made available to the members present. It was agreed that the reports were not for distribution as the Review process had not yet reached its final stage. The Programme Manager gave a brief overview of some of the key findings of the Sectoral Report.

The Programme Manager reported on developments in the six sectoral projects under way. A date was set, subject to confirmation, of the 22nd - 23rd May 2005 for the next meeting of the Board.

9.2.2. *Sectoral Projects*

Student Support Services: The Experts meeting took place on 11th March 2005 in the Gresham Hotel with invited speakers from the US and the UK. Over 110 delegates were in attendance with representation from a cross section of the Student Support Service units in the seven universities. There was also good student representation. Delegates from the IoT and other HE sectors were in attendance. An interim report for the project was distributed. An editorial group will now be established to begin work on the booklet of best practice.

Teaching and Learning in Mathematics: The additional data required for this project is currently being collated. This will be followed by a national conference in June 2005 and the publication of the booklet of best practice.

Strategic Planning in Academic Departments: Two departments/schools in each university are currently working on their strategic plans and their SWOT analysis. A date for a return visit by the facilitator, at a central location, in late April/early May is currently being organised. This visit will function to assist the departments/schools to streamline their strategic plans.

Improving Teaching and Learning: Six of the seven positions of Head/Directors of Teaching and Learning are now in position in the universities. Therefore this project is in a position to commence. A preliminary meeting of the heads, the project leader, (Professor Áine Hyland, UCC) and Dr Teresa Lee (IUQB) has now been set for the 10th May 2005 to identify the key areas that must be discussed at university level and to set out the time schedule for completion of the project.

Work is advancing on the projects '*Academic Workloads*' and '*Institutional Research*'.

9.2.3 *CEO Post*

Interviews took place on the 14th February 2005. It is hoped that the successful candidate will be able to take up the post of Chief Executive Officer shortly. In the interim period Dr. Teresa Lee is filling the position on an acting basis.

9.3. *Irish Higher Education Quality Network*

A meeting of the IHEQN was held on 24th January 2005 in the offices of the HEA. A draft operational principles document prepared by a sub-group of the IHEQN, for QA/QI in Irish higher education and training was distributed. The draft was produced by collating information and practices from across the sector (DIT, HETAC and the Universities) with the common operational principles extracted. It was noted that there was a substantial amount of common practice between the different sectors. The final document will be presented at the next meeting of the IHEQN in April 2005. with the aim of adopting the document at this meeting so that it would be available, in conjunction with the previously agreed ‘principles of good practice’ document, as a statement of the national position on quality assurance going into the Bergen meeting of ministers.

European Consortium for Accreditation: Code of Good Practice: The Network was briefed on the European Consortium of Accreditation and its activities. The consortium aims to achieve mutual recognition of accreditation decisions among the participants. To achieve this, the Consortium has developed and agreed a Code of Good Practice, which guarantees comparability of accreditation procedures throughout Europe and defines internal quality assurance measures of accreditation organisations. A copy of the Code is available at: <http://www.eacaconsortium.net/index.php?section=content&id=14>

9.4. *Consultation /Networking*

The Acting CEO attended:

- The EUA Conference: ‘Doctoral Programmes for the European Knowledge Society’, 3-4th February 2005 held in Salzburg, Austria, at which copies of the IUQB booklet “Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities” were distributed.
- The NQAI meeting: ‘Implementing the National Framework of Qualifications’ 24-25th February 2005 held in Galway.
- The National Conference on Bologna Process: ‘From Ireland to Bergen- What the Bologna Process means for Irish Higher Education Institutions’ on 9th March 2005.
- The INQAHEE Biennial Conference: ‘Quality, Assurance and Diversity’, 29th March-1st April 2005, held in Wellington, New Zealand.

10. **NQAI**

10.1. *National Conference*

Over 350 participants attended a major NQAI national conference in Galway on 24/25 February, 2005 to review progress in the implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications. The conference was attended by representatives from universities and a wide spread of education and training institutions and awarding bodies, from learner groups, trade

unions, the world of business, Government Departments, State bodies and from the community and voluntary sector.

Since the introduction of the Framework in October 2003, a wide range of stakeholders in learning has engaged in a complex process of implementation and the conference provided an opportunity to review progress to date. The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment addressed the conference. Of particular interest were presentations made on Credit Accumulation and Lifelong Learning.

Credit Accumulation: Dr. Jim Murray made a presentation on NQAI thinking on a national approach to credit.

Lifelong Learning: Dr. Patrick Werquin, OECD, in his presentation emphasised the role of National Qualifications systems in promoting LLL. He reported that the OECD had identified 20 mechanisms for changing aspects of a qualifications system so that lifelong learning is enhanced in some way.

