

IUA Review [08/1] for IUA Meetings in UL on 28th January, 2008.

	Section	Page No.
1.	Strategy Process	4.
2.	Research	4.
2.1.	VP/Deans of Research Group	4.
2.2.	National Research Policy	4.
2.2.1.	<i>Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation [SSTI] 2006-2013</i>	4.
2.2.2.	<i>Advisory Science Council [ASC] – Research Careers</i>	5.
2.3.	European Research Policy	5.
2.3.1.	<i>European Research Area [ERA] Consultation</i>	5.
2.4.	Higher Education Authority	6.
2.4.1.	<i>PRTL Cycle 5</i>	6.
2.5.	Science Foundation Ireland	6.
2.5.1.	<i>Value for Money [VFM] Review</i>	6.
2.5.2.	<i>Meeting with SFI Director General, Frank Gannon</i>	6.
2.5.3.	<i>Research Overheads</i>	6.
2.6.	Enterprise Ireland – RTDI Audits	7.
2.7.	Enterprise Partnership Programme [IRCSET]	7.
2.8.	Co-ordination of Research Audits	7.
2.9.	Irish Researcher Mobility Office and Web Portal	8.
2.9.1.	<i>Implementation of Third Country Directive</i>	8.
2.9.2.	<i>Statistics</i>	8.
2.9.3.	<i>ERAMORE FP7 Co-ordination Action</i>	9.
2.10.	EU Seventh Framework Programme	9.
2.10.1.	<i>IUA Marie Curie Office</i>	9.
2.10.2.	<i>‘People’ [Marie Curie] Programme</i>	10.
2.10.3.	<i>‘Research Potential’ Programme</i>	11.
2.10.4.	<i>European Network of National Contact Points for the ‘People’ [Marie Curie] Programme [“Mobility NCPs”]</i>	11
2.10.5.	<i>FP7 National Support Structure</i>	12.
2.11.	Expertiseireland.com	12.
3.	Strategic Innovation Fund	13.
3.1.	SIF Cycle 1	13.

3.2.	SIF Cycle II	13.
4.	Funding	13.
4.1.	Recurrent Funding	13.
4.1.1.	<i>Current Funding 2006/2007</i>	13.
4.1.2.	<i>Tuition Fee Increases Submission 2008/2009</i>	14.
4.1.3.	<i>Recurrent Grant Allocation Model [RGAM]</i>	14.
4.1.4.	<i>Skills Funding</i>	14.
4.2.	Pension Issues	15.
4.3.	Full Economic Costing System	15.
4.4.	Strategic Planning & Decision Support SIF Project	15.
4.5.	Tax Relief at Source on Tuition Fees	16.
5.	HEA/Department of Education & Science	16.
5.1.	Modernisation of maintenance Grant Payments	16.
5.2.	Framework for Departures from Approved Levels of Remuneration	18.
5.3.	Framework for the Payment by Corporations of Remuneration to University Employees	18.
5.4.	Code of Governance	18.
5.5.	Higher Education “Access/Foundation” Courses	19.
6.	Access	19.
6.1.	SIF Cycle 1 – Equity of Access Project	19.
6.1.1.	<i>HEAR</i>	19.
6.1.2.	<i>Supplementary Admission – Applicants with a Disability</i>	20.
6.1.3.	<i>Access – Admissions Policies on Non-Standard Entry</i>	20.
7.	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland	20.
7.1.	Placement of University Awards on the National Framework of Qualifications	20.
7.2.	IUA / NQAI Framework Implementation Network	20.
7.3.	OECD Project on the Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning	21.
7.4.	Study of the Implementation & Impact of the National Framework of Qualifications	21.
8.	Communications / Events	21.
8.1.	Marketing the University Sector & IUA Services	21.
8.1.1.	<i>4th Level Ireland Website Development</i>	21.
8.1.2.	<i>4th Issue – IUA e-Newsletter</i>	22.
8.1.3.	<i>Communications Officers Group Meeting</i>	22.
8.2.	International Affairs	22.
8.2.1.	<i>Production of Marketing Materials</i>	22.

8.2.2.	<i>Mexican Advert for Irish Universities</i>	22.
8.3.	Events	22.
8.3.1.	<i>Marie Curie Brochure Launch – Attracting Talented Researchers to Ireland</i>	22.
8.3.2.	<i>Marie Curie Academia – Partnerships and Pathways [IAPP] Scheme</i>	22.
8.3.3.	<i>Intervarsity Photography Competition</i>	23.
8.4.	Publications	23.
8.4.1.	<i>4th Level Ireland e-Brochures</i>	23.
8.4.2.	<i>Attracting Talented Researchers to Ireland – A Review of the Marie Curie Programme</i>	23.
9.	IUQB / Quality Assurance	23.
9.1.	IUQB Matters	23.
9.1.1.	<i>IUQB Meetings</i>	23.
9.1.2.	<i>IUQB Budget 2007-2008</i>	24.
9.1.3.	<i>Charitable Status Application</i>	24.
9.1.4.	<i>New IUQB Website</i>	24.
9.1.5.	<i>External Review of IUQB commissioned by the HEA</i>	24.
9.1.6.	<i>Sectoral Project Activities</i>	24.
9.1.7.	<i>IUQB Nationally and Internationally</i>	25.
10.	Charities Bill 2007	25.
11.	Valuations Act 2001	25.
12.	Copyright	25.

IUA Review [08/1] for IUA Meetings in University of Limerick, 28th January, 2008.

1. Strategy Process

An announcement from DES is anticipated in the near future regarding the commencement of a process to develop a long term strategy for Higher Education. IUA has been pressing for the commencement of such a project and for a strong stakeholder involvement in it. As part of IUA's submission to SIF and in the context of the forthcoming Department of Education and Science Departmental Strategy Statement, IUA made a submission setting out key strategic concerns. The document has been previously circulated in sort copies to University management. Additional copies are available from IUA (contact Lia O'Sullivan).

2. Research

2.1 VP/Deans of Research Group

At the first meeting of the year on 16th January, the Group agreed the following priority areas for action in 2008;

- Researcher Careers
- Research Overheads
- Cooperation with Deans of Postgraduate Studies on PhD
- Enterprise Development
- Sectoral Communication on Research Issues

This is in the context of the sector delivering on the SSTI targets and our intent to move from being seen as simply a recipient of funds to being a full partner in the national R&D programme.

2.2. National Research Policy

2.2.1 *Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation 2006-2013*

The SSTI is overseen by two key groups, the Higher Education and Research Group (HERG) and Technology Ireland. The IUA is represented by N. Costello / C. O'Carroll on HERG along with delegates from the key funding agencies and government departments, and the Group is chaired by the Department of Education and Science. At the last meeting of the HERG on 26th November 2007, the IUA arranged a presentation on the SIF project, Full Economic Costing (FEC) by the consultant, Dr. J. Port. There was a long discussion on the topic led by Frank Gannon (DG SFI). The IUA will present developments in Graduate Education to the HERG on 30th January, 2008.

There are currently three active working groups, namely -

- **Research Careers**

The IUA has produced a draft discussion paper on Researcher Careers that outlines the sectoral position on this topic. The document has been circulated to the DES and HEA for information. The proposed framework will be discussed and developed by the VPDOR group. The plan is to identify short, medium and long term issues for action by the universities.

- **High Level Indicators**

This group focuses on the development of a comprehensive and consistent set of indicators to track application of the SSTI and its outcomes over time. As reported previously, the group had been focussing on the development of an indicators framework. This has now subsequently evolved into a progress report on the implementation of key actions in SSTI. The progress report is now forming the focus for the development of appropriate indicators to track and review implementation of the SSTI, and a technical group on indicator development composed of DETE, DES, HEA and Forfás is being established to progress this. The technical group will report back to the full Indicators Working Group with their proposals with a view to agreeing, applying and reporting on those indicators.

- **Capacity Development**

The group has met twice (20th November 2007 and 11th January 2008). The focus of this group for the moment is on graduate education and the IUA has presented sectoral developments through the 4th Level Network. It is clear that there is the impression, amongst the research funding agencies and government departments (apart from HEA), that there is little activity within the universities. We are working to dispel this notion and will be making a full presentation on sectoral developments to the full HERG on 30th January 2008.

2.2.2. Advisory Science Council (ASC) – Research Careers

In parallel to the HERG, the Advisory Science Council (ASC) has been working with Forfás on making recommendations regarding the introduction of researcher careers. We had disputed a number of the recommendations in the report that was based on a survey of researchers by Technopolis, the consultants hired to carry out the study. Following lengthy discussion with ASC / Forfás (and other bodies, HEA etc), ASC has decided not to publish this report, rather they will issue a short report giving their recommendations on research careers in February 2008.

2.3. European Research Policy

2.3.1. European Research Area (ERA) Consultation

The European Commission and the Commissioner for Research (Jan Potocnik) are planning a major announcement that will be a renewal of the Lisbon agenda for R&D at the Spring Competitiveness Council in Slovenia, April 2008.

The basis for this announcement is a result of the consultation on the European Research Area (ERA) Green Paper that was published last year. The national response to the EC Green Paper was submitted to the European Commission in November 2007. This followed a consultation process organised by Forfás. The IUA was deeply involved contributing to the sections on, *Realising a single labour market for researchers and Strengthening research institutions*.

Separately the Assistant Director is part of an EC appointed expert group to advise on ERA policy in the area of researcher careers. The recommendations of this group will feed in to the Spring Council.

2.4. Higher Education Authority

2.4.1. *PRTL* Cycle 5

The call for proposals for Cycle 5 is expected in March 2008, with deadline 2 months later. There will be two steps in the submission process. First, there will be an expression of intent focusing on institutional strategy. The second step will be the submission of a full proposal. While there are no definite figures, the amount will be significantly higher than other cycles. The breakdown will be 75% for capital funding and 25% for recurrent funding. A part of the capital funding will be a targeted element for national specialist facilities. The strategy of the HEA for funding will be informed by the HEA/Forfás Infrastructure Review. The VPDOR group met with the HEA on 16th January 2008 as part of the consultative process on the contents of the Cycle 5 call.

2.5. Science Foundation Ireland

2.5.1. *Value for Money (VFM) Review*

Indecon, the consultants appointed to carry out the review, presented a draft report to the Steering Committee on December 2007. The Research Office has been in consultation with the VPDOR group and has submitted a response to the draft recommendations and report content. The final report is expected in February 2008.

2.5.2. *Meeting with SFI Director General, Frank Gannon*

The VP/Deans of Research met with the DG Frank Gannon and senior SFI staff on 6th December 2007. The meeting was an open discussion on the future plans of SFI and how they will interact with the universities. It is planned to have these consultative meetings every six months.

2.5.3 *Research Overheads*

As reported previously, the HEA had agreed to convene a ‘Research Overheads Group’ to make proposals to the Higher Education Research Group (HERG) on the development of a policy framework for research overheads which will facilitate the costing and funding of the full existing costs of research. The HEA has subsequently indicated that robust data to support any increase in overhead funding would be required and such data was unlikely to be available until the first run of FEC data produced by the ACURAT system

was available. Consequently they are proposing that the overheads group would not be convened until FEC data was available.

2.6. Enterprise Ireland – RTDI Audits

A number of unsatisfactory issues arose in respect of the completion of RTDI audits undertaken on behalf of Enterprise Ireland. The research accountants group wrote to EI in respect of these issues in October 2007 and a representation subsequently met with EI to discuss these in further detail. There was an acknowledgement by EI that the process had been unsatisfactory and had created difficulties for universities but that these had primarily arisen from historical issues and were outside of their direct control. EI and the sector agreed a schedule for completion of the audits. There was a commitment to address these issues for future programmes. In this regard it was noted that EI had developed financial control guidelines for future funding programmes and a number of workshops were held to advise in respect of these guidelines.

2.7. Enterprise Partnership Programme (IRCSET)

This programme funds PhD programmes that are 50% supported by industry. There have been issues around the IP requirements especially in the case of contract with one large company. As a result, the IUA has written to the Director informing him that universities will no longer sign contracts where the sponsoring company has excessive demands on IP. Discussions are ongoing with IRCSET as how to best resolve this problem.