10.2. Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Awards

NQAI has prepared a document with a view to eliciting opinions on the issues of Titles of Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Awards. The NQAI's intention is to explore and advance consideration of the issue. The document has been circulated to universities for views and comments by 8th April, if possible.

11. Ombudsman

The proposal to extend the remit of the Ombudsman to include the universities was discussed at C.H.I.U. meetings on 31st January, 2005. It was agreed to set up a working group comprising two each from the Secretaries and Registrars' Group and the Director. The Group met on 4th March, 2005 and agreed the terms of a letter to issue from C.H.I.U. to DES. The letter suggested *inter alia* that the section 5(1)(a)(iii) of the Ombudsman Act 1980 which excludes action in relation to a person who has a right of appeal, reference or review to, or before a person other than a Department of State, or other specified persons in the First Schedule of the Act appeared to exclude investigations by the Ombudsman into actions taken by a university having regard to the provisions of Sections 26(1) and 2(c) of the Universities Act 1997.

12. Copyright

The C.H.I.U. Copyright Working Group reviewed developments in relation to the ICLA licence at its meeting on 21st February, 2005. It noted that NUIG, NUIM, UCD and TCD either had made payment or were in the process of making payment to ICLA of €3.00 per student FTE. The payments at €3.00 had been acknowledged as payments on account. The next meeting of the Group is on 11th April, 2005.

13. Lifelong Learning

FÁS has invited applications from interested parties for ESF support under the “Training the People in Employment” programme [notice posted on 21st March, 2005]. Expressions of interest are being sought from national and regional organisations with a capacity to organise, manage and deliver or procure the delivery of a significant and relevant volume of training. A major emphasis is being placed on training that will raise the qualifications of each individual participant. Training is organised in the following areas:-

- Owner manager development
- Management Development
- Entrepreneurship training, e.g. Craft workers, etc.
- Workers at risk of becoming unemployed,
- Workers seeking new skills
- Accreditation of prior learning
- Work-based education
 - Training aimed at specific sectors
 - Training in and for new technologies
 - Excellence through people HR standards

It appears that DETE has found it difficult to develop programmes to utilise funding available for employment training and there could be more initiatives of interest to the universities. Strategically, it would be important for universities, either individually or collectively, to consider submitting expressions of interest.

14. Civic Engagement

An International Conference on Civic Engagement and Service Learning is being hosted by the National University of Ireland Galway on 23rd and 24th June, 2005. The Conference will address the civic mission of higher education, focussing on the links between universities, students and the wider society. It will explore issues such as embedding “service learning” activity in academic programmes, civic education, voluntarism and participative democracy, as well as tackling practical issues of implementation, curriculum design and assessment. As discussed at the Plenary meeting on NUIG on 16th November, 2004 this form of learning through active participation is vitally important in today’s world where civic engagement and participation are essential to social change and active democracy. International experts in the field from the US, South Africa and the UK will be keynote speakers.

15. C.H.I.U. Issues

15.1. Changes to C.H.I.U. Constitution

C.H.I.U. solicitors are making the necessary arrangements for the formal amendment of Articles and Memorandum of Association to provide for changes agreed.

15.2. Accommodation

Renovation of No. 48, Merrion Square is progressing and it is likely that the premises will be ready for occupation by C.H.I.U. in July 2005.

15.3. Staff Changes

Interviews were held for the post of Assistant Director [Academic Affairs] (part-time). The position has been offered to the successful candidate who will be available to take up duty at the end of April 2005.

15.4. Sectoral Agenda

C.H.I.U. Council met on 9th March, 2005 and discussed the need for universities to agree and adhere to a clear sectoral agenda on issues of common concern and interest. A brief international perspective on the challenges facing universities is provided in the report of the 4th Glion Colloquium entitled “*Reinventing the Research Universities*”.

16. Teaching Council

Minister Hanafin launched the Teaching Council on 28th February, 2005. The Council has 37 Members including two members nominated through C.H.I.U. – Professor Sheelagh Drudy, UCD, and Dr. Jim Gleeson, UL.

When fully established the Teaching Council’s main functions will include –

- Establishing a register of all teachers,
- Advising the Minister for Education and Science on the minimum standards of education attainment required for entry into initial teacher education programmes,
- Establishing procedures and criteria for the prohibition and full recognition of new entrants into the teaching profession,
- Drawing up codes of professional practice for teachers and offer guidance on professional conduct as deemed necessary,
- Investigating and, where appropriate, applying sanctions in relation to the professional misconduct or fitness to practice of any member,
- Setting out a framework for the in-career professional development of teachers,
- Advising the Minister for Education and Science on teacher supply and demand.