2.8. Co-ordination of Research Audits

The IUA made a proposal to the Standing Group of Research Funding Bodies (Merrion Group) in 2006 on the coordination of research audits. Each university is faced every year with a series of audits from the various funding agencies. While there are differences between the funding agencies, a substantial portion of these audits are repetitive especially when considering financial systems, processes and internal controls. As there had been no response (and the Merrion Group has ceased to be active) the IUA re-submitted this to HERG for consideration and it was discussed at the recent working group meeting on Research Capacity (11th January 2008). The proposal was welcomed by all of the funding agencies and each agency has agreed to consider the implications for their own organisation bringing a response to the next working group meeting on 26th February 2008. The IUA has also been asked to review the proposal in light of the time which has now elapsed and the finance managers group will undertake the review on behalf of the sector.

2.9. Irish Researcher Mobility Office and Web Portal

2.9.1. Implementation of the Third Country Directive

The new scheme for admitting non-EU researchers to Ireland is now in place. The Hosting Agreement system established under the Third Country Directive 2005/71/EC (OJ L 289, 3.11.2005) implements a straightforward, free of charge, mechanism for entry to the state of scientists for a purpose of carrying out research. Under the new Directive,

researchers, together with their spouses and children, will be admitted to Ireland on the basis of a hosting agreement signed up between an accredited research organisation and a researcher. All Irish research organisations in both the private and public sector, which wish to avail of a new scheme in order to employ non-EU researchers, must first be subject to an accreditation process (administered by the Office of Science, Technology and Innovation of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment).

The Researcher Mobility Office of the IUA is playing a vital role in dissemination of information on the Third Country Directive. The office is actively involved in managing the hosting agreement scheme in Ireland. As part of the procedure research organisations notify the Researcher Mobility Office of the details of hosting agreements which have been entered into and also provide that office with copies of relevant documents. The Mobility Office keeps a constantly updated database of all hosting agreements. The Department of Justice and the immigration authorities receive updates of hosting agreements through the Mobility Office for verification purposes. The office co-operates with the DETE and Department of Justice in order to provide effective help and assistance to the researchers employed in the State under the new hosting agreement scheme.

2.9.2. Statistics

Statistical analysis collated prior to the preparation of this report can be summarized as follows:

- 10,852 - Job Searches on the portal (1,864 since last review : 1st September 2007 - 15th January 2008)
- 209 - Job Applications made directly via the portal application facility (54 since last review) but this does not reflect the large number of applications that have been made directly to the organisation
- 1,583- organisations profile searches have been made by registered users (269 since last review)
- 56,686 - Unique visits to the national portal (7,584 since last review)

There are now 2,219 users registered on the portal and this number is continuously growing - (379 since last review). Users can be categorised as follows:

- Early Stage Researchers (Post-graduates) - 883 (148 since last review)
- Experienced Researchers (Post Doc) - 674 (97 since last review)
- Senior Researchers - 146 (19 since last review)
- Undergraduates - 75 (15 since last review)
- Other - 452

The top viewed research organisations are as follows: Athlone Institute of Technology, DCU, DIT, Dundalk Institute of Technology, NUIG and Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology

2.9.3. ERAMORE FP7 Co-ordination Action

Two proposals were submitted to the European Commission in August 2007, following a call for FP7 co-ordination actions within the framework of the European Network of Mobility Centres (ERAMORE). Both of these proposals have been successful and are currently under negotiation.

- The first project, “**ERA-MIND - European Research Area Mobile Researchers in Industry**”, aims at improving the collaboration between researcher mobility centres in different EU member states and associated countries. The project will run for 30 months. The IUA Mobility Office will be leading a work package on “Raising Awareness of Industry Needs and Expectations”. IUA’s share in the overall requested budget of roughly €340,000 is close to €140,000, including six person-months of personnel costs.
- The second project “**MOREBRAIN - From Brain Drain to Brain Gain**”, will investigate the reasons why researchers emigrate from Europe and what new mechanisms could be developed to either re-attract them to Europe or benefit from their expertise in other ways. IUA is the leader of a work package concerned with the implementation of a Mobility Survey and will also be carrying out a number of other activities in the project. The overall requested budget for this project is relatively modest with about €150,000, of which about €40,000 are allocated to IUA, including five person-months of personnel costs.

2.10. EU Seventh Framework Programme

2.10.1. IUA Marie Curie Office

Apart from the day-to-day work of providing practical guidance and assistance to applicants and contractors in the area of the Marie Curie Actions and the Research Potential Programme, the Marie Curie National Contact Point is regularly invited to make contributions to events and working groups concerned with broader issues related to mobility and researcher careers. During the period covered by this report, the Marie Curie NCP contributed as an invited speaker to various international conferences and workshops. In October 2007 she gave a presentation at the “EU 7th Framework Programme Turkey Forum – 4” in Ankara (organised by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey – TÜBİTAK). In November 2007 she followed an invitation by the Portuguese Secretary of State for Science, Technology and Higher Education to give an invited talk at the “High Level Meeting on Modernizing Universities in Europe” in Lisbon, which was part of the Portuguese EU Presidency programme. In December 2007 she travelled to Bonn as an invited speaker at the “7th Workshop of the German

ERAMORE Mobility Centre”, organized by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, where she presented best practice examples from the Irish Researcher Mobility Network.

Further international activities include the participation in the “Career Structure Committee” of the “Initiative for Science in Europe” and active membership in the Advisory Board of the FP6 “Science in Society” Coordination Action “eument-net – Building a European Network of Academic Mentoring Programmes for Women Scientists”.

2.10.2. ‘People’ (Marie Curie) Programme

A new round of calls for the ‘People’ Specific Programme of FP7 was launched in November 2007. A whole number of calls are currently open, with a number of deadlines coming up in March and early-April 2008. These include in particular the “Industry-Academia Partnerships and Pathways (IAPP)” scheme which aims at increasing and facilitating transnational exchanges between non-commercial research organisations and industry, the “Co-funding of Regional, National and International Programmes (COFUND)” scheme which is directed at funding bodies running fellowship schemes involving mobility, as well as the new “International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (IRSES)” which provides support for exchanges of staff between research organizations in Europe and overseas.

In order to support (potential) applicants for these schemes, the IUA Marie Curie Office has organised a number of events.

- For representatives from Irish funding bodies a meeting on the COFUND scheme was organised at the IUA in November 2007, in which Commission officials in charge of the new scheme participated via video conferencing. This meeting will be followed up by a proposal writing workshop for COFUND applicants at the end of January 2008.
- The IAPP scheme received particular attention through a “National Information Event on the Industry-Academia Partnerships and Pathways Scheme” in Dublin in early December 2007, which was co-funded by Enterprise Ireland in the framework of the FP7 National Support Structure. The new IUA brochure of success stories from the Marie Curie programme was also launched at this occasion (see section 8.4.2. for more details).
- A number of targeted workshops on the IAPP scheme will take place at six of the seven Irish universities (all except UCD) as well as Waterford Institute of Technology during the course of January and early February 2008. These events are organised in collaboration with the Research Offices of the participating institutions. They are open to outside participants, and representatives from local industry, technology transfer offices etc. are especially invited to attend.

- Most of these events will also include an introduction to the new IRSES scheme which appears to be not yet very well known among the Irish researcher community.

The National Contact Point also gave invited presentations on the Marie Curie Actions at a number of national events such as the “ERA STRIVE PhD and Fellowship seminar” organized by the Environmental Protection Agency in Dublin in November 2007, the “FP7 information session for the forestry-wood sector in Ireland” organized by InnovaWood in Dublin in December 2007, and the “JETSET winter school” organized by the FP6 Research Training Network “JETSET” at NUI Galway in January 2008.

The IUA Marie Curie Office not only provides information to applicants regarding the eligibility criteria and technical aspects of the proposal submission, but also carries out pre-submission proposal checks, giving feedback on draft proposals, provided these have been submitted to the Marie Curie NCP early enough before the deadline.

At the level of interaction with the European Commission through the ‘People’ Programme Committee, the IUA Marie Curie Office has continued to be very actively involved in the discussions concerning the Work Programme for 2008 as well as the Guides for Applicants for the two new Marie Curie schemes, “Co-funding of Regional, National and International Programmes (COFUND)” and “International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (IRSES)”.

2.10.3. ‘Research Potential’ Programme

As pointed out in the last IUA Review, opportunities for Irish participation in the Research Potential Programme is very limited, due to the focus on “Convergence Regions” and “Outermost Regions of the EU”. Two projects with Irish co-ordinators have been successful in the special call in 2007 addressed to consortia involving at least one partner from a ‘Western Balkan Country’, one of them led by UCC, the other by Ericsson Ireland. The NCP has been invited to contribute with a presentation to the first project meeting of the Ericsson led project which has been scheduled for March.

2.10.4. European Network of National Contact Points for the ‘People’ (Marie Curie) programme (“Mobility NCPs”)

The proposal for a European Network of ‘People’ NCPs (“PeopleNetwork”) that was submitted in August 2007 (requested budget €2 million) has been retained for funding and is currently in the negotiation phase. IUA will lead a work package within this project aimed at providing feedback to the Commission on the implementation of the Marie Curie programme, but also on more general policy issues related to researcher mobility. The project will run for three years; IUA’s share in the requested budget is about €110,000 and includes personnel costs for 11 person-months.

2.10.5. FP7 National Support Structure

As a member of the FP7 National Support Network, the IUA Marie Curie Office has participated in a number of events organised by the network. This included in particular a full-day team building workshop in Portlaoise in October 2007 and a training workshop for content providers and administrators of the new FP7 national portal in January 2008.

2.11. Expertiseireland.com

A proposal for the definition phase of a new National Research Platform has been submitted for funding as part of IUA's overall SIF Cycle II Universities sectoral proposal. The scoping phase is scheduled to run for one year, the intention being that the execution of the resultant scoping and definition plan would be submitted to the Interdepartmental Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation for funding from overall SSTI resources. The academic output captured by the *expertiseireland.com* portal is proposed to be used as a building block for this new Platform.

Under the banner of the *expertiseireland.com* website considerable progress has been made in mining the research support systems of the higher education institutions and creating, in a single web-based location, profiles of knowledge experts. The portal represents the collaboration and commitment of the higher education and public sectors to the promotion of research from Ireland, as evidenced by daily uploads of information. Currently, the number of experts contributing expert profiles to the portal stands at 5,564 as of 14th January, 2008. The breakdown is as follows:

Trinity College Dublin	950
Dublin Institute of Technology	686
University College Dublin	658
University of Ulster	613
Dublin City University	540
National University of Ireland, Galway	511
University College Cork	506
Queen's University Belfast	412
University of Limerick	323
National University of Ireland, Maynooth	254
Athlone Institute of Technology	28
Waterford Institute of Technology	20
Letterkenny Institute of Technology	15
Institute of Technology, Tallaght	8
Dundalk Institute of Technology	7

Trinity College Dublin has developed a link from the Institutional Repository to the local Research Support System, and changes have been made to the xml schema for *expertiseireland.com* to allow full integration of this link. Currently TCD are trailblazing testing of this integration to the *expertiseireland.com* portal. Testing is ongoing with

University College Dublin, Teagasc and is scheduled to begin shortly with Queen's University Belfast. The University of Ulster will not be ready to start testing from their new Research Management System until May 2008.

The maintenance and support contract with InfoEd has been cancelled and Institutions have been advised to change over to the xml schema, developed by j4b for *expertiseireland.com*, to maintain daily uploads of information from 28th February onwards. The new schema will also allow full integration of the link from the Institutional Repositories to the Research Support Systems, in line with the IUA librarian's Open Access project.

3. Strategic Innovation Fund

3.1. SIF - Cycle I

IUA projects funded under Cycle I of SIF are progressing well in the third quarter of funding. Tendering exercises are completed or underway in a number of projects for the hiring of external experts to implement parts of the workplan. A detailed report was submitted to HEA in late 2007.

A particular issue of concern has arisen in relation to time recording and reporting for matching funding and funding drawdown purposes. IUA has been in contact with all institutions in this context with a view to putting more robust procedures in place.

3.2. SIF – Cycle II

The sectoral projects for Cycle II were approved at the Galway Council in October and submitted on time to HEA. An IUA/University team subsequently met with the reviewers and the informal feedback is that the reviewers were positively disposed to the sectoral bid. Unfortunately, while the results of the call are understood to be with DES for some weeks now, at the time of writing, no announcement of the results has been made.

4. Funding

4.1. Recurrent Funding

4.1.1 *Current Funding 2006/2007*

The estimates of public expenditure for 2008 provided for a 5% increase in the recurrent grant in aid for universities and colleges, IoT's and other HEA designated institutions of Higher Education. We await a detailed analysis of the breakdown of the grant available to the university sector, however indications from the HEA suggest that the actual core grant increase available to universities is in the region of 3.5%. The sector in its submission to the HEA had indicated that an increase of 7% was required to meet the cost of known unavoidable cost increases and consequently this represents another 'real'

decrease in core funding and therefore will require further cost efficiencies within the sector to maintain existing levels of service.

The shortfall is further accentuated when one considers that the 7% increase calculated by the sector did not include a provision for O'Brien review awards as these were not known at the time.

Actual university recurrent grant allocations are expected to be issued by the HEA during the week commencing 21st January 2008.

4.1.2. Tuition Fee Increase Submission 2008/09

In December 2007 the University Chief Finance Officers Group made a submission to the HEA in respect of the required increase in tuition fees for 2008/09 noting that the increase in tuition fees required to cover the cost of known unavoidable cost increases was 9.0%.

4.1.3. Recurrent Grant Allocation Model

As noted at 4.1.1. above, final grant allocations for 2008 are expected to be issued by the HEA in late January 2008. Grant allocations will be determined in accordance with the HEA's Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM) based on the student number returns submitted by all institutions in late 2007. In November 2007, the HEA confirmed that 2008 grant allocations would be on the same basis as 2007 with the following possible exceptions (which have been referred to the HEA's RGAM Task Force for consideration).

- Possibility of increasing the research top-slice
- Mechanism to support strategically vulnerable subjects

An issue of increasing concern is the impact of escalating pension costs on underlying core funding. Pension supplementation costs (in respect of funded schemes) and pensions in payment (in respect of unfunded schemes) are top-sliced from recurrent funding. As these costs are growing at a significantly higher rate than core funding the underlying funding available for core activities is being eroded. This issue has been raised with the HEA and will continue to be monitored.

The development of the RGAM will be kept under on-going review by the sector.

4.1.4. Skills Funding

As reported in the October 2007 IUA Review, the HEA wrote to university chief finance officers in September 2007 outlining revised treatment of undergraduate ICT skills programme and the Postgraduate Skills Conversion Programme funding.

4.2. Pension Issues

The IUA through the HEA Pensions Working Group continues to work with the HEA, DES and DoF to resolve the issues facing university pension schemes. As reported previously it is proposed that existing university pension schemes be taken over by the State and that the funds be transferred to the National Treasury Management Agency. Considerable progress has been made to date and the proposal has been agreed in principle by the relevant government departments. However as legislation is required to provide a statutory basis for the transfer of assets this will require government approval and consequently due process must be adhered to. The HEA Pensions Working Group remains confident that the proposal can be advanced and finalised within the next couple of months.

There remain a number of operational issues to be addressed and a number of joint IUA/HEA working groups have been set up to address such issues. Issues to be addressed include funding for the future pension liabilities of funded research staff, grant allocation and operational implications for the new pension arrangements and issues relating to the finalisation of the model schemes.

4.3. Full Economic Cost System

The design and development of a full economic cost system for the sector has progressed under the IUA SIF sectoral project chaired by M. O'Malley (Bursar, NUIM). Following an extensive consultation process involving a wide range of stakeholders the project steering group approved the conceptual design framework for an FEC system. The consultants, JM Consulting Limited, have also prepared a document and presentation which can be used as the basis for internal communication within institutions.

The consultants are now preparing a tailored implementation plan for each institution and will be meeting with relevant staff in all universities to develop such plans. Timelines for implementation are quite tight if universities are to minimise the potential financial loss under FP7 contracts. The major challenges of implementation relate to project management and culture change rather than technical costing issues. In November 2007 the IUA hosted a symposium for non-financial senior officers to discuss these wider implications. The consensus was that there are significant challenges, particularly around the human resources aspects and the modernisation agenda, but that these were to be managed rather than seen as an impediment to obtaining FEC information. Funding for the implementation of the FEC system has been sought in the SIF Cycle II sectoral submission.

4.4. Strategic Planning & Decision Support SIF Project

Phase I of the Strategic Planning & Decision Support project, relating to the development of a ‘headline’ set of key performance indicators (KPI’s) is well advanced. The project is chaired by M. Dooley (Bursar, NUIG) and is being facilitated by external consultants (Mazars). The consultants have undertaken detailed research on best practice KPI’s in higher education internationally and prepared a detailed report based on their findings. A detailed consultation process was subsequently undertaken with senior management within institutions and through a number of cross-sector functional workshops. Arising from the consultation process a broad suite of KPI’s has been produced for consideration. The consultants are currently finalising the consultation process and following this will be presenting a comprehensive KPI framework. The consultants will then, in consultation with the project steering group, agree a ‘headline’ set of KPI’s within this framework for development. Phase I of this project is due to complete in February 2008. Phase II, which relates to the development of data models to support the KPI’s is currently commencing and has a target completion date of May 2008.

4.5. Tax Relief at Source on Tuition Fees

The IUA, through the finance managers group continues to liaise with the Revenue Commissioners in relation to the capture of data at source in respect of tax relief on tuition fee payments. The basis and principles for capturing data has been agreed and the sector and Revenue are currently agreeing the text of the communication to be sent to students.

5. HEA/Department of Education & Science

5.1. Modernisation of Maintenance Grant Payments

At the invitation of DES, a meeting was held with representatives of the IUA executive and university fees officers on 7 November 07 to discuss the modernisation of the student grants system. DES had previously met IoTI representatives. This is one part of a wider reform agenda currently underway in DES regarding student supports. Other elements will in due course look at student supports for transfer and progression using the National Framework of Qualifications.

Student maintenance grants are seen by DES as part of equity of access agenda, and a significant programme of reform is currently underway re the administration of student grants. A decision was taken by Minister Hanafin in 2006 to move all grants schemes from Local Authorities to 33 VECs: this involves repealing previous acts and putting in place new legislation (currently being finalised – to be published in early 2008). This also results in the amalgamation of 4 existing grant schemes into 1 unified scheme. The objective is to provide a far better service to students, which is student centred, with administrative efficiency based on better provision to students on the ground. This implies a new IT structure for VECs, on which work has already started.

Under the new system, it is proposed that student will apply to their VEC and be assessed for eligibility by that VEC. It is envisaged that VECs would also provide support on the ground to students in respect of the application process. DES would like to put in place incentives for people to apply early, including early notification of approval and guarantees re timely payments, etc. DES is also working towards an on-line applications process for students. It is planned to have application forms available to students by end January each year, with details of student grants schemes available by end March. An early closing date for applications would be 1st May, 2008. This will involve a significant publicity/awareness raising campaign through schools etc. It is likewise proposed that, for early applicants (i.e. by 1st May), decisions re eligibility could be made known to prospective students by end June, once LC exams are over. DES is planning to apply a finite closing date for grants, to avoid the current situation where students can back-claim grants for any number of years. Current thinking is that such a deadline would be at the end of April for that academic year.

Regarding payment issues, DES reported huge areas of agreement from all parties around need for modernisation of payment process. This means moving to the implementation of an electronic transfer system to each individual student's bank account. The frequency of payment currently varies across 4 existing schemes, this will be standardised. Under the new scheme, it is proposed that VECs will be required to have service level agreements in place, eg guaranteeing payment dates for students if applications are completed in time. The system will require unique student identifiers, using PPS numbers, and will be web-based, to allow for interaction between HEIs and the central payment system. It is intended that all VECs will feed into a central national database – and that payments would be made from one central system. This is still under discussion with the VECs. DES reported that agreement had already been achieved regarding payment by electronic transfer. DES stated that it was pushing very strongly for a central payments system, making standardised payments possible for all students, in a manner to be decided but which best suit student needs (eg once every month, with larger up front payment at start of year).

Discussions will be needed with DES to ensure that robust and workable systems are in place to ensure verification of eligibility and participation. The decision regarding eligibility will remain with the Local Authority for existing students and will be placed with the VEC for all new students. Important areas for discussion with HEIs include prevention of fraud, verification of student participation, need for confirmation from HEIs re student “attendance” ie a method of verification, e.g. 3 times / year. DES stated that it would be happy to use proxies for verification where these are sufficiently robust. A number of such possible proxies already exist, such as registration, census dates, etc. A student not flagged as “active” at each milestone would have payments suspended pending investigation. Sophisticated methods will be needed in order to know why a student might not have been flagged up at a particular milestone, since the student could still be eligible. The possibility of institutions including an explanatory note on flagged

students is being considered i.e. did not sit 1st semester exams etc. to assist dealing with queries where these arise. Where institutions become aware of students de-registering etc. between ‘flagging’ dates, there remains a responsibility on the institution to notify the awarding authority of this fact immediately.

Pending confirmation of this new system, DES proposed that interim arrangements could be as follows: current students in Local Authority system would continue and be run out over next few years; that the overall administration of grants be moved to the VEC sector for coming year (08-09); that the 4 existing schemes be moved into a single unified scheme for 08-09, but that the payment method would be modernised over a phased period following that. It is not expected that EFT payments would commence before 09/10 academic year. This new payment scheme would need secondary legislation, ie regulation.

DES stated that it would like to convene a round table with Universities, IoTs, students and VECs to work through these issues.

5.2. Framework for Departures from Approved Levels of Remuneration

IUA has been in contact with the HEA in relation to the proposed review of the above framework which is due to commence shortly.

5.3 Framework for the Payment by Corporations of Remuneration to University Employees

IUA has been in contact with the HEA in relation to the development of a framework for the payment by corporations of remuneration to university employees and has made proposals to the HEA in this regard.

5.4. Code of Governance

The HEA formally launched the agreed Code of Governance of Irish Universities at a governance seminar in the Alexander Hotel in Dublin on the 18th December 2007. The seminar was attended by chief officers, chairpersons of governing authorities and senior management and provided an opportunity to raise and discuss issues arising from the implementation of the code and the roles and responsibilities of governing authorities and executives.

Arising from the Code universities will be required to include a Statement of Internal Control in their financial statements. The Statement of Internal Control requires that the Governing Authority make a statement regarding the effectiveness of the systems of internal control including financial, operational and compliance controls and risk management systems. UCFOG and the IUA Secretaries Group will be considering issues relating to such a statement at their joint meeting on 28th January 2008.

During 2007 the HEA also invited applications for funding for governance training to prepare members of governing authorities for new requirements arising from the code and to support the implementation of the code. In December 2007 the HEA agreed to allocate €50,000 to each university as a contribution towards governance training. In addition an amount of €100,000 was provided to fund cross sectoral initiatives in this area and further funding will be available for such cross sectoral governance training in 2008.

5.5. *Higher Education “Access/Foundation” Courses*

A consultation paper on the topic of “Higher Education Access Courses” was produced by the HEA National Access Office and discussed with its NAO advisory group and other stakeholders in autumn 2007. The paper concentrated on issues surrounding the provision by universities and other higher education providers of “access” or “foundation” courses, and various aspects of Department of Education policies surrounding these, including provision of such courses by the Further Education sector, funding of such courses, and the eligibility of individual students on such courses in higher education institutions to receive DES student supports.

This consultation paper raised a number of serious concerns with the universities and other higher education providers, and the universities and DIT made a joint proposal to the HEA and DES to undertake a study looking at current provision in this area and possible future options in this area, in order to encourage maximum potential of access, transfer and progression across the National Framework of Qualifications. The study will also examine good practice in other education systems (notably Scotland).

A draft Terms of Reference is currently being agreed between the universities, DIT, HEA and DES, with the study due to take place during the period February – May 2008. An academic expert has been identified and agreed with all parties. Costs will be shared between HEA, the universities and DIT.

6. Access

6.1. *SIF 1 - Equity of Access Project*

6.1.1. *HEAR*

A review of the HEAR Schemes in 2005, 2006 & 2007 has now been completed. This provides a detailed profile of applicants and entrants to the universities via this route and quantifies the outputs over a 3-year period. The report has been presented to a number of key groups, including the NAO Advisory Group (at the invitation of the Head of HEA-National Access Office). The new indicators, to be piloted in parallel with the HEAR application process in 2008, have been agreed and incorporated into the application form. Decisions on data management and reporting in 2008 (particularly around the reliability/validity of the new indicators) will be agreed by HEAR Operation Group over

the coming weeks in consultation with the CAO. NUIG propose to pilot HEAR (for the first time) in some of its local schools for entry in 2008.

6.1.2. *Supplementary Admission – Applicants with a Disability*

There has been some progress on the supplementary admissions route for applicants with a disability, with partial data on both the 2006 and 2007 schemes now available to IUA for analysis. However, there remain significant challenges in the management of this complex admissions route in 2008 and beyond, particularly in terms of: (i) the assessment (of eligibility) of students with specific learning difficulties e.g. dyslexia; (ii) robust data collection and reporting; and (iii) targeting and communicating the scheme to the most marginalized (severely impacted) candidates.

6.1.3. *Access-Admissions Policies on Non-standard Entry*

As a follow-up from the last IUA Council meeting in October, Admissions Officers were asked to furnish the IUA with key policy/procedural documents pertaining to the non-standard admission of students from under-represented socio-economic groups and students with a disability. These documents have now been received, interpreted and key information condensed under a common set of headers for each university. Subject to agreement (sign-off) with each institution, an overview document for the sector will be produced. There is real potential for learning and exchange of good practice across the sector as an outcome of this process.

Finally, a proposal to present a paper on HEAR to an international conference on Widening Participation has been successful. The conference will take place in Toronto in April 2008 and IUA, TCD & UCD will jointly write and present the paper.

7. National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

7.1. *Placement of university awards on the National Framework of Qualifications*

A meeting of Registrars or their representatives took place on 4 December 07 regarding the outstanding placement of university awards on the National Framework of Qualifications, including Higher Diplomas (Level 8), Postgraduate Diplomas (Level 9), and a number of special purpose, minor and supplemental undergraduate and sub-degree awards (Levels 5-8). Agreement was reached regarding how these should be placed in a coherent manner by each university on the NFQ. IUA has supplied a template to assist with this, and each university's template will be jointly submitted through the IUA in mid-February 2008, following the meeting of DCU's academic council on 13 February. These templates will include all outstanding postgraduate awards (except those in the area of Education), as well as Level 5-7 awards from universities who are ready to do so.

7.2. *IUA / NQAI Framework Implementation Network*

The joint IUA / NQAI Framework Implementation Network has formally been launched, with its first meeting taking place on 12th December, 2007. The network, which is chaired

by Prof. John Scattergood of TCD, includes an academic and an administrative representative from each university, as well as a representative from each of the colleges of education affiliated to a particular university and the NUI constituent colleges. The second meeting will take place on 21st January 2008, at which it is expected that a number of topics will be identified for exploration by working groups during the first half of 2008.

7.3. *OECD Project on the Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning*

As one of over 20 countries participating in the OECD activity on the Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning, Ireland opted to undertake a Thematic Review and engage in Collaborative Policy Analysis (CPA) with regard to the Irish recognition system. A Country Background Report on this theme was published in July 2007 and can be downloaded from the NQF www.nqf.ie and NQAI websites www.nqai.ie. An OECD team will visit Ireland during from 4th-8th February, 2008 to explore these issues in further depth. All universities have been invited to send representatives to discuss issues surrounding the recognition of non-formal and informal learning with the team, and meetings will take place.

7.4. *Study of the Implementation and impact of the National Framework of Qualifications*

The NQAI has embarked on a study on the implementation and impact of the NFQ. The study will assess the extent to which the National Framework of Qualifications is being implemented; support deeper implementation of the Framework and policies on access, transfer and progression; identify progress in implementation; identify gaps and drivers/obstacles in respect of implementation; assess the initial impact of the Framework. The study will focus primarily on the work of the Authority, awarding bodies and providers of education and training.

The study will comprise papers on the state of development of the Framework, policies on access, transfer and progression, and assessment of impact by the Authority; reports from key stakeholder bodies responsible for implementing the Framework in the schooling, HETAC, FETAC and university sectors; case studies of implementation; submissions from the public; evaluation of inputs by a study team of national and international experts; and a synthesis report and recommendations by study team. As part of this, IUA will coordinate a report from the university sector. The study will commence in March 2008 and be completed by June 2009.

8. Communications / Events

8.1. *Marketing the University Sector and IUA Services*

8.1.1. *4th Level Ireland Website Development*

Work on the development of the website is ongoing. A logo has been selected and materials are being gathered from the PostGrad departments of each university.

8.1.2. 4th IUA e- Newsletter

The fourth edition of IUA news was published on 19th December and was distributed to over 1,200 subscribers. In this issue of the IUA newsletter there was a special feature from Ned Costello on his first year as Chief Executive of IUA. Details were given on a memorandum of understanding which has been agreed between IUA and the China Scholarship Council for the exchange of PhD students between Ireland and China. News and photographs of recent brochure launches included the new Marie Curie Brochure - "Attracting Talented Researchers to Ireland - A Review of the Marie Curie Programme" launched in December. Also featured in the newsletter were the visits of the European Research Council and the Belgian Royal Couple and the results of the inter-varsity Equality Photo Competition.

8.1.3. Communications Group Meeting

The second meeting of the IUA Communications Group will take place as part of the IUA quarterly meetings in Limerick on 28th January. A key feature of this meeting will be a presentation on the communications activities of the HEA delivered by its new Communications Manager, Malcolm Byrne. The meeting will also be a first for newly appointed NUI Maynooth Communications Manager, Deirdre Watters. A full attendance is expected and plans for joint communications strategies will be discussed.

8.2. International Affairs

8.2.1. Production of Marketing Materials

The international officers have requested the production of light weight banners for joint marketing purposes at international fairs. The banners will be produced by the IUA in time for use in Mexico in March 2008. The hard copy 4th Level Ireland brochure is also being reshaped for more cost effective distribution at international fairs.

8.2.2. Mexican Advert for Irish Universities

As part of the marketing activities for the upcoming Europosgrados Fair, the IUA is producing a sectoral advert for the official event publication.

8.3. Events

8.3.1. Marie Curie Brochure Launch - Attracting Talented Researchers to Ireland

On 6th December the IUA launched a new brochure entitled "Attracting Talented Researchers to Ireland – A Review of the Marie Curie Programme". The purpose of the publication is to illustrate how researchers in academia and industry in Ireland have successfully secured funding from Europe in the Marie Curie Programme and to highlight the impact this has had in furthering their R&D ambitions.

8.3.2. *Marie Curie Industry Academia - Partnerships and Pathways (IAPP) Scheme*

A national information event on the Marie Curie Industry-Academia Partnerships and Pathways (IAPP) scheme was held at the Royal College of Physicians on 10th December, 2007. The event was organized by the Communications and Marie Curie Offices of the IUA.

8.3.3. *Intervarsity Photography Competition*

On 11th October, 2007, an inter-varsity photography competition for staff and students of the seven universities in Ireland was launched to celebrate the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007. The theme was "*Changing Perspectives: Equality and Diversity in my University*". The IUA Communications Manager was a member of the judging team in December when the winners were selected. Prize money has been provided by each of the seven universities and a calendar featuring the top 12 images, funded by the Equality Authority, was distributed to all universities in January 2008. It is hoped that the four prize winners will receive recognition for their achievements from the presidents during the IUA meetings in January in Limerick.

8.4. Publications

8.4.1. *4th Level Ireland e-Brochures*

Work is underway on transforming the hard copy 4th Level Ireland brochure into electronic format. This brochure will then be translated into Chinese and Spanish for use in marketing the Irish universities in these regions. The Spanish version will be used for marketing the universities primarily in Mexico (Europosgrads March 2008) as part of the drive to recruit students under the Conyact agreement, and then later for Argentina and Chile. The finished product will be available for download from the websites of the seven universities as well as the IUA website.

8.4.2. *Attracting Talented Researchers to Ireland – A Review of the Marie Curie Programme*

This brochure was produced as part of the ongoing promotional activities of the IUA which is the National Contact Point for the Marie Curie Programme. In the brochure a selection of success stories are presented of researchers funded during the Sixth Framework Programme (2002-2006) across highly diverse disciplines in academia and industry. These stories demonstrate the hugely positive impact that Marie Curie funding has had on research in Ireland. The brochure has been distributed to the Research Offices of the seven universities and also to brochure contributors and other interested parties.

9. Quality Assurance

9.1. *IUQB Matters*

9.1.1 *IUQB Meetings*

A meeting of the IUQB Board took place on 19th November, 2007. The next meeting of the IUQB Board is scheduled for 10th March, 2008.

A meeting of the IUQB Management Committee took place on 17th December, 2007. The meeting considered the process for preparing the 2nd IUQB Strategic Plan.

9.1.2. *IUQB Budget 2007-08*

All funds due from the HEA and all subscriptions due from the universities in respect of 2007 were received within the calendar year. A proposal on the 2008 budget and the subscriptions required from universities will be placed before the IUA Council at its meeting on 28th January, 2008.

9.1.3. *Charitable Status Application*

The Secretary was notified that the IUQB application for charitable status had been approved by the Revenue Commissioners on 11th December, 2007. IUQB has been allocated the Charity Number - CHY17790.

9.1.4. *New IUQB Website*

A new version of the IUQB website (designed by Arekibo) was launched on 10th January, 2008.

9.1.5. *External Review of IUQB Commissioned by the HEA*

The review is a three-stand process which will examine: (i) the performance of IUQB under its objects as a company, (ii) IUQB activities funded by the HEA, (iii) whether IUQB substantially complies with the requirements of an external quality assurance agency under Part 3 of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (the European Standards and Guidelines). Further details are available on the IUQB website: <http://www.iuqb.ie>

Following consideration by the IUQB Board of a draft report on 19th November 2007, the self-evaluation report for the review and a statement of IUQB compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines were finalised on 30th November, 2007. The published report plus appendices was sent to the HEA on 20th December, 2007 for forwarding to the external panel appointed by the HEA to conduct the review. Following receipt of the self-evaluation report by the panel, the report was published on the IUQB website, as per the published Terms of Reference for the review.

The HEA informed IUQB that the visit by the external panel will take place on 21st-24th April, 2008.

9.1.6. *Sectoral Project Activities*

Following the fifth annual IUQB conference on 12th-13th October 2007, the project organising group for *Institutional Research* met on 30th October 2007, 3rd December 2007 and 18th January 2008 to discuss the feedback from the conference and the interim report on the project.

A draft of the interim report on *Quality Improvement in Teaching and Learning* was submitted by the team leader Professor Áine Hyland (who also made a presentation on the project) for distribution at an international conference (co-sponsored by IUQB and the National Academy for Integration of Research and Teaching and Learning, NAIRTL) which was held on 9th-10th November 2007 in UCC.

9.1.7. IUQB Nationally and Internationally

The CEO made a presentation entitled *Doctoral Education: Challenges for the Future* to the UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) Inaugural Colloquium on Graduate Education which was held on 24th-25th October 2007 in the Burlington Hotel, Dublin.

The CEO chaired a workshop at the 2nd annual European Quality Assurance Forum which was held on 15th-17th November 2007 in Rome.

The CEO made a presentation of the 3rd Report on the follow-up to the (EUA) *Review of Quality Assurance in Irish Universities* (2004-05) to the members of the Authority of the HEA on 4th December 2007.

10. Charities Bill 2007

The Charities Bill 2007 will have implications for universities as charitable bodies and also for foundations or similar bodies that may be involved in fund raising activities. Ann Gilligan from Arthur Cox solicitors has been invited to the joint meeting of UCFOG and the Secretaries group on 28th January 2008 to make a presentation on the implications of the Bill for universities. The IUA will continue to monitor progress in respect of this bill.

11. Valuations Act 2001

The issue of municipal rates has arisen in some universities in respect of certain activities and this could potentially result in a multi-million euro bill for the sector. The Secretaries group and UCFOG will consider this issue at their joint meeting on 28th January 2008.

12. Copyright

In December 2007 the IUA applied for an amendment to the terms of their copyright licence with National Newspapers Ireland Limited to allow for the indefinite storage of electronic copies of material. NLI have agreed to provide the extension for a small additional charge, however we await receipt of the amended licence.